

## President's Corner

Dear Montessori friends!

It has been an exciting year for Michigan Montessori Society. Our new website is up and running to better serve our membership. We are working to offer more and more services and resources on line for your convenience. Our MMEAN committee continues to advocate for our members and affiliates. They are our voice on a state level as well as communicating ever-changing rules and roles. We strive to offer more services, networking, and resources to members and affiliates. Our workshops were successful and offered great material. The newsletter is full of great information on topics of current concern. We are proud of our work this year!

We hope to hear from you about how we can serve you in the future to continue to meet your needs. Remember, we meet as a board on the first Monday of each month. Members are welcome to attend meetings to bring up concerns or see what we are working on each month.

Recent events in our country and around the world have brought traumatic situations into the experience of the children, families, schools, and communities. This month we offer some great information and resources in dealing with the effects of trauma. Please take the time to read and consider all the information.

"It is from numberless diverse acts of courage and belief that human history is shaped. Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current that can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance." ~ **Robert F. Kennedy**

Finally, as you meet the demands of the ending of the school year – look forward to summer to recharge, research, and rest for next year.

My hands to yours,

MMS  
Fall  
Workshop  
Watch this  
space for  
information

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## MMEAN Update

### Michigan Montessori Education Advocacy Network is working for YOU!

By Sue Fitzpatrick

*This group of passionate volunteers has been busy working on behalf of all of you in the greater Michigan Montessori community to ensure that Montessori programs are included in and protected by any legislation and regulation that will impact them.*

Currently, one of our MMEAN members is part of an ad hoc committee with the Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs – LARA. This is an advisory group reviewing all proposed changes to the Early Childhood licensing code. The goal is to make adherence to the licensing rules easier for program directors. Our proposal to recognize the Montessori teaching credential at a higher level commensurate with credit hours and internship hours is one of these proposed changes.

Work also continues in supporting changes to the PQA that will recognize quality in Montessori pre-school environments. The PQA is the classroom quality assessment tool used by Michigan's Great Start to Quality program to determine an early childhood school's 5 star rating. The HighScope Center for Early Education Evaluation (CEEE) is the author of the PQA. Several Montessori schools are participating in this process by opening their classrooms to this trial review. Currently one of our Montessori advocacy committee members is participating as a classroom assessor in Trial 3 of the validation and reliability study for the new revision. The hope is that the instrument can fairly assess all early childhood program curriculums for quality and best practice.

### *How To Develop Your Own Montessori "Elevator Speech"*

*In the previous two newsletters, we shared with you two different Montessori elevator speeches. At the recent convention in Denver, "Creating Your Montessori Elevator Speech" was one of the workshop offerings. The presenters gave us an opportunity to discuss our ideas of essential elements and then were given some guidelines as to how to fine tune our speeches. Hopefully, the following suggestions along with the two previous examples will help you craft your own "Five Minute Montessori Elevator Speech."*

#### **Identify:**

- Big Ideas – These are essential elements of the Montessori experience
- Recall a Worthy Anecdote – An experience you can share that demonstrates your choice
- Elements that excite you to your innermost soul -
- Something applicable to the current audience.

#### **Make:**

- A list of words that are commonly used in Montessori environments.
- Examples: Normalization, ground rules, cycle of activity, sensitive periods,

#### **Choose:**

- One key idea from your list.
- One key audience

#### **Create:**

- Take some time to write your pitch and organize your thoughts.

*While the opportunities to share Montessori with strangers are usually spontaneous conversations, planning your speech takes some time and thought. While your passion about Montessori might allow you to talk on the subject*

#### **MMEAN's Mission Statement:**

*"We advocate for the validation and advancement of authentic Montessori education in Michigan."*

*at length, using the above limiting factors helps to focus your conversation utilizing the short time you will have to convey your enthusiasm.*

## *Childhood Trauma – What does it look like? What can be done?*

### **Let's talk about childhood trauma.**

The impact of childhood trauma is gaining more recent attention. Roughly 1 in 4 children experience potentially traumatic events before their third birthday. Think about that. One in four. The effects of those traumatic experiences extend far beyond the child to their families, schools and communities. As educators we must learn more about the signs of trauma and how to help children cope, so that children suffer less, and our communities are strengthened.

In the 1990's, a physician named Vincent Felitti was curious about why patients in a weight loss program would drop out after starting to be successful at losing weight. He started interviewing individual patients and found out that because many of the patients had been sexually abused, losing the weight made them feel vulnerable. Felitti's results captured the interest of Dr. Robert Anda, and together they launched the CDC-Kaiser Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) study to further examine the frequency and effects of these adverse experiences. The ACE list includes substance abuse, mental illness, parental incarceration, separation/divorce and physical, sexual and emotional abuse.

The ACE study offers incredible information on both the prevalence of ACE's and the effects. It was discovered that although childhood trauma crosses all socio-economic and racial levels, roughly 30 % of the original sample of 17,000 mostly white, middle-class, well-educated adults had experienced physical abuse as children. Fifteen percent experienced emotional neglect. A separate study showed that one in six men, and one in four women reported childhood sexual abuse.

The study then connected more research and found that ACE's were associated with many adverse outcomes in adulthood, including health problems such as heart problems, obesity, liver and pulmonary disease, as well as increased suicide attempts, smoking, substance abuse, and marital problems, to name a few.

In 2012, the American Academy of Pediatrics called for a focused effort to address childhood trauma. Even with this trauma prevalence, we know that all is not lost if we focus our energy and resources to support children and their families. Humans are adaptable and can transform their lives with support. First, we must start with ourselves by learning all we can about childhood trauma, and especially the ways we can support our children who have experienced trauma in their young lives.

Here are some things you can do now as you continue to learn all you can about trauma and trauma-informed care.

- 1.) Make sure ALL children feel safe and secure by providing them with the continuity of well-trained and nurturing caregivers.
- 2.) Create school environments that promote safety and trust for students and their families.
- 3.) Create school environments that teach and promote self-regulation and calming strategies, along with skills in developing social-emotional skills.
- 4.) Learn about the behaviors that may indicate a child is really struggling or perhaps is experiencing trauma in their life. (e.g acting out, shutting down, extreme crying)
- 5.) Build strong family relationships so that you can more easily talk with families when you notice dramatic changes in behavior.
- 6.) Try to wonder more about what is going on and instead of thinking "what is wrong with this child?", wonder "what might have happened to this child?".
- 7.) Learn and use strategies to calm and regulate yourself in the face of challenging behavior so that you are better prepared to support the children in your care.
- 8.) Be calm, kind, compassionate and acknowledge what children in your care are feeling.

Knowing more gives us an obligation to do more. Find ways to both increase your knowledge and also work across systems to minimize the effects of trauma in our young children. The quality of their lives, as well as the future of our communities is in our hands.

## *Explaining World Tragedy to Children*

*By Chick Moorman & Thomas Haller*

Your six-year-old has just seen video footage of devastating destruction including collapsed buildings, crushed cars, and homes under water, all vivid images resulting from the recent earthquake and tsunami in Japan. Your teen sits transfixed watching the numbers of dead and injured mount. At the dinner table your fifth grader asks, “Can anything like that happen to us, Dad?”

How is a parent to respond under such circumstances? What should you say? What should you do? How do you deal with your children’s fears without increasing them? Is it possible to reassure them at a time when you, yourself, are horrified by the images of intense pain and grief you see on the faces of parents halfway around the world?

Yes, you feel empathy for the survivors who have lost loved ones, homes, and jobs. Yes, you are extremely grateful that your children are safe in your comfortable home as the horrific images continue to flow from your television screen. And, yes, you can use this tragic situation to help your children learn lessons of love and compassion and about the indestructible nature of the human spirit.

Once children have seen the images of tragedy and suffering, debriefing is essential—the sooner the better. By debriefing, we mean answering their questions, providing information, asking questions, and reflecting their feelings.

Provide the scientific information they’re asking for. Tell your children in age-appropriate language what you know about how nature can create an earthquake, tidal wave, tornado, hurricane, or volcanic eruption. Keep this part factual. You can even use books or magazines to assist you in providing information.

Tell your children the effects of the natural disaster. Talk about the destruction that was created by nature’s fury. This is a good time to make the connection between cause and effect. Limit what you say to what your children actually saw on TV, and provide answers to their directly asked questions. Too much information at this point can increase their fright and worry. The goal is to be brief and accurate and to provide them with the specific information they’re looking for. If you fail to give them information, if you fail to debrief, children’s brains will fill in the blanks. Better to fill in those gaps yourself with factual knowledge than to have your children fill them with their imaginations.

Concentrate on feelings. Your children will be seeing a wide range of feelings expressed during TV coverage of such events. They will see sadness, panic, grief, relief, joy, depression, frustration and desperation. As a result, they will personally experience unexpressed and often unrecognized feelings.

When you sense they are feeling empathy, sadness, or pain, say so. Tell them, “You seem deeply saddened about this,” or “You sound afraid that this might happen to us.” Children are starving for feeling recognition and this is a great time to supply it.

When strong emotion is shown on TV, honor it by talking about it. Acknowledge the extreme sadness and grief that people are experiencing. Refrain from being an adult who ignores the grief of others and refuses to acknowledge it. Do not treat hurting human beings as if they are invisible. Talk about your own feelings. Tell your children about the sympathy and pain you feel for the losses others are suffering. Allow your children to hear and see you express feelings. By doing so, you’re helping them acquire a feeling vocabulary they can use their entire lives.

When you communicate your own feelings and honor the feelings of your children for people around the world, you teach them important lessons about the human condition. You help them appreciate how we are all more alike than different. You help them see that we are all connected, no matter how distant we seem. You help them learn that we are all one.

As you go through this debriefing process, encourage your children to look for the helpers. Helpers always come. There are always people who step forth to help. In the case of a major tragedy, there will be many helpers playing out a variety of roles. Point them out to your children. Then, when small problems occur in their own lives, they will have learned to look for the helpers. There are helpers at school, on the playground, in the mall, and on the highway when our car breaks down. Learn to look for helpers and they will be more likely to show up when you need them.

Discuss with your children how you as a family can be helpers during this tragedy. Perhaps you can send money, give blood, say prayers, send love, or call the Red Cross to see what kinds of items you can donate. Choose one or more ways to be helpers as a family and allow your children to participate in implementing those choices with you. Pray together. Let them observe as you give blood. Take them shopping for the toiletry items needed by the Red Cross. Let them help you address the envelope that sends the check. Get them involved in the process of being a helper. Let them see and be love in action.

The scope and depth of the pain and heartache of catastrophic tragedies are not measurable. Yet, those horrific events can serve a useful purpose if we use them to help our children learn about feelings, look for the helpers, and appreciate the connectedness of all human beings and the beauty of one heart reaching out to another across continents. We can help them learn that around the world is a long way away, yet still very much a part of our neighborhood.

Chick Moorman and Thomas Haller are the co-authors of *Parent Talk Essentials: How to Talk to Kids about Divorce, Sex, Money, School and Being Responsible in Today's World* and *The Only Three discipline Strategies You Will Ever Need*. They are two of the world's foremost authorities on raising responsible, caring confident children. Visit their websites today: [www.chickmoorman.com](http://www.chickmoorman.com) and [www.thomashaller.com](http://www.thomashaller.com).

## *How Can We Help a Traumatized Child?*

As we felt it was an important question, our school recently sponsored a workshop on Childhood Trauma. Our first session focused on defining and recognizing behaviors that are the result of trauma in young children. The second session discussed ways to help those children begin to feel they can again trust and feel safe.

Our presenter began with John Bowlby's definition of Attachment Theory :

- Attachment is the universal, biological drive for survival and a control system for managing the response to threats and anxiety.
- Attachment helps children balance exploration with protection.
- Attachment impacts all domains of a child's development.

Trauma impacts children's attachment relationships which can be simplified into four categories:

- Secure – child balances exploration with closeness to attachment figure
- Insecure/Avoidant – child is overly independent, no confidence adults will be helpful
- Insecure/Ambivalent – child is uncertain whether adults will help or not, less exploration
- Disorganized – Child has no strategy for getting needs met. Fright without solution.

From the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, we learned that, "Individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on an individual's functioning and physical, social, emotional or spiritual well-being." An easy way to remember this definition is to think of the Three E's

1. There is an **Event** that is
2. **Experienced** by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening and
3. That has lasting **Effects** on the individual's functioning and well-being.

Some typical behaviors you may see in your classroom as a result of a child experiencing a trauma are

- Difficulty trusting adults or enjoying relationships
- Can appear "cold" or without empathy
- Can be passive, unable to initiate activity
- Have a high need for control
- Have poor cause and effect thinking.
- Have a low ability to respond to limit-setting or discipline
- Have poor skills for handling stress
- Can seem "wild"

Our second session began by discussing the qualities teachers should have if we are to help children overcome the trauma that so adversely affects their development. A teacher that will provide a significant positive impact to those children:

- Is predictably and consistently available to the child
- Sees the world **from the child's viewpoint**
- Sets fair, reasonable limits
- Recognizes a child's strengths and builds from those
- Structures the child's experience to encourage new learning
- Provides a physically and emotionally safe environment so the child can grow socially and emotionally
- Provides an opportunity for the child to have a different view of himself in the world

To avoid retraumatizing a child, remember to provide these for all children:

- Safety/Security— A safe environment, yet strong enough to contain all of the children's feelings
- Trustworthiness - Stable relationships with teachers
- Choice with predictable routines
- Collaboration
- Empowerment
- Providing reassurance about fears and emotions (not dismissing them)

Difficult child behaviors may be triggered by situations that remind the child of the traumatic event. Try to find out, if possible, what the traumatic event might have been.

When a child is struggling with the results of a traumatic flashback that results in inappropriate behavior, the following routine will help to resolve the situation.

- Take a breath and calm yourself – you cannot calm a child if you are not calm.
- Try to find the reason or function of the behavior
- Let the child know you want to understand what is happening or has happened.
- Provide information and give the child a positive limit
- Work with the child on considering positive solutions
- Avoid punishment or shame
- Model the behavior you want children to learn

Additionally, providing developmental supports in your conversations will help the child calm down and again be able to rejoin the classroom.

- Express empathy (I know you really wanted to ..., , I understand it's hard to wait your turn)



- Use words with children to label their emotions (You seem really frustrated right now)
- Attend to and accept the feelings that arise (I can see that loud noises upset you and are scary)

Helping children overcome their traumatic experiences will help them become resilient. It gives them the tools they need to recover from or adjust to life circumstances and bounce back.

Resources for more information on Childhood Trauma:

<http://www.ddcf.org/globalassets/17-0428-helping-young-children-who-have-experienced-trauma.pdf>,

<http://theconversation.com/how-childhood-trauma-can-affect-mental-and-physical-health-into-adulthood-77149>

## *MMS - What's In It For Me?*

*Individual membership and school affiliation in the Michigan Montessori Society help you keep in touch with other active Montessorians! Networking with others committed to promoting authentic Montessori programs is vital to your professional growth. Don't miss the opportunity to join our vibrant organization.*

- *MMS presents two professional development seminars every year. Members enjoy a significant reduction in seminar fees.*
- *A newly designed website has launched! We continue to work on ways to make your experience as a MMS member more timely and exciting!*
- *You can register for seminars and become a member online using your credit card.*
- *MMS publishes a newsletter online, posts job openings, promotes educational opportunities and disseminates other helpful information.*
- *Because most MMS communication will be sent electronically, it is imperative that you provide us with your email address. Please be assured that we do not sell or share our electronic list with anyone.*
- *We have also assumed the important task of advocating for Montessori education at the State level. There is power in numbers; your membership supports our efforts (see MMEAN article above).*
- *You will be notified when affiliated schools offer mini workshops that may interest your staff.*

The Michigan Montessori Society's objectives are to:

- *Broaden understanding of the Montessori method*
- *Encourage the growth of Montessori education*
- *Act as an information center*
- *Support existing schools*
- *Provide professional development*

*In order to continue to receive these benefits and more, join MMS today!*



