

# GRACE AND COURTESY ACROSS THE PLANES OF DEVELOPMENT

by Pat Ludick

*Pat Ludick's commentary on grace and courtesy is established by a philosophical orientation to development: Grace is oriented to the life of the interior that is consciousness and being, and courtesy moves outward to daily living where civility reflects on success with human interactions. Pat's projected grace and courtesy across the planes is manifested in the language of respect, in the art of the seminar or exchange of opinions, in hospitality, social unity, independence, and in the expression of gratitude and persuasion. This upbeat narrative illuminates the psychological characteristics of grace and courtesy at every stage of formation and through adult civility of the fourth plane.*

I want to open by thanking NAMTA, David Kahn, and the group of professionals who designed this conference. I am grateful that NAMTA has been on the cutting edge in so many ways over the years, but I am especially excited that our collective work is addressed in terms of the continuum of human development. This conference, Grace and Courtesy and Civility Across the Planes of Development, is a classic example of helping us all to recognize that our own personal energies are part of something deeply significant as we sweep across the developmental planes. We are serving life as a whole and we must stretch and grow into that noble venture, no matter our specialty training or current placement within our Montessori school.

If the formation of man becomes the basis of education,  
then the coordination of all schools from infancy to ma-

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turity, arises as a first necessity: for man is a unity, an individuality that passes through interdependent phases of development. Each preceding phase prepares for the one that follows, forms the base, nurture the energies that urge towards the succeeding period of life. (*From Childhood to Adolescence* 134)

Now to present my thesis for this morning. In order to fully address this very complex topic, I have been invited to explore with you, I want to make you aware of my efforts to weave together several important ideas. We will indeed be examining grace, courtesy, and civility but will also closely attach those tenets of Montessori work to the critical realm of moral and social development. Important threads to weave into these considerations will also be those thoughts relative to the constructive stages from birth to young adulthood. For this purpose, I have chosen to trace one of the human tendencies, namely language, across these periods of formation because language is so critical to the development of the personality. And then, of course, I want to touch on our important roles as guides and directresses/directors as we interact with children and adolescents, thus the role of the adult will keep reoccurring throughout this hour.

A few months ago, our adolescents engaged in a study of World Religions/World Views in an effort to see how one's inner beliefs, whatever those might be, enable a mindset, a way of being and then a way of acting in the world. Being and acting as both individuals and as collective members of a human society. The tangible metaphor that we kept returning to during our studies and pilgrimages was the image of the window and the mirror. I wanted to invite the students into that practice of looking out at the world of ideas but also to welcome them to look into the mirror of their own beings and to ask the questions that were percolating there. Knowing that things must be very visual with young adolescents, I even found an old window and a mirror in a thrift shop and kept them visible as touchstones throughout our investigations.

As I was preparing our presentation for this conference, it seemed equally as fitting to bring that same symbolism to the forefront as we experience some reflections on grace, courtesy, and civility as Montessori practitioners. We have a need and a responsibility to look out beyond our present understanding of these tenets to still

a larger view of seeing life (the window), but then to journey on back to ourselves and to hold ourselves accountable for what we are experiencing personally (the mirror). Again, the continuum presents such a wonderful opportunity for all of us to embrace not only the stage of development where we feel comfortable and serve diligently, but to stretch ourselves in both directions to what has been and what awaits the young people we observe, love, and serve.

And so then, as one considers the formative process across the stages of development, one must recognize that during the cycles of formation, there are two strong currents always at work. Two currents: one that moves outward toward a life of action in the outer world and one that flows inward toward the endless source of consciousness and being. When we examine the tenets of

I believe that courtesy extends to how we are able to recognize and respect that innate goodness, that mystery of both darkness and light in the lives of others. From the infant to the child to the adolescent and to the young adults we encounter in our daily lives, it allows us to connect successfully with others.

Montessori education as they are revealed through the rudiments of grace, courtesy, and civility, we cannot help but to recognize them as the foundation of healthy living in our daily work. They are part of that outer work that involves the outer world of our school communities, our daily work with toddlers, children, and adolescents and their families; in short, our basic human interactions as they present themselves day after day. We soon come to know that grace, courtesy, and civil behaviors venture deeply into our inner world of personality development and spiritual wholeness as well. The practices of grace, courtesy, and civility touch our hearts; they resonate in our souls. They grant us a sense of serenity and well-being. Perhaps this is why Dr. Montessori recognized the importance of developing these rudiments of social and moral development, internalizing them in spirit, in word, and in deed, in response to the natural unfolding of the human over the constructive stages of human growth. In order to reflect a bit on these tenets, let us examine some interpretations of these words as they translate into both outward actions and inner convictions.

## Some Thoughts on Grace

Grace in its simplest form is the manner in which we value ourselves. I believe it is the manner in which we are present to ourselves and the manner in which we present ourselves. It is looking in that mirror! I believe it is a deep, spirit-filled self-awareness, a sense of one's personhood, a humble knowing of the wonder of one's humanity. It aligns with recognizing the divine that is mysteriously woven into our being. It is believing that we are loved and capable of being loved. It is wrapped in mystery, complete with the knowledge of our weakness as well as our capacity for goodness. It is daring to believe that you have a purpose in this life, on this planet, and that your existence has meaning. For us, as adults in service of humanity, it means that we have said *yes* to life, to serving life, and that we recognize it as a gracious gift as well as our personal social responsibility. It is faith filled and demands faithfulness. This awareness is planted in us during our early years of development and little by little we begin consciously to recognize our dignity and worth.

As I was writing these thoughts, my mind went back to the 1940s and the actions of a very dear Irish mother. I was the eldest of nine so it seems there was always the gift of a new baby in our midst. I so remember a little ritual that my mother celebrated with us whenever she would give the tiny one a bath. We would gather around a kitchen table where the child would be bathed lovingly in a small basin. As my mother would wash the baby, she would say things like, "Oh, look at these tiny feet; I wonder where they will travel in our world. Look at these hands; what good will they do for others. And her eyes, what will they see and how will she see life...." These wonderments would go on and on as we would watch the simple liturgy unfold. Yes, the building of the life of grace! We came to recognize the wonder of a new child and somehow that our mother believed that about each of us. Something filled with grace happened there. I know that!

We move and act and express ourselves with a sense of that grace. There are times along the way when we disappoint ourselves and are drawn into personal suffering of all kinds, but if our foundations are strong and our belief is grounded in a peaceful acceptance of life's questions, questions that challenge us like: Who am I? How am I good? What is my purpose? We find our way. That discovery



process is often connected with the goodness and interaction with others. It sets us on the path to that discovery all over again.

### **Courtesy**

And we arrive at the reality and power of courtesy: the manner in which we respect the beings of others, the manner in which we respect the *Thou* as the other. Martin Buber, Jewish essayist, philosopher, and some would say mystic, of the twentieth century would direct us in the following way.

When I confront a human being as my *Thou* and speak the basic word I-*Thou* to him, then he is no thing among things nor does he consist of things. He is no longer He or She, a dot in the world grid of space and time, nor a condition to be experienced and described, a loose bundle of named qualities. Neighborless and seamless, he is *Thou* and fills the firmament. Not as if there were nothing but he; but everything else lives in his light. (8)

I believe that courtesy extends to how we are able to recognize and respect that innate goodness, that mystery of both darkness

and light in the lives of others. From the infant to the child to the adolescent and to the young adults we encounter in our daily lives, it allows us to connect successfully with others. Other persons are not merely accidental or incidental. They become necessary to my life. Other's claim to comfort and to health and happiness is as valid as our own, and we back up that belief with action. My work as a teacher and guide is to help others, those in my care, to recognize their gifts and their inner grace. It is who we are to each other, who we must be to each other.

### Civility

Civility seems to hold both beliefs about grace and courtesy together in one space, a sacred space. As Dr. P. M. Forni from the John Hopkins Civility Project reminds us throughout the pages of his treatise, *Choosing Civility*, it belongs to the realm of ethics. It has to do with grace, courtesy, politeness, and good manners of behavior. It frees us from the slavery to self-absorption, impulse, and mood. It speaks to what we as Montessori practitioners recognize as social and moral development. It is gracious goodness. It demands restraint,



the work of the will, deepest respect, and consideration, often at a time when it may be difficult to respond in that way. It is often akin to self-regulation. Indeed it is the work of the will and the intellect but also the work of the heart. It is caring and claiming one's identity, one's needs and ones' beliefs without degrading someone else's in the process. It is a belief directly related to the common good. It aids social cooperation. In fact, it is an attitude that is accepting of the fact that we must work on behalf of the whole of society and remain a steady presence alongside the conflicts of interests and ideals that are part of living in that society and community. It is not a philosophical abstraction but a code of decency to be applied to everyday life. It is often recognizable as a higher level of moral development. It must be part of the culture of our schools on every level of the multiple interactions that occur day after day.

#### GRACE, COURTESY, AND CIVILITY ON A PRACTICAL LEVEL

All that being said, let us bring the grooming of grace and courtesy and civility to a practical level, that is what we do day to day in our work with children and adolescents. I would like to now lighten your spirits with what has become a personal epic tale, or maybe it has moved into the genre of a myth as the years have unfolded. This scenario caused a huge awakening within me as a Montessori teacher. The following episode enabled me to view the power of the continuum as never before. I began to comprehend at a new level the significance of our work as it spans the planes of development and education. My hope is that you will listen to the unfolding story with an ear for the work. That is the practice of grace and courtesy that transpires in all of our Montessori environments on a daily basis, the seeds that have been planted through the exercises and decorum that has been paramount throughout the planes of development.

We welcomed a distinguished visitor into our busy April day. He was a Jewish rabbi who was visiting middle schools in our area in search of a progressive model he might like to imitate as he designed a middle school at his temple. He wanted to observe for an hour or so to see how we did this challenging work with teenagers. He was greeted by one of our students, who saw him at the door, and then who promptly welcomed him into the adolescent environment. The

young lad proceeded to take his coat, to offer him a chair, and then politely asked if he could get him a coffee or a cup of tea. A few other students came over and asked him where he was from and if they could tell him anything about the work they were doing. They then went back to their studies, preparing for a seminar on Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Soon, at the invitation of the guide, fifteen young people at the seventh and eighth grade levels combined and formed a circle with their novel and interpretive questions in hand. They began their discussion with the adult guide setting the stage for the great conversation. As so designed, they reminded each other of the respectful parameters for the seminar, the call to collaborative work and shared dialogue ahead. They said it was important to review the guidelines because everyone needed to feel safe to present their points of view on the novel. They reminded each other about the need to really listen to others and to maintain good eye contact. They took a moment to explain to the visitor that they do not raise hands but have found ways to make the comments flow by watching each other, by knowing each other. Someone noticed that the rabbi did not have a text so promptly handed him one, his own, and retrieved another from the shelf.

Included in the dialogue that took place around this provocative story of life in the deep south during the 1930s were examples of a difference of opinions, tensions surrounding elements of justice and injustice, of developing empathy, of the struggles of conscience, and of the challenge found in tenuous human relationships, even family relationships. It was a tender, powerful, and revealing conversation. The students wrapped up their discussion with self-evaluations and set a time for one more discussion as they all ended the book. Collectively they came up with a date that honored everyone's pace.

Our visitor, took a sip of his tea, and sat there in disbelief. As the group joined others for research work on the twentieth century, he approached me with tears in his eyes. "Who are these children?" he asked. "Did you know I was coming and rehearse this?" "Rabbi," I said, "I did not know you were coming until you appeared at the doorway. This is the way we learn and grow in our adolescent community." He then proceeded to stay the morning with us. He saw the students clean up their working spaces, set the lunch tables with mats and napkins and plates and then observed them engage



in shared conversation. He shook his head, still in disbelief, and asked if he could return the following day. He did come back to the usual welcoming and tea and observed a council meeting with a clear format for civil dialogue and a go at discussion and listening and problem solving. I even remember the issue, probably because I was a bit nervous about how a peaceful resolution would be reached. It was about a student bringing up the conflict of some tensions between the boys and the girls in a gym class that week. There was some apparent rivalry and over-the-top competition because boys versus girls had been the team set-up, one they themselves had begged the coach to allow. They talked about their conflicts with an air of openness, bringing to light that they needed an adult to guide them and to listen. It had brought out the worst in everyone. They all had made a poor choice and it had led to other poor choices. The coach was fairly new and they were hoping he would accept their desire to go back to mixed groups as teams and to accept an apology for their behaviors. Two students volunteered to approach him, negotiation being the first step. They would report back.

Our rabbi friend again sat in disbelief. “Who are these adolescents?” he asked again. It was then that I had a keen and humble moment of insight. “Rabbi,” I said, “I want to invite you to spend a few days at our school. I can arrange for you to begin at the Children’s House and move through the prepared environments of the continuum bit by bit. I can give you some reading but I can also give you some ideas of what to watch for as you sit in the classrooms. We can sit and talk after that. Please observe the children. Watch the interaction between the adult and the child. Watch for independence. Watch the courtesy levels. Watch the little lessons. Watch how choice grooms the will. Watch the peace tables. Observe the problem solving. Look for the respect of others as it passes from Children’s House to elementary to middle school. Watch for a culture of work. Find the moments where things fall apart. Notice how the adult handles those times.

The practices of grace, courtesy, and civility inform and protect the prepared environment for children and adolescents in a particularly effective way. They free them to be their best selves....They enable us to serve at a higher level of understanding and enable us to go about our learning and our lives in a balanced manner.

Watch for the mistakes and how children embrace those realities. Note the respect that is both implicit and explicit in every classroom in this Montessori school.”

Well, the long and short of this story, which could go on forever and ever, is that the rabbi asked if he could team teach with me for a few months (he would volunteer his services, he said), so he could absorb the practice and learn the art. And so he did, an Irish Catholic and a Jewish rabbi engaged in peace studies together. It took patience and a great deal of love but it was my work and it was his chance to grow as well as mine, and it was important for the students to observe and absorb the partnership. He came to our graduation and sat in the front row, he listened to the speeches, and again, he cried.

I hold out to you this little saga because it so clearly speaks to the power of the continuum as we explore grace, courtesy, and civility as core tenets and principles that guide our work in our Montessori schools. Hospitality, rituals, meaningful systems and rudiments in place, the respectful dynamic of the shared viewpoints, the power of the novel as a means of combining imagination with life and enabling empathy and critical thinking, the thoughtfulness for other’s learning differences, the dignity of sharing food together, the modeling of the adult, the ongoing rhythm of engagement and withdrawal when children must be called to higher levels of behavior...the list goes on. The practices of grace, courtesy, and civility inform and protect the prepared environment for children and adolescents in a particularly effective way. They free them to be their best selves. They fill the air with all kinds of healthy vibrations. They enable us to serve at a higher level of understanding and enable us to go about our learning and our lives in a balanced manner. They groom the developing human for peaceful living and for gratitude and generosity in the process. Nurtured in the children during the time of the absorbent mind and then thoughtfully and actively addressed in the elementary classrooms, they come to fruition in a special manner with the social newborn of the third plane. The adolescent must know how to act as an emerging adult. They really long to know how one assumes full citizenship. What are the parameters? What are the guidelines? How do I practice civility? How do I remain present to the world around me, especially in this era of the hyper use of technology? What does that look like and

what does that feel like and what happens when things fall apart? It is a personal work but it is also the work of the community that has been created. It is the hard work of the guide, as well, for high expectations and lessons must prevail!

Now in response to the prompt that defines this presentation, let's take a direct look at the constructive stages of development and education. When we visit the planes of development, we need to identify with the scope of these important periods in the unfolding of human becoming. In terms of preparation for maturity, which we recognize as a centered personality, we must recognize that one plane of self-construction within a Montessori prepared environment indirectly prepares the human for the next period of deep work. Thus the periods of infancy and childhood will influence significantly the work of the third plane of self-construction, and all three stages will have an impact on the emerging adult at the fourth stage.

As I was trying to think of a way to directly address grace and courtesy across this formation process, I thought about the foundational tenets of our work—the human tendencies—tendencies like movement, the culture of work, order, exploration, adaptation, communication, those tendencies that we respect and respond to as they are manifested differently at each level of development. It occurred to me that tracing the development of language might serve us well. Grace, courtesy, and civility is at the heart of so much that we do in honoring the word, be it spoken or written or related to body language.

In order to stress the power of language as connected with this ongoing development of civility, let us cite a few very basic ideas about this gift of communication to the human being.

- It is a fundamental means of social interaction
- It is the center of human life and human energy
- It permeates all things human
- It enables us to function as a group
- It is a medium for human understanding
- It is a psychic organ, an organ of the brain.

Now with a lens on grace (the respect for oneself) and courtesy (that identical respect as shown to others), let us consider in a very practical manner what this path looks like.

In the time of the absorbent mind, the little one is taking in her culture and is responding to the love and words and gestures of the adult and others in her prepared environment of the home and in a variety of places that are part of her surroundings. She is absorbing language. Connections are made as a healthy bonding process with other humans begins. She watches faces and hears utterances that influence who she is becoming. She comes to know her value as a person and then to imitate those utterances in speech, in action, and in signing or speaking her first words in order to have her needs met. We know this and we are fascinated with the early acquisitions of language. Language is integral to the building of the personality. We protect, nurture, and guide with a sense of serious responsibility...or not. Grace is forming within the human. She is coming to hear and feel and know her own value and of the love extended to little being.

Important points regarding language during infancy:

- Presence
- Modeling
- Responses
- Needs
- Sensitivities
- Independence
- Movement
- Love
- Natural World

As she experiences life in the toddler program and in the Children's House, the word is presented as a power and as a revered human action. Language is developed in an honorable manner and soon used not only in service to the self, but also as a manner of responding to the needs of the other. Grace and courtesy lessons are given with all the beautiful words and actions that enable these two realities to come together. Writing enables the brain and the hand to connect in honorable ways. Reading and storytelling bring the little one to understanding the feelings of others as well as the goodness of others as well as fueling the creative world of imagination. The little one is growing into her idea of respectful living. She is learning care for the self, care of others, care of the environment through listening, speaking, writing, reading, and exploration. All is beautifully designed to complement what is happening within. The development of the gracious personality, that grace-filled self, is being nurtured and formed with respect and goodness as the foundational tools of being human are utilized.

Important points around language development in this stage of early childhood include:

- Independence
- Socialization
- Presence
- Protection
- Wonder
- Words
- Manners
- Hand work
- Story telling
- Natural world

During the second stage, language becomes the language of discovery and research and imagination and social interaction at a whole new level. The language of patience, forgiveness, diplomacy, and peace-making is taking root. The art of observing others, of being present to others, is so very critical. Opportunities through outings are offered and lessons are sharp and keen in keeping with courteous exchanges beyond the classroom setting. Heroes and voices from the past speak of virtues and values that are civic-minded in nature and raise mankind to a whole new level of esteem. They hear the great stories of creation and man's coming and giftedness, his discovery of language and writing, they learn to listen, they learn to speak in front of others with beautiful words and respectful tones. They learn how to ask questions in manners that are respectful and yet honest. They learn how to take exception to others' ideas with language that is respectful and words that are thoughtful. They are guided into cooperative group work that takes negotiation and self-regulation. Grace and courtesy is wrapped in every aspect of language development, implicitly and explicitly as part of Montessori's plan for the development of the gracious and effective human.

The language during middle childhood could well be focused upon such areas as:

- Independence
- Presence
- Moral development
- Social issues
- Movement
- Redirection
- Imagination
- Reasoning
- Literature
- Natural World

We must trust the work of these constructive stages of life. The fully alive and fully human adult that is being birthed at the third plane as a social newborn holds within her all that has been planted in the previous phases of her Montessori education. We must never negate that reality. Dr. Montessori speaks of it again and again in her writings. The adolescent is now opening the door to very active and practical involvement within the life of a community. The seeds of a social and moral life in its fullest form are germinating. The Montessori adolescent will be called to develop her own personal self, to gain confidence around that newly found self but also a self that acts as a responsible member of a construct called a society. The social self, indeed the moral self, must tangle with authentic issues in a real collective forum called a just community. She must know of her privilege to make her mark upon the world, to become an instrument of peace in a palpable way. She must be inspired to know that she can indeed contribute to her world. Again, the third plane recapitulates all that has transpired or not during the planes of childhood. Young adolescents come to us as social newborns wired to embrace the skills of language of grace, courtesy, and civility. These often need to be brought into keen awareness and that is easily accomplished when their classroom is the town, the city, the farm, the civil community where they are growing up. It must be the real, not the virtual or a pretended venue. Their ability to navigate those venues with poise and confidence and yes, civility, is their work and also the diligent work of those who guide them. Lessons regarding the use of language in personal communication with peers and adults and children must prevail. One is always setting the stage for how to embrace their best selves. Literature, a window on life, helps them develop empathy and develop a word bank that addresses life. Workshops on social media protocol, including that of moderation and discretion, gift them with tools in which to use the faceless technology in ways that are courteous and appropriate and respectful. This is certainly a great challenge in our work these days and has become more and more a part of our work with adolescents and their families. They must learn how to process mistakes with vocabulary that is honest but thoughtful. They are wired to learn persuasive language and to respectfully defend their views on real-life issues. They begin to realize that they have duties to perform and responsibilities to honor. It is language that will enable those elements of adult life to unfold.

The needs of the adolescent for language deal with the realities of preparation for adult life. This language addresses such areas as:

- Poetry and rhetoric
- Self-awareness
- Persuasion and debate
- Place/community
- Civility and citizenship
- Technology and media
- Language of silence
- Gesture and expression
- The natural world
- The land
- Language of the arts
- Language of academia
- Drama and music

And then the fourth plane of human development unfolds. This is that period that brings one's adult life mission into full view. It is one that provokes the young adult to identify his values and to be able to navigate through cultures that will challenge the very fiber of his being. They now independently exhibit their respectful collaborative working skills and use the language that is part and parcel of those interactions. They hold dear their proficiency to speak their truth around issues of social responsibility and genuine beliefs. They have established an ability to honor work with their hands as well as to exhibit their intellectual gifts. Dr. Montessori addresses the importance of their ability to become self-sufficient by working as they take on their higher education responsibilities, their ability to love another human being, and to



be able to respond to another's needs with genuine devotion and commitment. And again, their ability to be present to other human beings in ways that are genuine and true is forming. They are once again, applying all that has been a part of their formation process into the challenge and gift of living on earth in a gracious manner as an adult of the species.

Now we see the need to use language that is inclusive of ideas around:

- Social responsibility
- Discourse and debate
- Human sexuality and love
- Theology and philosophy
- Civility and citizenship
- The arts
- Academia
- Politics and ethics
- Business and economics
- Diplomacy
- Analysis and synthesis
- Spirituality
- The natural world

At this point, I will dare to say that the acquisition of language, the language of civility, grace, and courtesy, may be a part of understanding Dr. Montessori's larger agenda or mission and we certainly must recognize that a larger mission was indeed her aim. Dr. Montessori embraced the idea of universality, of solidarity, of cultures respecting other cultures, of people being present to each

other in civil and compassionate ways, of all humanity becoming one nation, a single organism. She cites throughout the recorded lectures in *Education and Peace* the need for a conscious vision of this mission of mankind across time and place, the need to convince the world through words and actions that there must be a universal collective effort to build a foundation for peace. She envisioned a world community that respected diversity, one that was based on understanding among peoples on a very significant level.

Let us therefore unite our efforts to construct an environment that will allow the child and the adolescent to live an independent and individual life in order to fulfill the goal that all of us are pursuing ... the development of the personality, the formation of a supernatural order, the creation of a better society. The human soul must shape itself within a supernatural milieu. (*Education and Peace* 127)

And so we are back to where we started, aren't we? The role of the adult in a society that desperately needs the world citizen, one who is grounded in gracious self-awareness and in turn chooses to practice courtesy as they reach out generously to others. One who is dedicated to interacting with people and with the environment in ways that reflect civility at its best. Those adults are hopefully who we are: the adults who are part of the prepared environments of our schools, our communities, our homes. Remembering the image of the window and the mirror, I will leave you with questions that deserve some thoughtful reflection. I have chosen them because I believe that they are necessary to the integrity of the work we have been called to do, the important work we have embraced. They reflect our own social responsibility that is of the greatest importance, the life work to which we have said *yes*.

#### REFLECTIONS

Do I see my presence/my movement in the environment as being a healthy and generous and respectful presence, one of deep awareness for the children and adolescents with whom I work? Do I see those young people as *Thou*?

Do I practice the lessons of grace and courtesy myself? Are the students able to observe that practice so as to imitate my example? Am I really present to them, listening and responding with words

and body language and movements that reflect respect and love and full engagement?

How do I interact with the adults who are part of my personal and professional life? Am I able to remain gracious in the choice of my words and actions as I relate to parents and other staff members? Am I mindful of the climate of my school and am I a positive contributing presence in that way? Am I a problem solver in a manner that speaks of civil and respectful engagement?

Have I established a way to rejuvenate my spirit when I am weary or discouraged? Do I know how to self-regulate in that way? How do I do that without disrespecting others in the process? Have I secured time to be silent, to read, to walk, to refresh?

Am I allowing this beautiful vocation of serving humankind to form me? Do I see my presence with the students as a part of my own personal formative process?

...Education is a relationship between humans. Relationships with children [adolescents] give us a special opportunity to improve ourselves, to acquire a larger awareness of reality. In this way, our limits are stretched, as is our ability to participate in life...the child [adolescent], with its immense physical and intellectual development, is a miracle standing in front of us. (Montanaro ix)

Our work, our commitment to serving life, is an extraordinary gesture of generosity and goodness. We must not fear it. We must hold true to our *yes* and carry on. We are not alone in this great work. We, as enlightened practitioners, are an image of solidarity and a testimony of renewed faith in the child and in the adolescent and in the young adults we have honorably guided over the years. Dr. Montessori would remind us of the challenge and the vision in these words.

Society must recognize the importance of the child (adolescent) as the builder of humanity and come to have profound appreciation of the physic roots determining whether the mature adult will seek positive or negative goals. The child (adolescent) today is the forgotten citizen; society must now turn its attention to him and fulfill his vital needs and foster spiritual liberation....and this great task, must be the work

of education, for this is the only way to build a new world and to bring peace. (*Education and Peace* 42)

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