

A photograph of a man with dark hair, seen from behind, wearing a bright yellow t-shirt. He is carrying two young children on his back. The child on the left has blonde hair and is wearing a light blue long-sleeved shirt and pink pants. The child on the right has blonde hair and is wearing a pink and white striped long-sleeved shirt and purple pants. They are standing in a field of tall green grass and numerous red poppies. The background is a soft-focus view of a blue sky with some clouds and green foliage.

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Human Needs and Tendencies

Understanding our human needs and how it feeds the Montessori method.

Maria Montessori believed that education was more than filling a child up with information, it was a well rounded effort to help a child become a total being functioning in society and contributing to it.

It was not just intellectual, it was spiritual as well.

Children she believed helped man to evolve and change to adapt to their different time and space. Children constructed themselves to do this through the help of an inner teacher.

Animals operated from instinct, children from sensitive periods which feeds from their inner teacher based on tendencies and needs.



Human needs are those things required for survival in order to live as a human being and not as an animal.

Human needs are feed by our tendencies so they help us in to fulfill these human needs. The tendencies are traits which only human beings possess in order to achieve our higher calling as stewards of the earth and heirs of the kingdom of God. Animals are not heirs of the kingdom.

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The human being has a much more complex nervous system, a larger brain, the ability to stand upright which frees the hands, as well as the thumbs.

The child from 1 to 6 years is adapting herself to her own society and culture, through the development of consciousness, reason, will power, imagination, and conscience. These human needs, which are essential to life itself, and tendencies, which are ordered to fulfil our needs, act as creative possibilities. From birth to age six, the child's mission is to construct himself into such a being that he belongs within his social group, making the environment around him part of himself.

Human Needs

Humans have two types of needs, physical and spiritual. Without one or the other, the person will have less life within him, sometimes to the point of death. Physical needs include sufficient food, appropriate clothing, shelter, safety, and transportation. Spiritual needs

include love, arts/music, (to improve and embellish one's environment), and religion:

Children without love of some degree will die, even if they

have every one of their other needs fulfilled.

All humans have some typical characteristics in the human tendencies.

While individual outcomes can vary greatly, basic human tendencies are ordered to the objective of fulfilling human needs.

The Characteristics of Tendencies

Tendencies can strengthen slowly or quickly for varying lengths of times, but are hereditary and in their essence unchanging. Human tendencies have functioned from the creation of man and still operate today. They are human and apply to everyone regardless of race.

Tendencies develop from the human's need to survive and adapt to his environment. They operate in mature individuals but are clearly present and recognized in the child, particularly during the period up to age six.

Tendencies are a driving force behind work towards betterment of the individual person, his family and society and humankind as a whole. Every tendency supports the others as they are all inter-related.

Tendencies

Universal human tendencies as noted throughout time and in the Casa de Bambini are as follows:

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exploration, orientation, order, communication, to know/to reason, abstraction, imagination, the mathematical mind, work, repetition, exactness, activity, manipulation and self-perfection.

When man was first created, **exploration** was necessary to locate food, shelter, and fulfilments of the other basic human needs. As time has gone by, man has explored further, finding more foods, modes of shelter and clothing, ways of life, spiritual and religious understandings, discovered the varied greatness of our planet and even beyond. In the

children's house (Casa de Bambini), our mission is to offer freedom for the child to move at will, so we can give opportunities for exploration within orderly and beautiful environments.

While exploring the world around him, man had to or desired to return to specific locations, for family, specific foods, shelter, later crops and/or large group protection.



Orientation, man originally used the stars, rivers and mountains as indicators of current location, desired location and preferred routes between each one, much as we use landmarks of various types today.

Later, maps were developed as well. Orientation for the child is also fulfilled in a particular structure to the day as well as knowing that everything is in its place from one day to the next, which helps the child to hold the environment in his mind. The child orients himself to the

environment through order of the schedule and of the physical characteristics; an environment which should be stimulating, but not overly so.

Order is the basis of the entire universe; without it there would be only chaos and no possible way of anticipating or instigating appropriate changes and improvements. Seasons follow in a pattern, the days and years proceed in orderly fashion, vegetation grows, produces

food and seed dies and provides nourishment for other growth, the cycle of human life, etc. This is life and we learn to understand this.

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The child has sensitive periods for order in the environment and in his life, which help him to adapt to his environment; most particularly during these sensitive periods, physical order frees the mind to create a lesser, clutter-free environment. A child of two is at the most

sensitive period for order. This external order assists the child in establishing a mental order which builds intelligence.

Communication: Humans are social beings, therefore communication is necessary to share discoveries, express ideas, needs, thoughts, instructions, etc. Language was invented by humans; no animals have

language to the level of humans. The child has physical independence when he can walk, but mental independence occurs when he can speak clearly.

Human beings have a strong tendency towards **knowledge** of

various pieces of information they obtain, defining, classifying, making

predictions and plans. Through familiarity with the environment, gained through experience within that environment, human beings develop, even in childhood, the ability to apprehend and build up fact banks.

Once this knowledge base has been established, the young child, indeed all humans, use their reasoning skills to judge each new and old piece of knowledge.



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Abstraction is the ability to see qualities and ideas, to eventually be able to understand a concept through spoken, written, or drawn communication, rather than through concrete materials. All of the sensorial materials in the Casa de Bambini are materialized abstractions, meaning that they are identical in every way except for the one concept which is to be learned, for example size or color.

Imagination allows man to create. With knowledge, reasoning and the ability towards abstraction, one's imagination is set free to create solutions to current problems, demonstrate new techniques, or simply to entertain. The Montessori Method does not utilize fairy tales until

the elementary age; the younger child is equipped to fully utilize his imagination through various tools providing him with reality, art skills, and developing focus on careful observations with the materials.

Human beings have mathematical minds. All of our inventions depend on our ability to think mathematically. Mankind has learnt to measure time, volume, weight, etc.; count; express the concept of 'how many' in specific amounts or in comparisons of more or less. Order, exactness and abstraction all contribute to the mathematical mind, through exercises of pouring water, cutting flowers the proper length for a particular vase, seeing sizes of various cylinder blocks, cubes, prisms, rods and bead sets.

The tendency towards **work** is the expression of spirituality. Work that is purposeful is towards an end of some sort, whether it is the formation and perfection of the self, to make a specific product, earn a certain amount of money or otherwise. Work makes ideas reality, but

even at the end of a great work, everyone, including the child, needs a period of rest, physically or mentally, by sleeping or returning to a simpler work.

The young child looks for work that is geared towards forming the man he will become – he is much less concerned with the end result of his work, than with the self-perfection he is developing within himself.

Repetition is necessary towards self-perfection, allowing for strengthening of a learned or in-progress skill.

Self-esteem comes from a child feeling competent, and only through

repetition can the child be allowed the opportunity to perfect any particular skill, therefore interruption is neither necessary or desired; the child will cease his work when he has completed the task he set out to do. This is why the long work period of 3 hours is advised where children would be allowed to choose their work, where they do it and how long they work on it, uninterrupted.

The child **normalizes** himself through repeated work which

leads to **perfection** – a process-oriented perfection defined differently from the product oriented adult's definition.

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Through repetition, the tendency towards **exactness** is fulfilled. Later in life, exactness will be crucial: giving medicine, baking, doing gymnastics, driving a car, and more. With a built-in control of error, a young child can work with a material over and over, thereby developing a deeper sense of exactness.

Human beings have a deep need to adapt not only to their environment, but also to their differing cultures. The 14 tendencies are the key factors that help man adapt to his culture.

The child in the same way uses these tendencies to adapt to his culture by exploring and classifying things in the environment, such as animals, plants, landforms, objects in the kitchen, the bedroom, etc. The child tends to want to have things in order around him and also in his mind. This is why the Natural Science subjects are very paramount in the 3 to 6 Montessori Cultural Subjects curriculum. These include Biology, Zoology and Geography.

From ordering things in the environment the next step is to want to share experiences and communicate these with others, this makes Language Development very important, it is a core subject in the curriculum and also is a core objective

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The child will soon move on to wanting to understand the environment, his curiosity will lead him along the path of scientific discovery, and he will therefore make generalizations from things he sees around him. He is moving gradually from the concrete to the abstract.

The child will then be led into either modifying things technically to make them better, creating artistic impressions as an artist, writer or musician or assessing the progress of man-kind as a historian.

Really the Montessori Method has established a fool proof method to educate the child, helping him to prepare for his tomorrow through activities and materials that introduces first the environment then the universe to the child. He is allowed to follow his inner teacher to learn skills to fulfil his needs and tendencies.

The advancement of our society will unfold through the opening up of our children's creativity and potential. It may not look too inviting as a method, it may not be hip but it is very effective.

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If you are in doubt ask these Montessori graduates:

- Larry Page and Sergey Brin – founders of Google.
- Jeff Bezos – founder of Amazon.com.
- Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis – former first lady (John F. Kennedy)
- Sean 'P.Diddy' Combs – singer.
- Prince William and Prince Harry.
- T. Berry Brazelton – pediatrician and author.

