

VOICES OF AMI TRAINING

Give Me My World

Irene Fafalios, AMI 3–6 Trainer

It is through my senses that I learn about my world. So, let me experience my world... let me live it... feel it... touch it... taste it... hear it...

Let me do this, in an environment which is safe, clean and rich with things to do. Give me free reign... introduce me to everything... guide me... not by your likes and dislikes... but give me my culture with your joy and enthusiasm.

Every experience for me is a new experience and I need help, support, encouragement... Offer me love, security and consistency, because when I am not sure, I will turn to you and see how you react and that is where I will learn my first lessons of openness or fear.

Let me touch everything. Present me my world in a way that I, with my little hands, my little ears, my little nose, tongue and eyes can explore and discover. Prepare it all in such a way that I can contain it psychologically, right from the word «go».

My clothes and all the fabrics I touch, let them be rich, special, different... dress me in velvets, cottons, silks and linens... let me feel the slipperiness of satin, the softness of cashmere... give me the warmth of wool, the fluffiness of mohair, the solidity of felt...

The food you feed me with, let it have wonderful smells and flavours... introduce me to all the tastes of my culture... the sweet together with the sour, the bitter and the salty, the spicy, the garlicky... let me touch my food... let me feel its texture... the lumpy, the boney, the soft and squidgy, the creamy and runny! You can even let me hear my food... that which I crunch, that which I suck, or lick, that which I bite into, or just spoon into, that which goes down easily, that which I need to chew and chew and chew again!

But be gentle with my senses! Don't bombard me. I need a few stimuli – well chosen – but few... a few key sensations... provide me with contrasts... show me the two extremes and I will fill in the rest! Give me contrasts to attract my attention and give me all these sensations in some order, again and again, so that I may gradually come to make sense of this jumble.

Above all make these first 6 years of my life – but especially my first 3 – really beautiful... not fashionable or trendy, or even up to date... but really, truly, aesthetically beautiful...

Give thought to the quality of light and the play of shadows through the shutters and windows and the lighting that you will choose. Give thought to the colours and their hues as day becomes night... give thought to the fabric of the curtains that will billow in the wind...give thought to where my bed is and to what I can see when I lie down. Think of my toys and choose them thoughtfully for me. Hang pictures on my wall and remember that I will be gazing at them for hours...

Give thought to our dinner table, to the flowers, to the candles, to the cloth and to the napkin which I will use to wipe my hands and mouth. Give thought even to my plate of food... prepare it all so that it is pleasing, attractive, so that it calls out to be touched, to be eaten and even shared.

Make bath time not just fun, but beautifully so...think of the temperature, the light, the smells, the toys, the towel, the sound of your voice the gentleness of your hand as you rub me, pat me, massage me, dry me, tickle me....

Make each day beautiful... protect me from ugliness... create a beautiful space for me to be in, together with my family... a space where I will absorb all those things which will form me...

Make each moment special... breakfast, lunch, dinner, bath time, play time, driving time, shopping time, cooking time, story time... so that my day will be marked by a rhythm, with landmarks I will recognise, with images and feelings that I will hold within me always.

Give all festivities and seasons meaning and value. Think of what summertime means to you, and then give me the light of your summer, the smells, tastes, songs and flavours of all your memories...

But above all I need you to stand by me, be with me, watch over me.... and to give me time... time so that I may experience all these things at my pace... so that I may ponder on the sound of leaves rustling in the wind, so that I may follow the sound of church bells in the distance, the dawn chorus, the night owl... give me time so that I may lose and find myself in a silence...

If I am to grow, I need all this, because these are the raw materials for my imagination. All this will build my foundation – a foundation which I will use to draw from. For my time will come and I too will need to create and give back to this world, which has served me so well for these 6 years...

My first encounter can only be through my hands, ears, eyes, nose and mouth...therefore make it a rich encounter... a memorable one...

... for I will become whatever I touch, feel and see....

...and what I become will be revealed in my reasoning... in my logic... in my imagination... in my discoveries and creations... in my relationships and interactions... in my exchanges and negotiations... in my choices and decisions... in my participations and contributions... and above all, in the quality of the love and affection that I will hold in my heart, hand and mind, for mankind and for creation.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Irene Fafalios (M.A. Social Anthropology, AMI Dip. 0-3, 3-6, 6-12, EsF) lives and works in Athens, Greece, where in 2002 she set up The Montessori Institute, Greece (formerly The Montessori Lab). Over the last 20 years, she has worked to establish Montessori in mainland Greece and now, together with the growing team at the Institute, they are extending their work to the islands and supporting their students as they put Montessori into practice both in the classroom and beyond. Irene Fafalios is an AMI Trainer (3-6) and an International lecturer and Examiner for AMI.

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