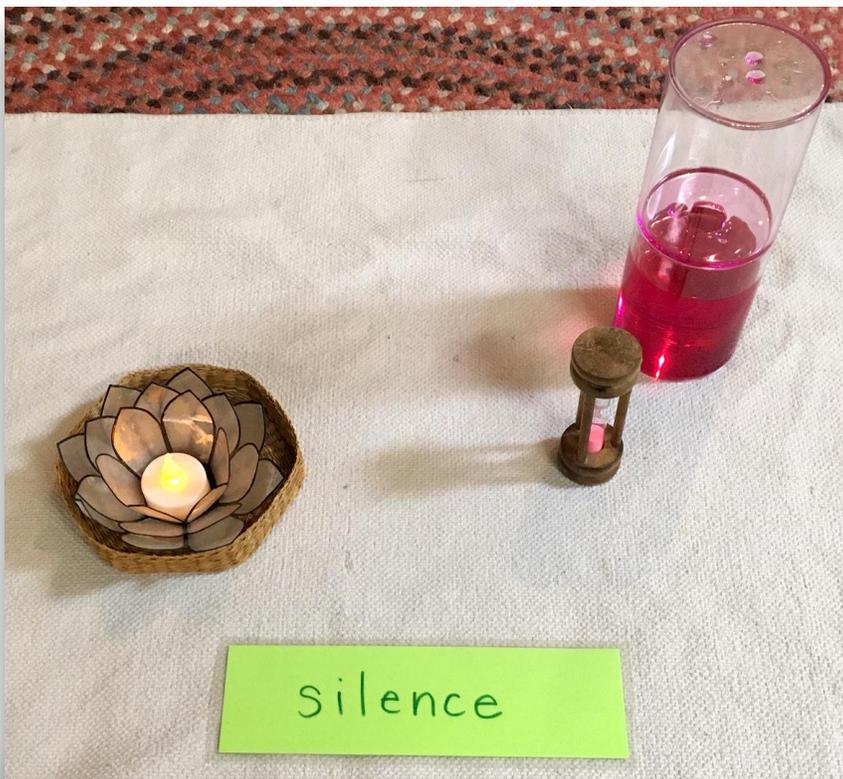


Making Silence



"When the children have become acquainted with silence...(they) go on to perfect themselves; they walk lightly, take care not to knock against the furniture, move their chairs without noise, and place things upon the table with great care.... These children are serving their spirits."

*Maria Montessori
Dr. Montessori's Own Handbook*

Making silence is a central activity in Montessori classrooms. Learning to be able to quiet one's body and mind is essential for children's development, deepening awareness and extending concentration. In our classrooms, we make available a tray of a few simple objects to help facilitate this practice. You may wish to use a work mat to designate one's workspace- for this work, we sit in the mat as the "work" is our body! A card with the word 'silence' written can show others that we are practicing and help limit disturbances. You may wish to have a sand timer or "gel jar" to watch while sitting to help bring focus.

When introducing this activity for the first time, invite the child to make silence and explain that in order to make silence we must not make noise. Sit comfortably on the mat and light the tea candle. Show the card with the word 'silence' and explain that when we see this word we will begin making silence and will not move. Tell the child that you will whisper their name when the game is over. The goal is to whisper their name just before you feel them losing focus. Remember, we want them to feel successful and encouraged!

If the child has created silence, introduce the idea that they have and talk about how it felt. Discuss what sounds you were able to hear while making silence.

Be aware that the first attempts at making silence may be very short, perhaps less than 10 seconds. As you practice the time will extend. Once a child is familiar with making silence the activity will likely be chosen independently, with the child choosing the length of time that feels comfortable.