

Who was Maria Montessori?

- Maria Montessori was an Italian physician and educator, celebrated for her educational method that builds on the way children naturally learn. She was an innovator, feminist, and idealist.
- Born on August 31, 1870, in Italy. At age 13 she entered an all-boys technical institute to prepare for a career in engineering.
- She decided to become a doctor instead. She applied to the University of Rome's medical program but was rejected. As a result of additional study and great effort, she gained admittance.
- She was appointed co-director of a new training institute for special education teachers.
- She opened a childcare center in a poor inner-city district. This became the first Casa dei Bambini. The children were difficult to manage at first, but soon showed great interest in working with puzzles, learning to prepare meals, and using materials that centered around math lessons.
- She observed how the children absorbed knowledge from their surroundings, essentially teaching themselves. Through scientific observation she designed learning materials and a classroom environment that nurtured children's natural desire to learn.



Montessori Philosophy

- Respect the person
- Observe in order to learn about the person
- Encourage independence
- Provide meaningful work
- Remember that learning and engagement can occur anywhere

What is Montessori for Aging?

We have combined Dr. Montessori's philosophy of learning and living with what we know about aging and dementia care best practices. It is not a technique, task or intervention. It's a way of living one's life to the fullest extent possible.

Our Goal

To enable your family member to be as independent as possible, engaged in a meaningful life, doing things they love, with people they enjoy, in a supportive environment.

⇒ How do we do this?

- The care community is a "prepared environment" for your family member. (We explain what we mean by *prepared environment* on the next page.)
- Activities and roles are available that match the person's cognitive abilities. Materials are visually and physically accessible all throughout the community.
- Care partners practice with elders to help them relearn previous roles or enjoy new ones. The more the elders do this, the better they get. Eventually they are able to do most or all of it on their own.
- Activities and roles have meaning and purpose. For example, someone can set the table for meals to help the community or play cards with another for socialization and pleasure.
- Activities and roles happen as a normal course of the day, just like they would if the elder was living at home. The result is a flow of the day during which people are doing different chores and hobbies on their own or in small groups. Montessori isn't a specific time.
- Elders choose materials freely and are able to respond to their own internal needs. Sometimes staff need to invite or remind elders to join an activity or to participate in a role.
- Elders are encouraged to repeat activities and develop routines. That helps the elder know what to expect next and to be more independent.
- Elders are encouraged to do as much for themselves as possible. During care, care partners take their time to encourage independence. They use task break down and give directions one small step at a time so the elder can be successful.



How do we begin?

Step 1

We complete an individualized assessment

- We want to learn about previous and current roles and activities
 - * **Role:** caring for one’s community, caring for others, household chores, volunteer positions, occupations
 - * **Activity:** interest pursued for pleasure, leisure, education, etc., such as a hobby, sport, or social event
- Let us know how your family member would like to spend his or her time
- We will identify any supports needed for your family member to be successful

Step 2

We create a prepared Montessori environment

- Elders are encouraged to move about often
- Only materials that support the person’s social, emotional, cognitive or spiritual needs are in the environment
- Materials are arranged in an orderly manner, with everything labeled and well cared for
- Elders have easy access to the outdoors, and care partners bring the outside in whenever possible
- There are many opportunities for socialization
- There are signs, invitations and memory books to support those with memory impairment

Step 3

We engage your family member in all of the daily events of the household

Elders engage in many roles in the community:

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|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| • Setting the table | • Watering the plants |
| • Wiping the table | • Reading to others |
| • Sweeping the floors | • Greeting new residents |
| • Dusting | • Making their beds |
| • Folding their own laundry | • Reading a blessing at meals |
| • Folding kitchen towels | |

Elders engage in many activities in the community:

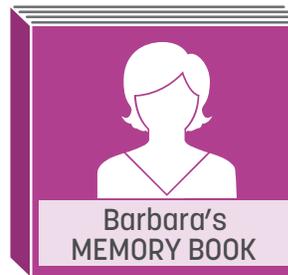
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| • Metal insets | • Music |
| • Three-part cards | • Gardening |
| • Matching | • Exercise |
| • Sorting | • Reading |
| • Games | • Memory books |
| • Puzzles | |

Step 4

We use tools, such as Memory Books

Memory books were created by Dr. Michelle Bourgeois as a way to enhance communication with people living with dementia. Memory books can be conversation starters, act as memory cues, be used in storytelling together, and if the person ever becomes unable to speak, the care partner can tell the stories of the Memory Book to the person with dementia.

We have created templates for memory books that families can complete and email back to us. We then create the rest of the book for them, and present it to the elder.



What’s in a Memory Book?

- One phrase or sentence and one picture on each page telling the person’s life story or important life events.
- Books can be topic related, such favorite family vacations or information about a hobby.
- White paper with large-print black lettering.
- A meaningful photo the person will recognize on the cover.
- A daily schedule and a place to write notes.

How to Use a Memory Book

- Use the book to hold a conversation, not to quiz. Provide a prompt that will encourage the person to read the page of the book or to add more to the conversation.
 - * **DO say**, “What a lovely house you grew up in. I’ve been to Lancaster before.”
 - * **DON’T say**, “Where did you grow up? Do you remember that house?”
 - * **DO say**, “I love dogs. That dog is the the cutest I have ever seen.”
 - * **DON’T say**, “Whose dog is that? What is the dog’s name?”