



Episode #147:

**Simone Davies Talks About the
Montessori Philosophy and Differently Wired Kids**

March 5, 2019

- Debbie: Well, welcome to Tilt Parenting Simone.
- Simone: Thank you so much. I love being back again in the studio virtually. This time across the oceans.
- Debbie: It's the first time we're doing it across the pond, which is very sad. For those of you who listen to the show you may or read my book, you may know that Simone is, is my person and uh, and has been one of my anchors in Amsterdam. So, but it's nice that we can look at each other while we're doing this conversation. So for those of you who haven't heard Simone before, she's been on the show twice. Um, so I'll leave links to those conversations in the show notes pages. But Simone has a new book coming out and it's about the Montessori toddler. And so I wanted to bring her back on to talk about that, but also just talk about Montessori as a philosophy because our other episodes were about designing your space for Montessori and about having more calm. But I, I've been reading more and more about how Montessori can be such a great type of education philosophy for certain differently wired kids. So I thought, let's use this opportunity to just talk generally about Montessori and why it can be such a good fit for some kids. And then we can talk about toddlers as well. Does that sound like a good plan?
- Simone: I think that sounds great. And I think that it applies to any age child and you know, basically a differently wired child is almost like a toddler because we have to be their prefrontal cortex for them because that's still developing really. You know? So I think a lot of the things that we talk about with toddlers, you would see even for an eight year old differently wired child would completely you know apply as well.
- Debbie: Or a 14 year old differently wired child sometimes.
- Simone: Yes. And it's just getting started.
- Debbie: Yeah, that's good. I actually like that reframe. If you do think of it that way, suddenly things make more sense.
- Simone: Yeah.
- Debbie: So I was gonna ask you the big question I ask everyone, tell us about yourself and your personal why. But I promised I wouldn't do that. So maybe we could just start by, just give us your, I know you have got a great answer for just, in simplistic terms, what is Montessori, like if you were to summarize the philosophy?
- Simone: Yeah, I always say like it's an alternative education system and the child walks in and there's beautifully arranged materials with a really rich curriculum. So all the maths materials are laid out, building each activity on top of the other. Um, then there's language materials, cultural materials, there's a lot of practical life activities, which are things like caring for your environment and it's the children

that get to choose themselves what they'd like to work on rather than the teacher telling them what they need to learn today. So it might sound like chaos, but there's a mixed age classroom. So there's older children who can help the younger children and the younger children are always watching and observing the older children and so they can learn from them. And the teacher is going around the classroom and giving lessons for each child where they're up to, either individually or in small groups.

So it's a beautiful way I think for education because the children love learning, they're empowered in their own learning as opposed to being directed all the time, like in the traditional education system. And so you actually see that children love learning, except that it's kind of usually stomped out of them in the traditional system where they have to sit still and listen all the time.

Debbie: And so you, you work with the littles, like the really little kids, but Montessori can go all the way up to high school, correct?

Simone: Yeah. So here in Amsterdam we have Montessori high schools. Um, there are even some really authentic Montessori high school programs in the US where you actually have farm schools and the children go and live on a farm. Um, and then they learn their maths by taking their goods to market and they learn about geography and the land by working, you know, growing vegetables and living in community with each other.

And actually Dr. Montessori recognized that teenagers actually are in their least academic time when most traditional education becomes even more academic. So she really proposed this Erdkinder or farm school kind of model. But we have schools in cities that are called urban compromises, which apply the same kind of principles like how can we engage these children in their own learning so that, and they might do more project based learning for example, uh, to develop the skills. And they like not having to, you know, always have to go what everyone's doing, they don't all have to learn the letter 'a' today, you know. So you really follow everyone's unique timeline and their unique interest and also the way they learn.

Debbie: Yeah. I'm glad you mentioned that unique timeline. Cause as you were talking, I was thinking too that one of the biggest challenges with differently wired kids is their learning is very uneven and the confines of the traditional education system is that we're grouped by age instead of by interest or ability. So it sounds like even that alone, that variation and that acceptance of that we're all in different places in these different skills could be such a great fit for a differently wired kid.

Simone: I think that's why it's really suited because I don't think there's any educational system where that's not done. Everything's so curriculum based. So by the end of year three you're meant to be learning this. And that's just not how a differently wired child develops and often how even you know 'normally', if we want to put that in inverted commas, wired child also develops. Everyone's unique. Sometimes a child, I'll see have, be really articulate and the other child will be very active, but there are very few words. And so we're really seeing a child, what they're interested in learning in, how they learn and how we can make an

engaging learning environment for them. We're their guide helping and assisting and we also help them build skills for when they're avoiding an area. So that it's not just like free reign, but we're also building skills in areas that they have difficulty in.

Debbie: And I was listening to Ned Hallowell talk at an online summit and he is an expert thought leader in ADHD. He has ADHD himself and he specifically said that Montessori, he thinks, is the best option for kids with ADHD. Uh, he didn't explain why, he just made that comment and I kind of perked up. So I'm, and also was feeling like, oh, why didn't we do that? But I'm wondering what your thoughts are on that. Like what aspects of the Montessori education particularly work, and maybe there are some aspects that could present more challenges, what are your thoughts on that?

Simone: Well, for example an ADHD kid is often one who doesn't want to sit still, right? They need to move a lot. And so in a Montessori classroom, you, you're moving around the classroom, you're taking an activity, you're bringing it to the table, you're working with the material and you're bringing it back. You can stop and observe another child. So even observing another child at work is your work at that moment. Um, and so you've also got a lot of movement in all of the activities. We have, what I mentioned before, practical life activities where you might decide to water the plants. So then you go to the sink and you go and fill up the watering can and you go back and you water the plant. And then there's a spill. So then you go and get the mop and then you go back.

Simone: There's a lot of movement in those activities. Even when you're learning sensorial materials. They have the pink tower for example, for the younger children around three years old and each block is brought one by one over to a mat. And so the children are physically picking up things and moving. It's not sitting, filling out worksheets. There's very little worksheet involved. And when you're doing maths, you're working with tiny little beads, that's a really concrete way to learn and I think it can be a very engaging and movement orientated way. And a lot of ADHD kids learn through movement. You know, I actually love the story, like you say that Asher could dictate to you like a whole book. Remember when he was writing his books, because he was moving and talking. And they've got, you know, scope to do that.

The Montessori materials are also great for all different types of learners because if you're a sensorial learner like you learn kinesthetically by touching, then these materials are great. If you're a visual learner they also work. And if you orally, you know, you hear it better, then all the materials have those three things always built in. So it can really suit any different type of learner. And just that fact that they don't have to sit in rows and just zone out because they're not interested in the topic, they're choosing themselves what they're going to work on. So they're going to have much more motivation, um, and be interested in that. And then over time the teacher is going to work with them to build planning skills in, um, how are you going to actually structure a day? In the early years, you know, they can really go with what they feel like and then they're going to need to start planning to make sure they can get through their work. So I think it could be really, really nice.

Debbie: That makes total sense. And I'm just, I'm having a bit of a flashback to when we visited a Montessori school in Seattle. There's a school, but it goes from I think Pre-K through eighth grade. And I remember visiting it and the classrooms were so quiet, and I don't know if that was unusual, but I remember thinking, oh my gosh, there's 30 at least 30 kids in this classroom and everyone's quietly working. And okay, if there's one word I would not use to describe Asher at the age of four and five, it was quiet. And I just couldn't see how that would work. What, what does that look like with a kid who is kind of loud or likes to blurt things out or interrupt? Does that work in that setting?

Simone: Then that is where they're going to have to learn like there's freedom within limits. So we have a lot of freedom to choose which thing we need to work on. But we're also living and working in a community, which I think would be great for differently wired kids to also learn is like how we're in community with other people in a very supportive way. So people often come to my classes and they say, oh, but my child can't share. And I'm like, that's why they're here, they're here to learn to take turns, you know. So it's a very supportive environment. When a child grabs a toy out of someone else's hands, I'm there to like translate for them and you know, just explain what, the most more appropriate way. So if Asher's used to bouncing into a conversation, he'd be gradually learning if you want to tell us something, and I'm in the middle of a lesson, you can put your hand on my shoulder and I'd love to hear what it is that you want to say.

If he really needs to talk to me, he might be given the choice to go outside to do something out there where he can do it louder. And then often you might find that usually it looks like kids are being quiet, but it's just they're focused. And if you've ever been in flow, and that's basically this deep concentration which once three children get into, why a Montessori classroom can look quite quiet. And I think that if these 'Ashers' would be choosing their own work and engaged in their own learning, you know, they might really also look very quiet and deeply focused rather than being like, oh, butting in and having to interrupt.

Debbie: So let's talk about, let's talk about Montessori kind of from a broad perspective. Cause I know that one of your goals is to spread the, uh, philosophy of Montessori to a wider audience and, and also help parents learn ways to bring more Montessori into their home. And again, we talked about this and just like creating Montessori spaces in your home. But let's talk about it from a broader perspective. And so could you walk us through what maybe a few of the key tenets are of the Montessori philosophy and how, how they could support our kids and then how we could weave them into our daily life.

Simone: I think this is why I love the Montessori approach because it's not just an educational approach for at school, but really all of the principles also apply at home. And I think that when you, if you did choose for a Montessori school and even if you don't go to a Montessori school you can still apply these principles at home and it's a good idea because then it's consistent. I think sometimes children might have difficulty if they had like a very strict house, um, then they'd find it like when they got to school and there's always freedom to choose, they really might not be able to make those choices because they're not used to having that

responsibility. And on the other hand, it might be that, um, if you have so much freedom at home, they might find that oh, you have to work with materials in a certain way, you're not just allowed to throw these materials, be really respectful of the materials. They might find that too limiting.

So um, applying the Montessori principles at home looks like things like respecting your child. Um, so the way that we talk with them is like as I would talk to an adult where I really take the time rather than top down learning. You know, in a house it's not just a dictatorship, me telling you all the time what you need to do, but really working together with your child. And I really loved the interview with Alfie Kohn that you had because I love all of the unconditional parenting ideas. It really is similar. How can we engage their cooperation and nurture their cooperation?

If you are differently wired, it'd be sometimes you're going to get resistance and you know, fight, but if they actually you give them choices or they feel involved in the process or yeah you really want to do this and I want to do that and how can we find a way to work together? You often get much more cooperation in a much more peaceful way and without you getting stressed as well. Earlier I mentioned that the Montessori teacher is often called a guide and I like to think of a parent in that way as well, because a guide will step in and stop you if you're, you know, crossing the boundaries, but they also can give you a lot of freedom. We don't also take it personally because we're not their boss. We're just stepping in to guide them and to support them where they're at.

Debbie: Before you go on, let's talk about that. I love that word guide and I think that's such an interesting way to think about our relationship with our child. You know, I often use the word coach when people ask me what our homeschool looks like. I say well, I'm not really his teacher and I and what I'm helping him maybe with executive functioning, skill development and planning and organizing. I'm really more of a coach for him. But can you just say more about this guide, uh, concept and maybe give us an example of what, what that actually looks like? If we're, how would we be our child's guide rather than this kind of top down authoritarian parent say in a, it doesn't have to be a terribly challenging situation, but something going on with a sibling or something like that where there's a little conflict?

Simone: Yeah, that's a perfect example. So I can imagine two children fighting and traditionally you'd come in and say, okay guys, you can't fight anymore. And you know, you'd just get really angry or you might blame someone or you put, you punish them, you put them into time out and you decide what the punishment is. And in a Montessori approach we're guiding them and we're kind of like I see two really angry children. If they're physically about to hurt themselves then you'd be like, I can't let you hurt yourself. Like it's my job to keep you safe and we're going to, you know, separate. But if in a low level situation where they're just pulling at things and arguing a lot, I'd be like, I see two angry children, it looks like you want that toy and it looks like you want the same toy. And I'd be there to support them. I'm not going to say you need to give it back. You need to take sides. Because then you think about the relationship that happens in your child's head. They're like, oh yeah, my brother always gets his way, or oh yeah,

mum always takes their side. Or our mom always blames me. So we're trying to just instead be neutral and to be their guide, to help them negotiate and to help them solve the problems for themselves eventually. So I won't actually, then I'll be able to step back and they'll be able to resolve problems themselves.

Debbie: So we're really observers and we're just talking out loud about what we're observing, right?

Simone: We're giving them empathy and tools. And so yeah, maybe if they're older children, it might be actually a problem solving where we all write down suggestions of things that might be ways to solve the problem. If it's over a toy, you probably won't need to get up, you know, to do a whole brainstorming. But if it's about something that always seems to be a problem like you guys are really always arguing about who's in the front seat of the car. I mean, it just keeps coming up every day. So let's just sit down and write down lots of ideas. This is like, okay, we're not gonna take the car, let's write that one down. We take turns every day or someone keeps a track of the calendar and you just write down everything. Even if it's a silly idea, like let's sell the car because it's too much trouble.

And then you can actually come back to, okay, this is the solution that we all agree on. Let's try that and let's make a date in the calendar where we're going to come back and see how that's going. And it's, so, it's just more, we're guiding this process. We're being like a mediator. I love the idea actually, it's very, coach is almost exactly the same principle. But yeah, it's very much not top down, but it's also not being like a servant. Because I think sometimes parenting becomes also that we don't want to make our child unhappy so we do too much for them. And a guide will really step in and set a limit saying, you know, I'm not going to let you hurt each other and keep them safe as well. We're not scared of actually having to set a limit if needed as well.

Debbie: And how does being a guide help us not become emotionally enmeshed with the situation? How does that work?

Simone: Yeah, so I think that it's because you recognize that it's not your problem to solve and that you're helping your children solve the problem. So I find that I can have more distance. I'm still being loving and nurturing. I'm not, you know, emotionally unavailable or something like this, but I just don't take it personally, their behavior. Because often we get into a battle with our child when we start arguing with them and when we start punishing them or when we start riding them and we're trying to solve the problem for them. And in this way we're giving them the tools to support them as they solve it themselves. So we're not giving into them, but we are supporting them.

And it might even mean like your child is melting down because they wanted ice cream. And we can then like really support them. Like you really want an ice cream. It doesn't mean that I go out to the shops and buy ice cream for them. Um, but it also doesn't mean that, I say 'don't be silly we're not getting ice cream now' and I get really angry about it. Instead I'm just like, you really want an ice cream. I'm sorry that there's no ice cream. We can write on the shopping list and maybe

next time we're at the shops we can get some ice cream. But you then will hold them, hug them as they calm down and if they'd actually like piled all the cushions across the room or destroyed something, then once they've calmed down then we'd help them to make amends as well at the end.

Debbie: Okay. And listeners, Simone walked us through how to do this in that initial episode that we recorded together. So make sure you listen to that on how to handle difficult situations cause it was a good one. Um, okay. So you've talked about the tenets of respecting your child. You've talked about being your child's guide. What else do you have for us?

Simone: Well, I think really important and fundamental to the Montessori approach is that we accept every child for the child that they are. As opposed to, you know, often as a parent we want something for our child. It might be as silly as like we want them to grow up to be a famous footballer or a movie star or something like this. Or maybe it's just that you wish that you had an experience for yourself as a child and so then you really want that for your child. And really Montessori strips it back. She was a scientist, a doctor, before she went into education. And so her skills of observation, she put then into an educational environment where she'd look at children in a very objective way. So a scientist, for example, says a plant grew five centimeters towards the window and he doesn't say the plant's growing beautifully or it's flourishing or it's a terrible plant or that plant should turn into a cactus, you know.

It's really just this is a plant and it's growing towards the window. So I love that when we look at children in this way too, you don't, when a child walks into my classroom, I don't think, oh, well last week they were really naughty or last week they were such a bright kid. And so we just look at the job with fresh eyes everyday and accepting them for who they are. And I don't know if you have any friends who really just look you in the eye and accept you for who you are without any judgment that the child feels so accepted for who they are, that they can just flourish in this environment. And so we really try and pass this on to parents as well is like let's try and also look at our children sometimes objectively. Cause sometimes we know our children do well and we, I practice observation exercises with people who come to my classes cause the parents come with their children to my classes.

And I say, imagine that you've never met Asher before. So now write down everything you see these Asher do. And all of a sudden they're actually amazed for all the things they're doing as opposed to, yeah, we can't see everything. So it makes us more alert to what they're actually capable of. We can see maybe even what's triggering them because we're just being more objective observers so we can be more sensitive to, oh I can see he's getting wound up and we can step in a little bit earlier. Or um, yeah just knowing what our child needs and how close we might need to be to them if they're in a volatile situation. Or simply what activities interest them so that we can provide engaging activities around the home so that they're more engaged and having fun at home and not bored and complaining because they've got a stimulating, engaging environment around them.

Debbie: So accepting the child for who they are is accepting who they are every day, kind of looking at them with fresh eyes. Is it also, I'm thinking of again that conversation with Alfie Kohn where he was talking about, um, he's really against praising kids for things, like even in the way that we've been taught to praise, you know, with the, the way that we're quote unquote supposed to praise kids to develop grit or whatever. Um, or a growth mindset and say, I really like the way you used purple in that sunset in your painting. He would just say you used purple on that sunset. Is that related to what you're talking about?

Simone: I think, we also don't use a lot of praise in Montessori. Well we use a different type of praise, where, exactly the same, we're kind of observing what they've achieved so that they can reflect on what they learned from themselves. So this is actually teaching children, um, intrinsic motivation as opposed to extrinsic motivation. Um, so that's where it applies for us. We're basically trying to teach children self discipline so that they know what feels good and to reflect on themselves if they like the painting that they made rather than always looking externally like is my painting any good? Often a four year old will already ask and they've lost their own self worth. And this is something that's the only thing we have really, you know, we're trying to build this muscle in the children to reflect on what they've done. So for example, a one year old who walks across the room for the first time has got this big grin on their face, you know, they're so excited. And instead of like clapping them going, good boy, you walked, you know, a Montessori teacher would say, oh, you look really excited, you walked across the room.

We're still in, you know, expressing it, but we're giving back to them the information, giving them feedback what I like to say really as opposed to external praise. And so they want more of the praise. That's the idea is, is that if, yeah, we were told that if you just say good job enough, then they'll want to do it again. But actually it's been, Alfie Kohn's work shows that actually if you do this, they just want more praise. And when you take the praise away, they're like, oh, but you aren't giving me pocket money so I'm not going to do the chores. And in Montessori we're a part of a family and so we take responsibility and we do things, you know, because they feel nice.

Debbie: I think it's so hard to do. I mean even, you know, Ash has been playing piano a lot as you know, and he's playing a lot and doing really cool stuff and I'm trying to remember, I mean sometimes he demands applause and he bows for me and I will applaud, you know. But um, but I'm trying to just remember to say things like, it seems like you're really loving the piano these days. So is that more in line of what you're talking about rather than like I love the songs that you're like, it's so cool to see. I mean it's kind of a fine line I guess.

Simone: I think the first option that you said you're really like, it went back to Asher, how much hard work he'd been putting in and it was all about him. And the second time it was all about you. And that's okay. Like I really enjoy listening to your music, you're a parent and you can say you really enjoy listening to the music. But I think a lot of the time we can just really focus on wow, how much effort they've been putting in and describing like, so you practiced three times this

week, without me even mentioning it. You know, it's uh, I think it is a mindset switch shifts. Sorry. It's a mindset shift. Yeah.

Debbie: Yeah. And so it's saying what you just, I know we're going off on a tangent and we'll get back to, to Montessori, but instead of saying, I noticed you practice like three times this week, not, you don't add the that's great or good job. You're just, it's just the observing and then stopping at that.

Simone: Yeah, exactly. Or you can even say how does it feel or you, how do you feel about it? Or do you want to tell me about your painting? Or how do you, yeah, how's the practice going at the moment for you? Because we might think, oh wow, it's great, and they're actually really frustrated cause like I'm not making any progress at all. And you're like, oh it's disappointing to hear that. It's hard to be that observer cause we want to get in there and we want to make them feel better all the time. And actually just to honor where they're at, accept them for who they are and the process that they're going through is um, it's really beautiful, and I find it a much calmer place to parent from because you don't get so triggered by things. You just see your child having a hard time and you can step in to help them if they need help.

And it also, that is, yeah, if they've done something amazing, you're just excited for them. Um, so I always feel strange, like I'm so proud of you. Like when I wrote my book for example and felt like they're proud of me for writing a book, I'm like, you could say you're really pleased for me. I guess it's just really a tricky one that proud of you. It's nothing to do with them in a way. It's just like I wrote a book, and I'm really happy about it. But yeah, I mean just enjoying it. It's really interesting, right?

Debbie: Yes. Simone I just wish you could like hang out in my house for like a month and I could just keep observing you do this because it comes so naturally to you and it's such a work in progress I think for so many of us.

Simone: It's actually funny because you also interviewed, um, the daughters of Faber and Mazlish, um, the How to Talk so Kids Will Listen. And that was like my bible when my son was one and a half, he's now 18. And I actually photocopied the section on like how to praise your child, which is this other way. And I hung it up in the kitchen cupboards and I'd say okay instead of saying good job this is what I would do. And I still remember, like they said, just describe what they've done. Or you can say, it makes me feel nice to walk into a room that's all tidied. Or you can sum it up with a word saying you've got your backpack ready to go, that's what I call being resourceful. And you sum it up with a word and it's just in my head now and I've practiced it for so long and then it becomes automatic. So it's like learning a new language and, and I think it's really nice. And then occasionally the kids will say, are you proud of me mom? And I'll go, I love you, of course I'm proud of you but I don't have to do that all the time.

Debbie: Yeah, that's great. All right. So let's get back to your sharing with us some of the tenets that we can be using in the home. So what do you have after accepting every child for who they are?

Simone: Well, one that you would appreciate I think a lot, cause I know self care is important to you, is preparation of the adult. And so doctor Montessori, she wrote a lot of her things in the early 1900s and she talked about how the teachers need to prepare themselves because we can't be these calm guides if we're tired or if we haven't done sometimes the work to understand why we've been triggered by a child's behavior. And so, um, it's also really important for us to take the time to look after ourselves so that we can look after the others. And this could be because sometimes you can't, you know, it might be going out and having a massage, but actually more likely it's having a cup of tea, putting on some nice music as you're making breakfast, putting some flowers on the table, um, having a long bath in the evenings, reading books if you like reading books, making time to look after yourself and grow as well, that not everything is about the child, but that you're also growing. So I think that's always really beautiful to come back to. And I love that it's really a part of her philosophy that the parent or the adult looks after themselves.

Debbie: Yeah, I don't think I knew that that was a part of it. And yes, you know, I'm an unapologetic practitioner of self care. I just released by the time this comes out, it will have been a month earlier an episode just about self care. So I like your tips as well. Um, there's a few on there that I, that I didn't talk about. So. So what else do you have for us?

Simone: Well, I think the whole Montessori approach is often also following our child's interests and their own unique timeline. And this can happen at school but also just at home, you know. Like if we're leaving the house and your child doesn't want to leave the house, how can we find ways that we get them involved? What kind of activities we do that follow their interests and their abilities. Um, I love having them included in our daily life. So instead of like having to put the TV on while we make dinner, we often invite children into the kitchen to say, would you like to help? And then they take responsibility helping to prepare the vegetables or to set the table or to clear the table.

And children, particularly the youngest children, they're remarkably capable, and we talked a lot about executive functioning in one of our last interviews as well, and how you can set up your home so that your children can build up from one step activities like just hanging up their coats to the whole process of bringing your plate to the kitchen, washing it up and maybe drying it. Or in your house it might just be bringing it to the kitchen for now. And then they build up to putting it in the dishwasher or then they build up to helping you with the washing up and then they help, you know, so you can scaffold and build these processes as well. So I think that's really it. Follow their interests and also setting up their home for success so that they can be these independent capable humans and work together with us in a really peaceful, happy house. That's what we all would hope for.

Debbie: A peaceful, happy house. That's what I wish for everyone listening to this, including myself. Okay. So before we go, I just had a couple, because I have you on here and your book is specifically about toddlers and the toddler years can be really challenging. I hear from parents who are raising kids who are just starting

to realize that um, there might be something going on with my kid. And often it's because of behavior that's showing up in preschool or in daycare or something where their kid is really, you know, maybe they're get frustrated really easily or you know, hitting and biting are things that we might be getting phone calls about. So, you know, you're surrounded by toddlers. What is the Montessori approach to handling that type of behavior? The more extreme behavior that tends to kind of scare us sometimes or just freak us out cause we don't know what to do?

Simone: I, yeah, I think it goes back to being a calm guide. So one, I accept the child totally for where they are at. And so if they, for example, a really busy child might come in and knock three activities off the shelf, you know, and then we'd all be like in demolition mode trying to put the activities back and instead to just see what do they need right now. Are they, do they want some help to focus on um, one of the other activities or do they need some help to calm down and they'd like to help us put the activity back. So it really depends on the situation a little bit. Things like biting, we try and stay nearby a child who's often being triggered and finding themselves biting because biting often happens in toddler years when they don't have the words yet to say what they want.

They might even have tried to like pull the toy back closer to them that someone else was taking off them. And the second time they're just like, if you're not going to let go of the toy I was playing with I'll bite you. So we try and often translate for them, but sit nearby because like I often say, it's our job to keep you safe and to keep everyone safe. And so I can just sit nearby, almost being like a bodyguard to kind of put my hands between them. It's like, I'm not going to let you hurt each other, I'm keeping you separate. So I also like, I don't blame the biter. He, they're not going to get punished because they've got something to say. And often it was like, yeah, someone tried to take a toy off them or something happened unexpectedly. So I isolate it and give myself as a translator for them.

Are you telling them that the toy is not finished? And then we, once they've calmed down and we've managed to resolve the thing is to make amends with them so that I will get past the child, you know, should we go and check with your friend to see if they're okay? Um, maybe we can get them a wet cloth or maybe you want to get a tissue and we can offer that to them. So they also learn to take responsibility. I think some people think that Montessori is all about they can do whatever they like, but actually I find it really important to help those children to make amends as well. And if your child just runs the other direction and leaves, which happens right, then we model it to the other child. I'm really sorry my child bit you. I really want to make sure that you're okay and I'll sit with you until you've calmed down, you know? So it's also modeling that and it makes the other family feel safe as well and that they're looked after.

Debbie: That's a great answer. And what I'm hearing is that this isn't a quick fix and I think, and we talk about this often on this podcast, that when we're trying to support our kids in making changes, especially around behavior, that it's consistency and it can take a long time. And I know that when we're in this kind of situation where our kids are little and their behavior is the kind of behavior that is not accepted, right, it's just not okay, that there is this kind of instinct to

try to fix it right away. And often that's accomplished or it's attempted to be accomplished through bribes, through rewards, through taking away something. So Montessori would say no to all of those options, right? And it's more just consistently modeling the respectful, kind, compassionate way to move through these situations.

Simone: Yeah. And also like consciously realize that if you go into a situation thinking my child is going to bite someone, they pick up our negative energy. So we also really like, it's nice to just sit on the ground, feel like you're nearby, like to support them, but you don't have to feel anxious cause they'll just pick up this anxiety and then, you know, add pressure to the situation as well. Um, so it is more, I always say to parents, if they come to my parent workshops, this is a longterm approach. So if you want a quick fix, you know you're welcome to leave. And people don't because they realize that they're building trust with their child that they will need as their child grows. So I'm lucky to be on the other side, which now my children are 18 and 16 and I can see that they know that I'm not going to punish them if they've done something wrong, but I will make them take responsibility for it.

So I don't give them the easy option out, but I'm there to support them when they're having a hard time and then we'll work out a way to solve the problem and take responsibility if needed. And I think it's just a such a, you know, you raise responsible human beings and as opposed to acting out of compliance because they're scared that they'll get punished or even worse that they end up thinking, how can I get away with this? I'm going to find a way around you. And that's what threats and bribes and you know, punishments end up happening in the end. I always just think of myself like the only time I got a detention, I didn't tell everyone, oh, I feel so bad because I did that and I really should've done something else. I was just like, what a mean teacher, she gave me a detention. And I didn't, I wasn't remorseful at all. So it's definitely the long game.

Debbie: That was the story of my childhood, I'll just say. Getting punished and feeling resentful. So I guess it took me years to recover and I turned out okay. But, uh, I can see it's not really, doesn't necessarily give the result that we're looking for.

Simone: Yeah.

Debbie: Okay. So well, before we go, I want to make sure that listeners know about your book and I just have to share, I'm holding it up as if someone's watching me, but it's so beautiful. Um, so listeners, Simone and I co-worked when we were in the same city. We would co-work and so I had the privilege of watching Simone kind of dream and scheme about this book and then write this book. She did a Kickstarter campaign to publish the book, which was hugely successful and then Workman Publishing who published *Differently Wired* fell in love with her book and has now decided to publish it themselves. So it will be available everywhere. And that comes out very soon and it's called *The Montessori Toddler*. But will you just take a few minutes to tell us about the book?

Simone: Yeah. This is such a fun project because, um, parents were always asking me about applying Montessori in the home and I'd say, oh, you can read a little bit of

this book and a little bit of this book and read this book but don't, I don't really like this bit of this book. And then I just decided after 15 years of working in Montessori, I think I just need to write the parents' handbook. But parents don't have, like Montessori books are beautiful, but they're really hard to read for tired parents. So I really wanted to make it very easy to read. And so there's chapters on like how do you set up your home Montessori style? What kind of activities can I do? Um, and then into the more nitty gritty of parenting your child in a Montessori way. How you balance that curiosity and engaging their curiosity and being a curious learner, um, with how they take responsibility as well.

So that was some of the setting limits and how you can make sure they make amends at the end. And then there's also of course a chapter on taking care of ourselves as an adult, um, so that we can help them in this process and even how you can work with others like family. Because sometimes we go, yeah, we're really into this Montessori idea but our grandparents do something completely different. Um, so how can we then start to work with them as well? Um, and yeah, it was such a delightful project because Hiyoko illustrated it for me. She's a Japanese illustrator who used to come to my classes so she hand cut beautiful illustrations for the book. And because she came to my class and she knew the material so well, so there's beautiful little watering cans and things that just are laid out through the book and it's got a light airy design. So it's really easy to read, all the tired parents. And so it's really, really easy to read. And it's, um, now that the Kickstarter campaign was really successful and we've sold out, Workman will be putting it out at the end of March, so it's going to be available in all your favorite book stores. I'm very, very excited about that.

Debbie: I'm so excited and I'm excited because Simone's coming to the US on a tour and I'm going to stalk her so I make sure I get a little Simone time while she's here. And I'm just throwing this out there. If you, I want to give away a copy of Simone's book and it is gorgeous. Uh, if you share a post from the Tilt Facebook group and tag Tilt Parenting, then I will enter you. I've never done this before. I'm totally making this up on the spot, but I will enter you in a drawing to win a copy of Simone's book. So go to the Facebook page on Tilt Parenting, share the post about this episode and tag Tilt Parenting. And then I will enter you in a drawing to win a copy of Simone's book. So, okay, Simone, tell people where they can reach you on social media.

Simone: Yeah, the easiest place to find me is probably my website, themontessorinotebook.com. And if you sign up for the newsletter, then you'll get all of the regular Montessori inspiration and updates on the book. And, um, anything else that's happening. And I also hang out a lot on Instagram, so I'm over there on The Montessori Notebook as well.

Debbie: Yes, your Instagram feed is beautiful and, and has a lot of activity. There's a, you have a great engaged audience there. Awesome. Well Simone, thank you so much. It was delightful to have you back on the show and I just appreciate your influence in my own parenting life and journey and I'm always happy to be able to share you with my listeners.

Simone: And I'm always just so honored to be here because I think Tilt Parenting is an awesome initiative, and just so happy that differently wired parents are getting the support that you're offering them.

RESOURCES MENTIONED:

- [The Montessori Notebook](#)
- [*The Montessori Toddler: A Parent's Guide to Raising a Curious and Responsible Human Being*](#) by Simone Davies
- [Simone and The Montessori Notebook on Instagram](#)
- [The Power of Empathy and Staying Calm in Difficult Situations](#) (podcast episode with Simone Davies)
- [Setting Up Your Home to Support Your Child's Growth](#) (podcast episode with Simone Davies)
- [Montessori, the International Montessori Index](#)
- [Dr. Ned Hallowell](#)
- [Alfie Kohn on Practicing Unconditional Parenting](#) (podcast episode)
- [Author and Educator Julie King on Sibling Dynamics](#) (podcast episode)
- [TiLT Founder Debbie Reber Shares Her Best Self-Care Strategies](#) (podcast episode)