# Practical life exercises

## The meaning of the practical life exercises

The practical life exercises do not only have a practical goal, therefore the emphasis should not be on “practical” but on “life”.

*„The way to enlightenment and salvation follows from exercising mindfulness. One must go with patience and perseverance and preferably under the guidance of an experienced master. You should practice meditation when walking, standing still, sitting and working, when washing your hands, washing up, sweeping and drinking tea, when talking with friends and with everything that you do. You must do each action with mindfulness. Each action is a ritual. Does the word ritual sound too solemn to you? I use it, in order to make it clear, once and for all, that awareness, consciousness is a matter of life and death“.*[1]

It is the vital urge for self-realisation, which works in children during the execution of these activities. Practical life activities include both the care of the environment and the care of self.

The activities must speak for themselves. It should not be the case that the children practice because we do, or in the way we do it and definitely not because we want the work to be done. The exercises practiced by the child should be original work and an expression of self-unfolding life. The educator shows the children the exercise - but then leaves it to the child to implement it in their own way. In a lecture, which Maria Montessori held in London, she expressed it as follows: *„insegnare insegnando - non corrigendo“ (teach by teaching, not correcting!)*[2]

[1] Thich Nathan, Lächle deinem eigenen Herzen zu, Freiburg-Breisgau, 1995, P. 35, 45
[2] E.M. Standing, Maria Montessori - Leben und Werk, Finkverlag Oberursel P. 128

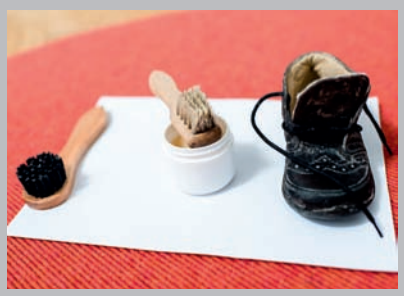
# Cleaning Shoes

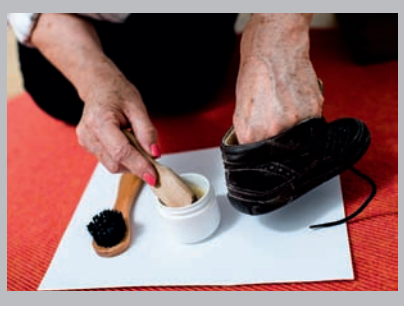
A basket that contains all the necessary items is taken to a table or an unrolled carpet.

A washable cloth or mat is spread out and the items put in their places.

In a vertical direction the dirt from the shoe is brushed with a hard brush onto a piece of newspaper.

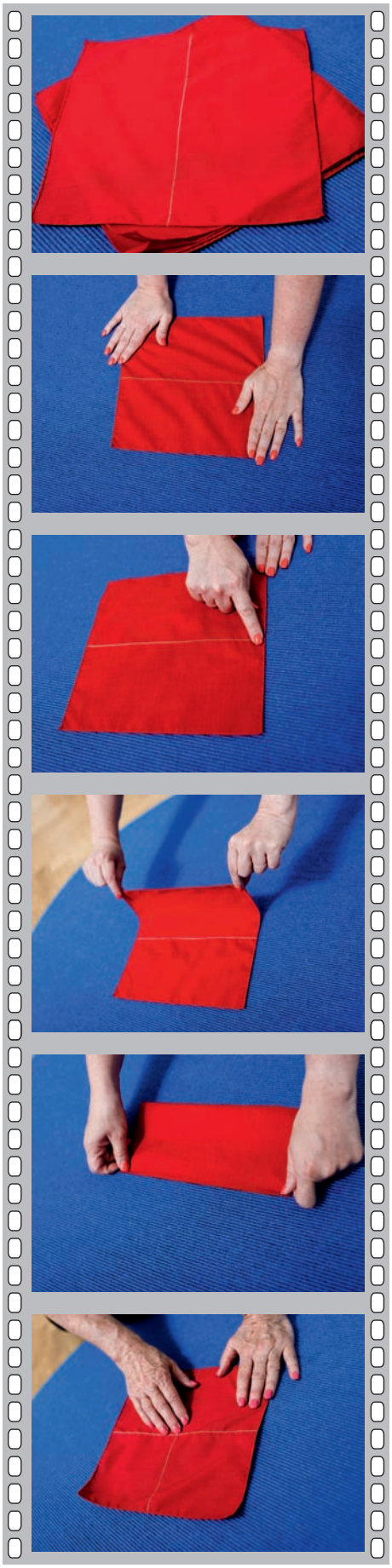
The newspaper is folded up with the dirt inside and the brush placed on the side.





The polish is applied to the shoe with the help of a small handled brush. Here special attention is paid to the different movements used: circular, zigzag and arcing movements.

# Folding Fabric Squares



Five square single coloured serviettes have a stiched seam in different places on them and lie prepared on a tray.

The first serviette is taken from the tray and laid on a rolled-out carpet, so that the horizontal seam is visible in front of the educator.

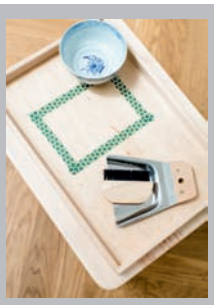
The horizontal seam is lightly brushed by the finger tips from left to right.

Each corner of the fabric closest to the educator is held in each hand and folded over the seam to the top edge.

A rectangle is made from a square!

The next serviette has a horizontal and a vertical seam. First the horizontal line is felt and the serviette is again folded to the top edge.

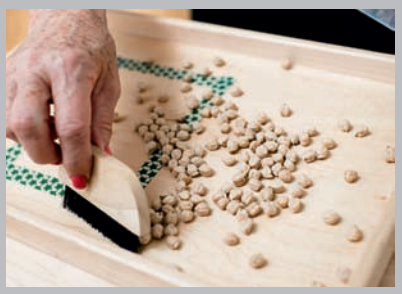
# Sweeping the table



The tray with the utensils for sweeping the table is carried to an empty table.

The middle of the table is marked with a coloured adhesive paper square.

Dirt from the bowl is tipped onto the table.

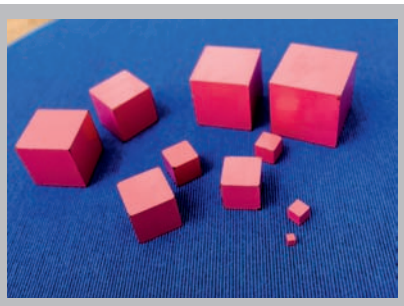


Using a small hand-brush, the educator brushes the dirt from the whole table to the square made by the adhesive paper tape in the centre.

The dirt is brushed into the dustpan with as few movements as possible.

# The Pink Tower

The educator with or without the help of the children, collects the cubes one-by-one from the shelf or stool where the pink tower is standing and places them on an already rolled-out work mat.



Taking each cube and laying it in the hand awakes the „baric sense“ and allows the eye to consciously perceive the difference in size.

On the mat, 10 differently sized cubes in different arrangements can now be seen at a glance.

From this, the child selects the largest cube and places it in the middle of the mat.

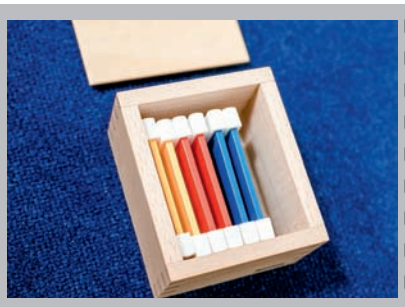
Now the next biggest cube is set and put on top of the cube in the middle of the mat. It is often observed how some children follow exactly which cube should be taken next. Sometimes they also count the cubes.

At the end, all cubes sit on the biggest one, centered on each other. The educator steps around the tower to quietly admire it from all sides.

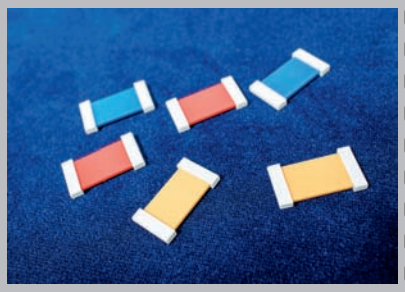
Seen from above, this looks like a temple.

# Experience with colours

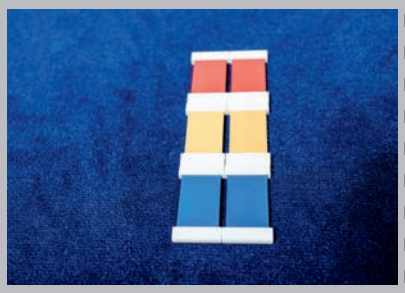
## The colour tablets



The child receives their first contact with the primary colours with the **first colour box**.



The coloured tablets are laid at random on a work mat and then put into pairs.



When the child recognizes the same colours, they are named using a three-period lesson.

As a distance game, the child looks closely at a colour tablet, and then searches in the room for the most diverse objects, which are also red, yellow or blue.

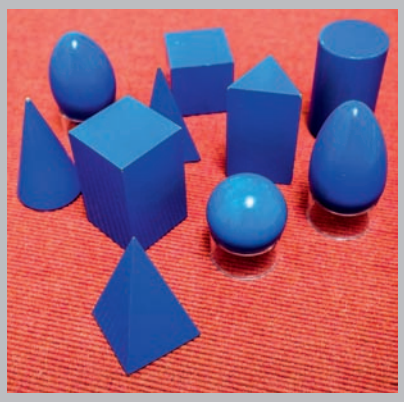
With the **second colour box**, the child learns in addition the secondary colours and also black and white.

Here the colour tablets are also mixed-up and placed on a work mat.

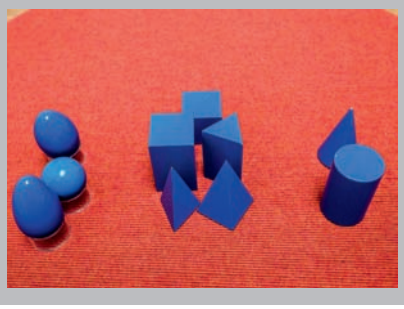
# Experience with forms and figures

## Geometric solids

The educator together with the child or children takes the basket containing the geometric solids and their corresponding base plates from the shelf to a rolled out mat on the floor.

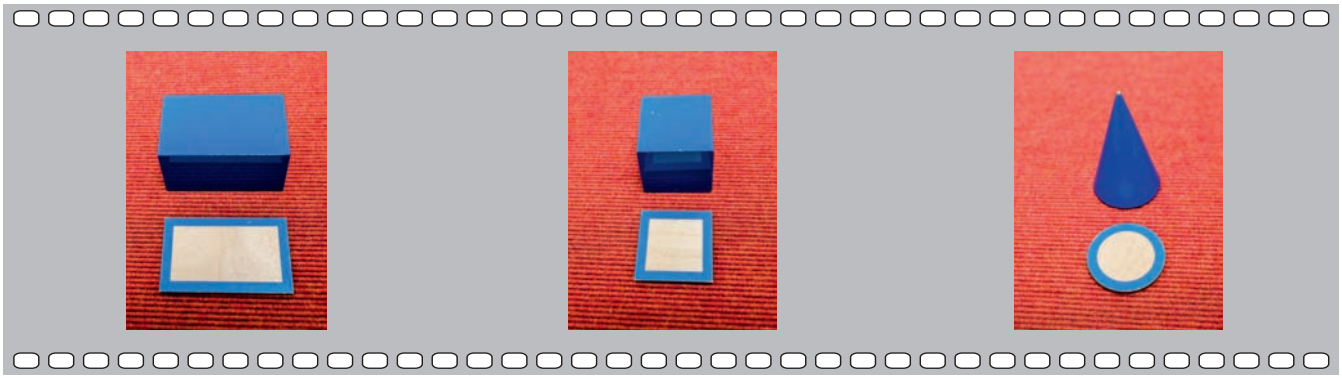


The educator takes all the geometric solids out of the basket and places them at random on the mat.

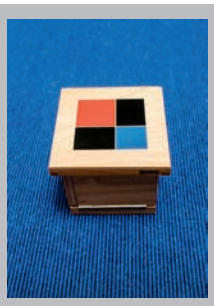


Next, the educator touches the geometric solids and puts them into the following criteria: all solids that are round, all solids that have corners and edges, all solids that are round and have edges or a point.

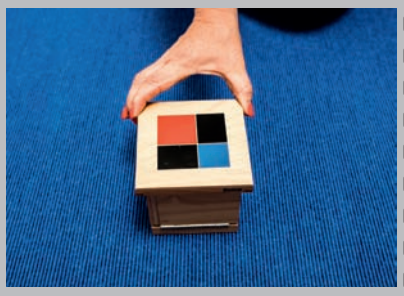
In the next step, the geometric solids can be assigned to the respective bases:



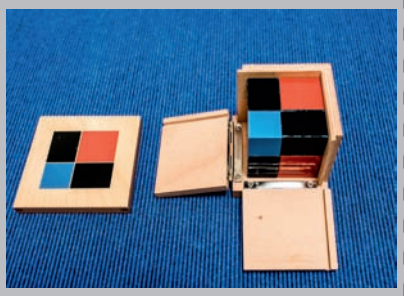
# Binomial and Trinomial cubes

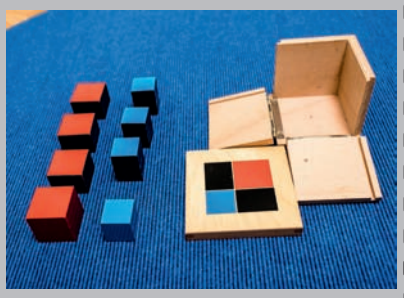


The educator, together with the child or children, takes the material to a rolled out mat on the floor.

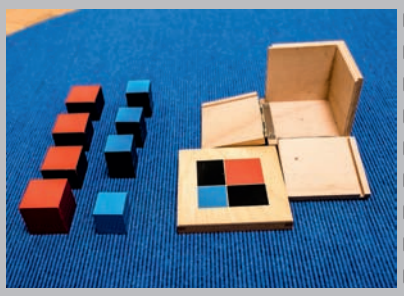


The lid is opened carefully, and the two side walls of the box are flipped down. The lid with the binomial surface pictured on it is laid in the right angle.

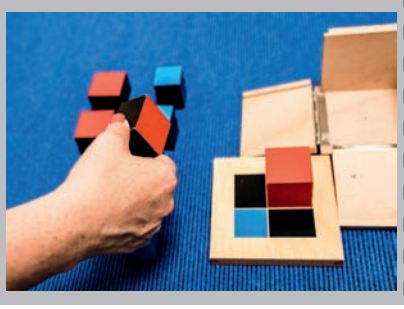




The blocks are taken out of the box one-by-one and put into rows of the same colour.



First, the red cube is placed on the corresponding red surface.



The cuboids are placed on the two sides of the red cube so that the red square rectangular surfaces match.