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## The Marte Meo method as a possibility for settling in the day-care centre

### An Educational Partnership From The Very Start



#### 1. Introduction

*For now about four years, we have been offering a Marte Meo playgroup for the familiarisation with our institution for our future day-care centre kids and their parents.*

*Whether attending »Present with two« or »Ready for the day-care centre« – parents and children get to know us and our work already before the kindergarten starts. This makes it possible for the parents to already build trust in the institution. Parents who trust the day-care personnel also mirror this to their kids. Thus, the children receive the information: »I feel at ease and understood here and you, my child, can feel this, too.«*

*In this way, the building of an attachment is positively influenced.*

*We start with some Marte Meo parent information and explain by means of video-clips what kind of skills a child needs in order to settle in at the day-care centre.*

#### 2. Supporting The Child's Ability To Play

The parents receive important information on how they can support their child's ability to play:

- *Why are sounds during playing of such high importance?*

The parents experience their child as competent in the way that it can extend invita-

tions to play.

- *Why is it so important to name one's own initiatives, and how can a child learn to do this?*

Parents learn to follow their child and hence get to know how their child expresses itself. The children come to know that they are of interest to someone. This also strengthens them for other social contacts.

- *What are moments of contact?*

Parents learn to share things with their child and the children get a feeling for how nice it is to share moments and thus become more aware socially.

- *What does taking-turns effect?*

The parents find out how they can support their child in using its social awareness so that it learns to seize initiative to play from other children. By doing so, the children develop principal models for cooperation.

- *How do children learn to cooperate?*

Parents receive information through which kinds of Marte Meo elements their children can be supported in regard to their ability to cooperate, for example to name the initiatives of others, to take turns, to name feelings. Thus, the parents can perceive themselves as competent role models, able to activate the development of their child.

The parents learn in these Marte Meo playgroups that we want to give them helpful tips on to how they can support their child so that it will have a successful start in the day-care centre. And that is what all parents wish for when they hand their child over to an institution where others are looking after its well-being. Thus, the parents are very motivated from the start. They come to know that we assume from the beginning that they can support their child competently.

### 3. Familiarisation: Manner And Planning

We start with this form of familiarisation already in January, that is to say half a year before the first day of kindergarten and we arrange for at least one playgroup meeting once a month.

#### 3.1. Parent Information

The first meeting takes place without the children. Here, we give the parents initial pieces of information regarding what helps children to further develop their ability to play by showing video-clips. The parents do not receive abstract information. Rather, they can recognize themselves and their children by watching the clips and connecting the images with the con-

crete information. Thus, the parents are able to follow easily.

#### 3.2. Children And Parents Meet In The Playgroup

After the parent information evening, the children and parents meet up for the first playgroup. Unlike in other playgroups, the parents are in interaction with their child from the very beginning, since they have already got to know that they can support their child.

We start with a welcoming song and then begin with a situation of free play. In preparation for this first meeting, the parents have already been asked to follow their child's ideas for playing and to name its initiatives. At this first get-together, we film small scenes on-and-off and end with a farewell song.

#### 3.3. Video Sequences In The Subsequent Meeting

Already in the next meeting, the parents can see in some of the briefly filmed video sequences what kind of effect their behaviour has on their child. In the review, the Marte Meo elements are always put into context of what these abilities signify for the daily life at the day-care centre.

For example: playing noises enable other children to become attentive to the play and to join in. This strengthens the parents in their educational competence, because we show them how they can help to cause this. They are happy that we can show them that their child has already developed abilities. Furthermore, they each receive a photo from every clip with a short description of what kinds of Marte Meo elements can be seen there and how they support their child in its development. In addition to the film, the parents take this hand-out home.

If mother and father are not able to attend the meeting together, they thus have the opportunity to share their experiences with their partner. Hence, everyone becomes involved.

In this phase, the parents get to know a lot about our working method and can experience the efficiency of Marte Meo for themselves.

### 4. Parents Receive Information On Development

*»If only I would have got this information earlier...«*

In the following individual reviews or reviews in small

groups, the parents then receive step by step information on how they can support their child's development. They learn how to relate children to one another, how children can take turns and what kind of things help children to concentrate, etc.

At the beginning of every meeting, there is a period of review. Afterwards, the parents play together with their children and introduce newly gained abilities. Since we accompany the playgroup with two Marte Meo professionals as a matter of principle, one can always film the situations of playing while the other can offer to stand in a role model in the same situations.

Statements like: »My child plays more merrily and longer now than it used to« are no rarity. We were especially touched by a mother's comment, who said: »If I had had these information sooner, so many things would have been easier for my older daughter, because then I would have known how to support her.«

## 5. Parents' Experience

The parents are grateful and glad to now have concrete information on how they can support their child and about how important it is to be able to interact with the child.

They experience that we as an educational partner take them seriously and notice their abilities. This strengthens the relationship between parents and us as professionals.

From the very start, the parents are more open and develop an immense trust in us. Their fears of confiding in us are reduced, since they have learned that our perspective is always orientated on the parental resources.

## 6. The effect & »Marte-Meo regulars' table« [The »Marte Meo Stammtisch«]

The later acclimatization in the institution is much easier and less stressful for everyone involved. The parents arrive with a lot of trust, which they could develop earlier. This message has a positive effect on the children. Both parents and children feel comfortable with us from the beginning and this makes it easier to establish a relation to the child.

### We, GUDRUN KOLDEWEY und DORIS PORSCH,

work in a Protestant family centre in Wuppertal Barmen and have integrated Marte Meo as an inherent part of the supervision and support of families. After beginning with our training as therapists, we have fitted Marte Meo as a method of parent counselling into our day-care centre. Then our Marte Meo playgroups and parents' evenings, which we organized using Marte Meo elements, followed.

Topics are, for example:

- how to effectively support linguistic development,
- siblings – getting along well with each other,
- ready for school, or how to manage homework without stress.

By now, we also offer, in addition to the parents' evenings, a regulars' table with Marte Meo for parents.

After finishing our training as therapists, we have started the training to become supervisors and train therapists for our employer, the Protestant day-care centre in Wuppertal. Colleagues in our kindergarten are also trained to become therapists or Marte Meo Practitioners, so that we are in the process of becoming a family centre that work with Marte Meo in all areas. In the summer of 2013, we finished our training to become supervisors.

As mentioned in our article, we are grateful for Marte Meo to help us in establishing contact with the parents and that the children profit so much from it.

By now, a whole »Marte Meo generation« is in our institution. This also has an effect on the contact between the parents. They have experienced each other as able in regard to the development support of their children.

They enjoy this feeling of competence so much, that they also return to our Marte Meo meetings where they can exchange experiences – our »Marte Meo regulars' table«. (In German: the »Marte Meo Stammtisch«)

Thus, we were able to engage parents actively in our pedagogic topics. Our institution is frequented by many socially disadvantaged families, who have often experienced in the past that they do not meet social requirements in regard to the education of their children or who feel that they have failed altogether. In the past, these parents would not attend such pedagogic events; they were afraid to have to listen to everything they had actually done »wrong« once again. Now, they can experience themselves as able and want to have more of that feeling. Indeed, the parents become more and more confident and competent in the development support of their children.

### **7. The Effect Achieved Through Marte Meo Is Impressive**

The effect achieved through Marte Meo is extremely impressive and we come to know again and again,

that we can sense this effect in areas that we did not consider initially.

Originally, we merely wanted to facilitate the start in the kindergarten for children by founding the Marte Meo playgroup. But gradually, we realized that the relationship between the parents and ourselves changed strongly and that we can now speak of a real, lively educational partnership.

The colleagues are less stressed with the familiarisation period of the children and the cooperation with parents is successful from the very beginning.

*By now, parents from other parts of the town start to attend our Marte Meo exchange meetings. It gets around that parents receive helpful information from us and that they are strengthened and affirmed in their educational abilities.*

**Further Information:**

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