

Marte Meo – a guidance method

Marte Meo is a method where we make use of video and visual images of interaction as a starting point for guidance. The method is a hands-on model for developing new skills in our daily interaction with children. The visual images are extremely useful as they provide “step by step” information about what takes place in the interaction. Simultaneously, the method provides the opportunity to combine theory and practice.

We apply the Marte Meo-method regularly for human resources development through guidance we use for a better understanding of the child.

The objective for applying the method in our work:

- Increased knowledge about interaction
- Improving/strengthening the quality of the interaction
- A common understanding of the principles for supporting communication
- A greater understanding of each individual child and greater insight
- Developing the ability for observation
- Contemplating our own role in our contact with each individual child

During guidance, we use the images to establish what will foster the desired development in the child and what creates safety and welfare:

- During guidance, we watch images of interaction that shows us
- What kind of competence the child holds
- What the child masters
- What fosters development in the child
- What, when, and why it works for the child
- How we can support the child further

Marte Meo – development supporting communication

Marte Meo means “by own power” and indicates that every human has the ability to develop interaction and communication skills. By the aid of visual images, principles for development supporting communication are emphasized: The following are some of the most important:

Naming

Give words to the child’s and one owns actions, intentions, focus, and emotional expressions

The child is supported in:

- Staying focused in the moment
- Noticing its own and others actions
- Confirming its own intensions
- Fortifying, broadening, and structuring its experiences

An example:

Mailalen lifts her cup in the air and is met by the adult telling her “you want some more milk in your cup”. When the adult then pours milk in Mailalen’s cup, she will hear “now I am pouring milk in your cup. There, now you can drink”.

Gives the child self-confidence, overview, collaborative skills, play competence, and emotional management.

Positive supervision/leading

Leading the child’s attention and accommodating for the child to gradually widening its horizon and coping repertoire.

The child is supported in:

- Knowing what it can or shall do
- Staying focused
- Choosing alternative solutions

An example:

Sverre wants an adult to lift him up on the swing. Instead he hears that he can climb on to the swing himself by stepping on a bucket. Sverre is given instructions: “Hold tight to the swing, step up on the bucket, and lift yourself up”.

Gives the child safety, overview, self-confidence, sense of coping, and energy to accomplish actions.

Positive confirmation

Catching the child’s initiative and signals and confirming through words and body language that the child has been seen and heard.

The child is supported in:

- Staying focused
- Becoming aware of itself
- Taking new initiative
- Reading and confirming others

An example:

Benjamin is reaching for the liver pâté. He hears “you want to spread the pâté on your bread yourself” while at the same time being given a smile and a nod conforming he has been seen and given acceptance for fulfilling his task as planned.

Gives the child self-worth, self-confidence, a sense of coping, and energy to continue.

Shared joy and experiences/tuning into

Sharing the child’s joys and experiences through words, pitch, facial expressions, and body language.

The child is supported in:

- Being aware of joy
- Letting others take part in the joy
- Staying focused
- Reading and confirming others
- Becoming aware of itself

An example:

Una approaches the adult filled with joy. She smiles broadly and proudly exclaims “look, I have lost a tooth”. The adult smiles, squats down, and says “so you have, oh, let me see”. Una smiles proudly and points to the gap where her tooth used to be. Gives the child experience in mastering emotions, relevance in contact with others, and structure to their experiences.

Signalling beginning and end, making transitions plain

The child is given direction when initiating an action and support to finishing it before moving on.

The child is supported in:

- Staying focused
- Knowing what to do/what will happen
- Noticing its own actions
- Widening its grasp of concepts

An example:

When Tiril hears “start with putting on your waterproof pants, then put on your rubber boots”.

When Andor hears “when you are finished chewing, you can carry your plate to the sink”.

Gives the child safety, overview, structure, predictability, and sense of coping.

Focusing on the child

Being attentive to the child’s initiative, needs, and focus.

The child is supported in:

- Staying focused
- Being seen and heard
- Being understood in its attention

An example:

Julie approaches the book shelf and looks up at it. Then she turns and looks at the adult before turning her gaze to the shelf again. Julie hears “you want a book” while the adult lifts her up so she can pick the book she wants.

Gives the child experience in feeling relevant in contact with others.

Marte Meo – other key concepts

Tips to adults when interacting with children

- Use the word THERE. The word is a signal that something is completed. “THERE, now we are finished”.
- Name things instead of asking questions. This feels more relevant to the child and gives a sense of coping. Rather say “you can turn off the tap” than “can you turn off the tap?”.
- Use the word YES! rather than “good/clever”. “YES, now you made it” rather than “you are good/clever”. This might appeal more to emotions og and increase the sense of coping.
- Yes-sounds are important. When a child’s initiative is confirmed by “yes”, the child receives acceptance for its initiative and focus: “Yes, I can see that you see a bird”.

Being in rhythm (action/reaction)

The child experiences turn-taking when interacting. The adults await new initiatives so that the child is given space to react and act. Turn-taking might be verbal, non-verbal, contain pauses, repeats of words and sounds, and mirroring of facial expressions and movements.

Being in rhythm in interaction gives the child experience in reading, interpreting, and acting on others’ signals. Rhythm in interaction fosters play competence, sense of coping, and a feeling of fellowship.

An example:

The adult rolls a ball towards Theo. Theo’s face lights up, he starts to babble and laugh, and makes eye contact with the adult. The adult smiles, laughs, and makes the same babbling sounds (mirroring Theo). Theo looks down at the ball and holds it for a good while before rolling it back to the adult. The adult catches the ball, seeks Theo’s eyes, awaits a while, then leads the ball back to Theo.

Presenting oneself in interaction

The child presents its initiatives, experiences, interests, and desires through communication and play with others.

Being able to present him/herself to others gives the child self-confidence and collaborative skills, and fosters competence in play and social development. Through presenting itself, the child achieves experience in being seen by others, noticing others around it, and experiences a feeling of significance.

An example:

Jesper introduces himself to Patrick when he takes out a book about cars from his backpack. He asks if Patrick wants to look at it and read together with him.

Triangulation

Connecting a child to another child or to an established relation between two other children.

Triangulation fosters the child's competence in play and social development. Triangulation helps the child to see others, become aware of its surroundings, and to be seen by others. Use naming to give words to the child's and other's actions/intentions.

An example:

Lukas and Uma are playing with cars. Amy enters the room. The adult connects Amy to the game by saying "Amy, we are so glad you came now, we need someone to show us the way to the garage. You can drive this car. Now, Lukas and Uma, we need to follow Amy, she knows where we are going".

Following the child before you can lead

Following the child's initiative and attention before you can lead the child in a new direction.

Following the child's initiative and attention gives the child overview, direction, and a sense of being important and understood.

An example:

Markus is told to tidy up, but he is preoccupied with a ladybird at the moment. The adult takes time to share Markus' focus by saying "wow, a ladybird, Markus". Markus is given space to answer, and the adult enters into a short conversation about the ladybird before saying "now you need to tidy up; I will look after the ladybird in the meantime".