

Some things to remember about home schooling

by Kathleen Smith

1. Keep the environment clean. A clean home is a home that inspires learning and creativity. And once it is clean, (and by clean, I mean mostly free of needless clutter, garbage or excess of anything) let go of the constraints to “keep it clean”. Keeping a house clean is far less important than creative thought, learning, building and making creative messes. LET THEM and then clean up the messes together at a later time, **together** being the operative word. Make sure that clean up is just as positive as the creative process was, or they may be deterred from doing it again.
2. Keep their environment free from distractions. Insist on devices being used only for education, or for education first (do this with a smile). Keep outward distractions to a minimum. Stay off the phone until educational pursuits are finished. BE THERE. In Scripture, the word HEARKEN has been interpreted as hearing. It literally means to BE THERE. Being there is the greatest gift you can give your children. Be there, see them, notice them, watch them. When you do those things, learning happens and you are there to watch the miracle. Try to MAKE education happen and you will find yourself sitting in the corner of your room with your back to your children, frustrated, angry and wondering why you every wanted to do such a crazy thing as home school. When you do right, you feel right. When you do wrong, you feel wrong. Take the responsibility because it IS YOURS!
3. Be committed. Be there every day, rain or shine, grumpy or cheerful. Just show up every day and do what your gut feeling tells you to do. Diligence is greater than the largest obstacle. Just do it every day and your ability and power will grow. True power is habit, influence and self-knowledge. Work on that all the time.
4. Be alive. Search for ideas about what you can do, how you can do it, and when is the best time. Look for ways to improve yourself. Eat well. Live well. Exercise. Be spontaneous. If you wake up and feel like you all need to go to the museum, or the zoo, or the park, or the library or Grandma's house, or anything, DO IT! Be alive to the changes, challenges, opportunities and good things around you. See your time with your children as an adventure, not a chore. The more you do this, the more they will do this. Find ways to motivate, inspire, interest, and challenge your children. Ask, seek and knock. Find answers, find knowledge, find solutions. There is no greater joy than being the captain of a ship that's going somewhere. You are that captain. Go somewhere!
5. Lose the clock. From the moment you are awake, until you retire at night, release your mind from the society-imposed control of the clock. Certainly there are times when the clock must be heeded. But when it is NOT necessary, to not MAKE it so. When you are home with your children, just BE there and let the clock take care of itself. If you spend time watching the clock, forming expectations, wondering if someone is watching, agonizing about how much time is spent on this or that, you sabotage your efforts in a big way. LET GO of the clock and your day will breeze by like a day at the beach. Only look when you must. Never let it be the controller in the room. LET learning happen in a completely free environment and it will blossom naturally.
6. When you find yourself worrying about what other people will think, or what will happen in ten or fifteen years when your children grow up, LOOK UP! Yes, look up, not out. When you look at everyone else, compare yourself to them, compare your children to their children and in general see yourself in a dismal light, **you** put yourself and your children in a position of defense. You find yourself trying to defend every little thing you choose to do. You want to justify yourself, give your reasons, make your excuses, etc. All such defenses are negative in nature and will yield only negative results. Look upward at those times and ask God for more reasons to keep going. Ask him to help you see the future, (even just a glimpse can help). Ask him for assurances. Ask him everything. He will never compare you to others. He never expects justifications. He always listens to you with understanding. Why would you want to talk to anyone else when He is always right there? Why would you want to go on the defensive toward people when God already understands what you are doing and why? Trusting him is sometimes about tuning out all the other voices and letting only HIM speak to your heart. A good indicator as to whether a voice or a thought is good

or right is to ask yourself how it makes you feel when you think it. If a thought makes you feel uneasy, sad, uncomfortable, frustrated, foolish, inferior, or ignorant, it cannot possibly come from a loving Heavenly Father. If it brings joy, peace, satisfaction, harmony, a sense of well-being and of self-worth, then you may know surely that that thought has come from a divine source.

7. Let love, not fear drive you.
8. Keep trying. Trying counts, **BIG** time.
9. No, everyone is not smarter than you.
What makes you think that 12 years is not enough education to qualify you to teach YOUR child what you have learned?
10. No, a degree will not make you smarter, better or more qualified to teach your children. (It might make you more smug about it though.) I have learned what is taught to teachers. I've been through the 'system'. In the words of the Wonderful Wizard of OZ: They've got one thing you haven't got:" A piece of paper saying they sat through some classes on education. No one on this earth is more qualified to teach YOUR children than YOU are. As their parent, you have a GOD-GIVEN right, responsibility and calling to teach your children. Your degree, so to speak, has come from the highest possible source. You cannot possibly be more qualified than that. God only requires that you love them, feed them good food, teach them what you know about being good, and keep your hands off their agency. When you do that, God and the child do the rest.
11. Punishment is for no one. I mean it! Stop punishing your children, (and yourself) especially if you expect to be a mentor and a happy one. You certainly must be SMART. And if you are SMART, you will never have to punish your child. God said: Vengeance is mine and I will repay. And he MEANS it too! I promise you, that if you take it into your head and your hands to punish your children, you will have to repent of that in order to go back to God. When YOU do wrong, YOU feel wrong. Now, by the same token, when THEY do wrong, THEY feel wrong. You must LET them. Then, cease to get in the way of that. When you punish them for doing wrong, YOU get in the way. YOU do wrong because THEY did wrong. This is TWO wrongs. There is not a single right here. What must be done is to see this differently. When they do wrong, they will feel it. However, you can HELP them to feel it, by talking about what has happened. Find out why things happened, who did what, how it happened, etc. Be a good lawyer, be a good judge. Get to the bottom of the thing. Do all of this calmly, and with a pleasant and non-emotional attitude if possible, never in anger. Think of yourself as an impartial judge. When you have got to the bottom of the thing, then, like a good judge, pronounce the verdict.
12. Your "court-room" should look something like this: After any incident, you gather all interested parties into a calm place where everyone is comfortable. Then you begin like this: Looking Johnny in the eyes you say: Johnny, you should not have taken that toy, (then turning to Suzie): and Suzie, you should not have hit your brother. (then pause for effect. This is important as it gives each child the chance to assess their own position in the difficulty). Then you pronounce the sentence: (This is not punishment), You might say: OK, Johnny, please tell Suzie that you are sorry for taking her toy and tell her that you will not do it again. (Wait for it. This is the hardest thing for Johnny. It is worse than any punishment and is much more effective as it will be a powerful deterrent in the future.) Continue with: Now, Suzie, you tell Johnny you are sorry for hitting him and that you will not do it again. (Again, wait.) As each child performs his sentence, you smile and nod approvingly. When they are done, hug them, tell them you love them, and let them go. The thing is, when you do wrong, you feel wrong and life just sort of has a way of punishing you. When Johnny takes the toy, Suzie hits him. When Johnny cries, Suzie feels bad. Each has been punished, so to speak, by his actions. They don't need more than that. When you inflict something on TOP of that, they get confused. They see YOU as the enemy, not the bad behavior. In the future they will simply learn to avoid you instead of bad behavior! Pain does not have to be visible to be real. And the NATURAL consequences of their actions will teach them far more effectively than your arbitrary punishment. This is just one example. Study this principle. Be smart. Be a good judge. Do not do wrong because your children do wrong. When you always try to do right, no matter what THEY do, you will earn their respect and be a powerful mentor in their lives.