

Back to Homeschool

It began a few weeks ago: the [back-to-school memes](#).

One featured dejected kids dressed in new school clothes waiting for the bus while elated parents look forward to an empty house. My favorite meme so far is one with a mom in mid-kick, child flying through the air toward a waiting school bus. Freedom, at last.

Perhaps I'd feel some solidarity with other moms if I sent my kids off and enjoyed a day-long break, but—for the 15th year running—I chose to [homeschool](#). And while I'm glad to have my children home, I must admit that there's a bit of weariness mixed with the usual new-school-year excitement.

Presently, I have seven children at six different grade levels, all homeschooled to varying degrees. One of these children presents with special needs, and I'm finding it increasingly stressful to manage all of my kids' educational needs, my domestic responsibilities, and my own self-care.

Certainly, teaching my children at home has been everything I hoped it would be (and a lot that I didn't expect it would be), but it's easy to get weary. So why continue? Why not just send them to public or private school, lessening my own load? Am I some kind of martyr? Do I enjoy burdening myself unnecessarily so I can feel important?

When these questions come, I must remind myself that [raising children](#) is a marathon, not a sprint.

Homeschooling is more than an educational choice—it's a lifestyle. We don't simply do school at home: We center our lives around the family and all of the [mundane](#) activities that simultaneously bore and comfort us. Learning is intertwined with everyday life. We read history aloud over breakfast. We compute fractions while cooking, and we discuss philosophy and

literature while eating dinner together. Relationships take time spent together *being* and *doing*, secure from the frenetic pace of life that regular school can require.

For us, there are no angst-filled mornings packing lunches, trying to find shoes as we rush out the door. We start days slowly and with intention, following the natural rhythm of family life so often missing in our modern world.

Certainly, there were many years that I felt left behind as other mothers I knew pursued their [careers](#) while also raising kids. They seemed to have it all, while I was “just” changing diapers, wiping faces, sweeping floors, and ostensibly wasting my education. I struggled not to compare my day-to-day tasks with my perception of other moms’ lives.

Eventually, though, I began to realize that this way of thinking can be quite toxic. It’s usually not rooted in reality, and it can lead to feeling jealous and overwhelmed. The anecdote to this is to focus on living *your life*.

For me, this means being firmly grounded in my belief that family relationships require time and effort. It means putting my family front and center. [Homeschooling](#) is the avenue by which I see this best accomplished, and it requires sacrifice on my part. I’ve learned to let the false idea of “having it all” go, and I am the happier for it.

Now, I look at my older children—currently at the cusp of [adulthood](#)—and see now emotionally grounded they are, how intellectually curious they are, and I know I am doing the right thing.

I look at my child with special needs and see the protection and freedom to be himself that homeschooling allows him. I take a deep breath and keep being with him in the struggle.

My kids have never had to worry about being shot at school. They have never been bullied by other students to the point of

developing anxiety or depression.

I see my younger children who are eager to learn, and I notice that I feel eager too. I feel a deep connection and bond with each of my children, and I encourage myself that it's not just my children who are learning and growing, but me too. I am learning and growing and having my own character developed alongside them.

And so, as I prepare for my 15th homeschool year, I acknowledge the weariness, and I take a deep breath. Being present for all of this—the easy, the difficult, and everything in between—is life. I'm not sprinting now so I can breathe when the kids are gone; I'm breathing now, with them, and thus showing them how to run the marathon well. This is how we do life: *together*.

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Image credit: [Pexels](#)