

The Side of Homeschooling We Don't Talk About Enough

As a veteran homeschooler, I am well aware of what a marathon this lifestyle can be. There's no break when you live and work in the same place.

It's time to take a deep breath and assess the situation. Burnout is a normal part of homeschooling. Everyone experiences it at one time or another, and it's often associated with feelings of being distracted, overworked, and overwhelmed.

November and February are the months most commonly associated with burnout for homeschooling parents. November is right before the holidays, and the preparations for various celebrations are often time-consuming and tiring, making getting through lessons a chore. February seems to have the opposite problem: Nothing exciting is happening; spring is around the corner, but it's still cold and dreary; and a restlessness develops that makes it hard to concentrate on lessons.

Homeschool burnout seems to surprise me every time it happens. I get through the holidays, and suddenly I'm dragging my feet and nearly as distractable as my kids when it comes to lessons. Burnout this year is bleeding over into March for our family. I spent much of January sick, and then we all got hit with the flu right at the end of February. Even with taking nearly a week off school to recover, a general air of malaise still hangs over us. Not even the daffodils, which managed to survive a late February snowstorm, are doing much to cheer us up.

There are other issues that can contribute to burnout as well: big life changes such as moving or a death or birth in the

family. During the years when I was having our children, I was giving birth about every two years. That means every two years I was experiencing something akin to burnout. Homeschooling got a bit pared down during the first three months following the arrival of a new baby.

In 2017, when we moved to our farm, it was a huge lifestyle change. While it was very exciting, it was also a big adjustment, and our homeschooling routine was adjusted accordingly. Other situations, such as caring for an aging or chronically ill family member or one's own chronic health problems, will also put stress on the daily routine and can lead to burnout.

The number of children you are homeschooling at a given time is also an important factor. I'm so used to having a large family that I can sometimes forget the stress that teaching so many children, in different grade levels and different subjects, can put on me! It's kind of intense!

Once I've recognized that burnout is an issue, however, I can begin to take steps to correct course and get relief. One obvious way to get immediate relief is to simply take a break. Many families homeschool year-round, and breaks are built into the school year. These regular breaks can provide the relief needed to re-energize the learning process.

For our family, breaks reflect a more traditional school year: winter break, spring break, and summer break. Spring break often involves planting our garden and spending lots of time outdoors soaking up the spring sun. We take hikes and go on field trips, which allows us to meet our hour requirements without the bookwork.

If the burnout is related to a health issue, it's important to take the time to address it. I suffer from chronic pain due to two autoimmune diseases. If my pain levels are up, that leads to more stress, which leads to more pain. It's a vicious

cycle. My self-care must be rigorous in order to keep up with the demands of my chosen lifestyle. So, for example, I get regular massages and chiropractic care. I exercise and drink lots of water. I medicate when I need to get pain relief. Overall, I am able, despite my health issues, to keep up with homeschooling and homesteading, which is such a blessing.

Another tool for combating burnout is support from other homeschoolers. I love that socializing with other homeschoolers is so easy to build into our routine. Once a week, we attend a [homeschool co-op](#) that hosts park days and other events. It's fun, it's a break, and it's a great way to connect and get support.

Homeschool burnout need not derail the education of our children. With a break and a little support, it's easy to get back on track and invigorate the daily routine once again.

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