**7 Honest Thoughts of a Homeschooling Mom**

**1.  It is hard.**  Homeschooling can be hard.  Why?  Because homeschooling calls us (the adult) out of ourselves, and into pouring effort and energy into another.  It's the discipline of putting myself and my day's plans aside when necessary to ensure that I’m supporting, instructing, and training another person.

**2.  Character.**  Homeschooling is an amazing laboratory for character development . . . first for the adult, and then for the student.  When frustration rises up, we as the adult are called to train up ourselves as we train up our children.  Often while working on academics, we see character issues revealed in our children.  Don't confuse academic issues with character issues.  This is an amazing opportunity for full-time parenting and training of our children in how to persevere, embrace things that are not ideal, and really going through the learning process.

**3.  Learning Process.**  Often, we as humans are uncomfortable with not knowing how to do something.  When I see my student resisting an assignment, I can try to discern if it is an issue of character (willfulness) or an issue not understanding a concept.  Part of homeschooling is constantly conveying the message of the learning process:  don't know how to do something -> doing that thing but still struggling -> mastering that thing.  We humans want to go straight from not knowing to mastering, but true learning happens in the struggle.  What can ease a student's self-imposed pressure/frustration is a gentle (yet constant!) reminder that it's ok to struggle, it's ok if it's hard, and to get comfortable with being uncomfortable.  Then, keep the **instruction** and **practice** going so as to allow your student to move from that middle part of the process (doing the skill but with struggle) towards mastering.  The big piece is children learning how to learn, which often involves a measure of struggle.  Teaching your student to understanding this process and valuing it will go a long way to diffusing those tense moments of frustration on their part, and diffusing frustration on our part when we can discern where the breakdown is happening.

**4.  Daily routine.**  When there is predictability in the day it serves to train our kids to participate in what is happening in the day.

**5.  Training.**  Many "sudden-homeschoolers" may have figured this out already.  To have a child suddenly do full-time school in a physical space that was previously just where they came after school is going to take some training.  And that training period is going to be an all-hands-on-deck time for the adult.  It can help to require your student to finish the next subject before they get a break or reward.  "Can I have a snack?"  "Yes, but let’s finish history first.  Then you can have a quick snack."  "Can I just get up and play Legos for a while?  I'm tired of this."   "Yes, but we're going to finish spelling first.  Then you have 15 minutes to get the wiggles out before we start math."  If you give them goals to reach before giving rewards, they start to realize that they cannot stall all day long.  If you find that you're struggling all day with them doing school work, and now it is 5pm and you have to make dinner, consider hitting re-set on the training.  Plan for a couple days of easy dinners (fried egg sandwich?  frozen pizza?), and utilize those days to get back to the basics of training, focusing, persevering, and strategic breaks when they've gotten to a place of completion on an assigned task.

**6.  Hen pecked!**  "Mom, how do you spell this?  Mom, this makes no sense!  Mom, I don't understand!  Mom, what does this word mean?"  It can go on all day.  How to curb the constant pecking for help all day?  Especially when really, those are **legitimate** questions coming from our student.  An important part of #3 & #5 above is this exact scenario.  It is possible to train your student to at least try to push through some ambiguity, note/highlight all questions until they have at least gone through the entire exercise once.  To be sure, if they truly don't understand something then they will be unable to complete something.  But for many students, having them note/highlight items in their reading until they have finished the chapter, or not to get hung up on that one spelling word before proceeding to the other questions in the exercise, will go a long way in your day.  If you avail yourself to all questions on demand, you will be in demand all day and that's not practical for you, nor good for your student to develop in their learning.  Instead, ask your student to make note of their questions until they have gone through the whole worksheet/assignment/chapter, then bring all of their questions on that subject to you at one time.  Also, make sure they are in the habit of reading (and re-reading) instructions.  Then, **be faithful** to sit and go through all of their collected questions with them.  Doing so will help them develop trust in the system, and be able to push through some things now, knowing you will indeed sit and go through what all the questions were.

**7.  You are able.**  Large scale education is rather a modern invention.  Parents have taught their children for millennia. In fact, YOU have taught your kids for years!  They seem to know how to dress themselves, recognize what is healthy meal option (even if they don't prefer it), and where to put their dirty clothes.  You don't have to be a professional to teach your child, or an expert in a subject to teach them to learn about that subject.  You don't even need to recreate a classroom experience.  You are coming alongside of your child, and shoulder-to-shoulder leading them in how to learn.  Read together, discover together.  Having a front row seat to seeing lightbulbs go off when they "get" something or discover something is priceless.  And if you are now more acquainted with the material they are learning, you get to see those things in the world around them outside of the textbooks and that is a delight!