

Rachel Winchester [00:00:01]:

One of the challenges of homeschooling is to not make it school at home. Oftentimes, we as parents need to deschool ourselves in order to give our kids one of the biggest gifts of homeschooling, which is the freedom to explore their own interests under parental guidance. In today's episode, we'll talk about how to break free of a school-at-home-model and deschool.

You're listening to the Homeschool Made Simple podcast with Carole Joy Seid. This is a podcast to help you homeschool simply, inexpensively, and enjoyably.

Carole has been helping families homeschool for several decades now, and I'm Rachel Winchester, a fellow homeschool mom to 3 kids and the director of operations for Homeschool Made Simple.

Today, we are talking about deschooling our kids and ourselves. Listen in.

Rachel Winchester [00:00:47]:

Well, now that it's midsummer as you're listening to this, I can imagine that some families listening are planning to bring their kids home from school and deciding to homeschool for the first time this year. So we wanted to answer a specific question about how to deschool. And so I am here with Carole today to talk about this subject. So, Carole, welcome. And could you give us a little working definition, if we will, of deschooling? And also tell people where you are right now so they are warned.

Carole Joy Seid [00:01:23]:

Well, I am sitting in my backyard with a big sun hat and sunglasses on, looking in the screen at your cute little face because I am not gonna sit inside on a day like this. And the birds are going out of their minds, so I just want you to be invited. I'm looking at these darling little pinks they're called, and some little purple flowers, and my apple tree, and my dahlias, and my roses, and I'm just living the dream, and I refuse to sit inside on a day like this. So I'm rebellious, but I can't help it.

So the question was, what is say it again, please, Rachel.

Rachel Winchester [00:02:06]:

Yeah. Give us a working definition of deschooling. Like, what might that idea be?

Carole Joy Seid [00:02:11]:

Okay. So deschooling is just basically the concept of, say that your child has been in school, you know, since they were in the playpen or some children maybe, you know, a

year or 2, but some kids have been in school many, many years. And they're burned out, they're traumatized, and they're wanting out. You feel that it's time to pull them out. But what do you do? Do you just continue having school as usual, whatever they've been used to? You just, you know, bring the textbooks home from their school or the workbook pages or whatever. And the answer is usually absolutely not.

If your child is in a burned out condition, very often I will recommend to parents that they give their kids 6 months to a year off from formal education.

Now before everyone faints and falls off their chair, I don't mean that you're just, you know, watching Lucille Ball reruns, but what you are doing is you're doing life skills, you're traveling, you're doing field trips, you're reading out loud by the hour.

Maybe they want to start their own business. Like, there's so many ways that they can live life richly and effectively without doing more of the same that caused the problem in the first place.

So very often, they're sleep deprived. There's so many things that you're overcoming and compensating for. You know, you're bringing your diet into maybe a realm of helpfulness instead of living on a survival mode, where all the things that were not being cared for well are being recreated and instituted in a healthy manner, which is why we homeschool in the first place because those are the things that give a foundation for our children to work from a place of well-being and healthiness.

Doctor Sears used to talk about feel right children, that when a child would come into his office, he could always tell if it was a "feel right child." They would walk in saying, "Hi. Don't you love me? Isn't the world a wonderful place? I'm so cute."

Instead of a child who kind of gets dragged in, you can just see the angst, the misery, the tension, the anxiety. And so this is what we're trying to do.

We're trying to recreate a feeling of equilibrium and well-being in our child. So if they've been burned out doing workbook pages since they were 2 years old, why would we bring them home and continue doing that with them? But instead, how about saying, well, instead of that horrible tuition that we were paying at that private school that almost put us in the poor house, how about if we take just a fraction of that money and we travel together, or we learn a new trade or a new skill and give our children an opportunity to expand their horizons from just school as usual to something really rich, fulfilling, a dream come true for our children, and fall back in love with learning and rekindle the relationships with their siblings, their parents, their

grandparents, their church family. This is the time to rebuild what the enemy has taken.

Rachel Winchester [00:05:38]:

Yeah. I love that. It reminds me of how Susan Schaefer Macauley talked about how her kids came home from the Charlotte Mason School and how she discovered Charlotte Mason is because they came home from this new school they'd sent the children to, and they had shining eyes. If you're bringing your kids home and they have dull eyes, you know, you're really wanting to get those shining eyes before you start getting into any sort of academic work just because all of their associations with that academic work is what has caused them to feel that dullness, that burned out sense within themselves.

Carole Joy Seid [00:06:15]:

Yeah. That's so good, Rach. And then, you know, the other thing is bringing them into the loop. Saying, what is something you've always wanted to do or always wanted to learn or a place you've always wanted to go and see? Or is there a business that you've dreamed about starting?

It's amazing when you start interviewing your children, the things that they have been thinking and processing, but haven't even verbalized because to them, it's just like a hopeless dream. But to say to them, when you wake up in the morning, what would make you giggle when you open your eyes in the morning? You know, whatever it is that, you know, I've always wanted to learn how to use power tools and make things with wood. And, like, well, this is your day. You know, grandpa's gonna come over twice a week, and we are gonna learn how to make stuff. And you're gonna start with birdhouses, or you're gonna finish with custom cabinetry.

You're going to give your children the opportunity to learn through life skills instead of learning through text books about people who are doing things.

They're actually gonna do those things.

You might pray about a mentor or an apprenticeship relationship where your kids could go and serve and not get paid for it. You might even have to pay the person who's who they're studying under. But if they've always wanted to be a motorcycle mechanic or always wanted to be, you know, a pastry chef or whatever the thing is that they're dying to do, Let them have real life experiences and build their confidence because reading, writing, and arithmetic is not the only coin of the realm.

There are so many other things that children can excel at that will build their confidence. And then when you bring them back into algebra, they're like, well, I've been running a business for 2 years. I guess I could do algebra.

Because they're so confident now. Because adults have learned that they can depend on them and that they're respected by adults in the real world.

So, of course, they're gonna be able to function in a school classroom, but that's not the that's not the universe.

Doctor Moore was the king of this philosophy, you know. These families would come to him. Their kids just weren't making it, weren't fitting in, you know, all the different issues. And he would say, well, what are they good at? Well, they, you know, they love to do, you know, roofing.

Or I remember this young man, he was this big, strong kid, but he just wasn't academically thriving. He hated school. But when they pulled him out of school and let him start a roofing business, he took off like a jet. He loved it. It was hands on. It was challenging. It was manly. It checked his boxes, and it gave him the confidence to live life successfully.

It's like a baby elephant. The way you train a baby elephant is you put a chain around their ankle, and they tug and they tug and tug and they tug, and they just finally go, it's useless. I'm not I'm never gonna tug again. And then as they grow, you can put a string around an elephant that could knock a house down, and they won't pull that string because you taught them when they were little, don't even bother.

And that's what school does particularly for our boys. We teach them, you're not good at this. You will never be good at this. This is misery. Join the merchant marines, and get out of here as fast as you can. And so by the time they're able to do it, they've given up. There's they they're not tugging on that string anymore.

Rachel Winchester [00:09:42]:

Yes. In "Dumbing Us Down" by John Taylor Gatto, he talked about I think that would be a great read, it's just such a short little booklet, but a great thing for parents to read if they're considering homeschooling or if they're bringing them home because he talks about how the school system today is so much like the industrial model. And so kids are just being a cog in a machine. Everything you're speaking to and what you just said is really just saying homeschool gives you the opportunity to pursue your own interest.

And so you really want to emphasize that when you're coming home from a school environment, you really want to give them that freedom to be who they are, and they don't have to fit into the classroom, into their seat, into their particular corner and the student dynamic and all that stuff, they can find their particular place within your home, within your family, within their community, and they can really then be set free to flourish rather than, you know, be confined and hemmed in on every side. They really have that freedom that homeschooling allows.

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Carole Joy Seid [00:11:24]:

Yeah. You know, yesterday, Rachel, I was talking to a consulting mom in an appointment, and I recommended a book that our listeners might be interested in. It's definitely not a Christian book, but it's called "The Teenage Liberation Handbook: How to Quit School and Get a Real Education" by Grace Lewellen.

It just spreads this banquet of, well, maybe your child should be like a filmmaker. Maybe they should just pursue being a violinist. Like, that's their whole thing or, you know, whatever. She spreads this buffet of don't just assume that it's just life as usual, school as normal, but that the world is your oyster when you homeschool.

I think sometimes in the Christian community, we're afraid of breaking out of our constraints, but Jesus set us free for freedom. And the beauty of homeschool is that you can create a school model unlike anyone else's, even within your children.

Each child can have a very different model. You know, one's gonna be a brain surgeon, and one's gonna be a landscape designer. And that's gonna look very different. And so giving them the freedom to pursue their own interests under parental guidance. This is

when we don't have school at home, as doctor Moore used to say, "If you're gonna have school at home, then send your kids to school."

At least they'll have recess and gym. But at home, if you're just doing school at home, that is the worst case scenario you could have. We're not reproducing the classroom. The classroom would give anything to have the freedom that we have in our kitchen or in our dining room.

Rachel Winchester [00:13:11]:

So a lot of these things are kind of speaking to if you're bringing home an older child. And I do know that, you know, we have some families who like the Arroyos, which you've interviewed in the past, so we have interviews with those boys, and they came home in high school. Some of their older boys came home in high school. So maybe there might be a little panic of, like, if I'm bringing my kid home in their middle school or their 9th, 10th, 11th grade, and you're telling me to take 6 months to a year off.

How do you approach that if it is a higher stakes as far as, oh, we actually are paying attention to transcripts or that sort of thing?

Carole Joy Seid [00:13:50]:

Yes. I would say use your teacher-ese, play the game a little bit where you say this was community service or entrepreneurial studies or mentorship. You know, like, use teacher-ese words that people go to very very expensive schools to do what you're going to be doing. And there's nothing to apologize for about this. In the Clonlara School, Ann Arbor, Michigan, one of the pioneer homeschool communities, they actually have a campus, but then you can also be part of Clonlara as a homeschool family. And one of their requirements if you are under their auspices is you must do community service every year.

There is a really big need in children's lives for real life experiences, And we are robbing our kids if they're just reading about stuff instead of actually experiencing it and doing it. So this is the perfect thing to do in high school. Send your child off to live with a family member who runs a farm or, you know, things that are outside of the box and definitely give them credit for those things and call them with those teacher y words and names.

And, you know, when I consult with families, sometimes we brainstorm on this kind of stuff because it's all in how you present yourself. Are you confident?

I mean, when you think of the Colfax family whose kids never went to school a day in their lives, 3 of them went to Harvard on full scholarships. Their first son had a Fulbright scholarship and went on to medical school at Harvard. They were living on a farm above Mendocino in California, Northern California. They didn't have electricity or running water. They were working all the time on this goat farm, and when they got to study, that was the reward for their hard manual labor. They were not doing school as we picture it.

So it's all in how you tailor the description of what your children have done. And what top notch colleges are looking for and trade schools are kids that have done things that other kids haven't done. What brings diversity to the student body?

Market your child for whatever potential school or career they're looking for and begin with the end in mind. And that's why we call the part 2 seminar that I do by that name, Begin with the End in Mind, because I want you to sit as a family and brainstorm about what do we see this child doing when they're 18 or 21 or 25, And then work backwards from that. How do we get there?

They wanna work for NASA. They wanna have their own candy company, whatever it is. And then how do we get them there? And that will affect how we do junior high and high school.

Rachel Winchester [00:16:38]:

Yeah. This is great. So then I think really no matter whether you're bringing your kids, you're keeping your kids home because they never left or you're bringing them home middle school or something. If we were in school or if we were school educated in a conventional way, we all have to be deschooled so that we can think outside that box ourselves to reimagine education and just say, oh, this is learning. They are learning and they are hungry to learn. That's what the dull eyes are a sign of is that there's no interest. There's no curiosity there that's been told to live. It's been deadened, you know, in in large part if you're bringing your kid home for that reason.

Carole Joy Seid [00:17:19]:

That's right, Rachel. Every child is born loving to learn. Every child. But we kill that love for learning, and that is our fault. And we need to repent of that, and bring them back to that beautiful love for learning that we can control and feed and fertilize and water and beam the sun, beams of freedom and encouragement to our kids and help make that happen.

Rachel Winchester [00:17:50]:

Absolutely. That's great. Well, would you want to pray for these families who are bringing their kids home?

Carole Joy Seid [00:17:55]:

Yes. Oh, Lord. This parenting thing, it's not easy, but it's a joy. And the opportunity, Lord, to throw down our chains and be free in Christ and to allow our children to pursue their own interests, to be all that they want and can be, and what that looks like, and how we can be like midwives for our kids as they blossom and bloom like roses. So, Lord, give each family the freedom, the confidence, the courage to do not not half measures. As they say in the 12 step movement, half measures avail nothing. Or as David Arroyo says, there's no half stepping. We don't half step.

If we're gonna do it, we may as well be hung for a sheep as well as a goat, as they say in Britain. I might as well if I'm gonna steal an animal, I might as well go for a sheep. Why just settle for a goat?

And so as parents, I just pray that we will go the full measure of our dreams and our children's dreams and throw off the shackles and live life to its fullest passion and vision and possibility, that our kids will feel empowered, that there's nothing they can't do within, you know, godly limits. They can follow their dreams, and we're their biggest cheerleaders. And between you and us, lord, cheering for our kids, they can fully realize the gifts and the callings that you have placed on them, and we can help make that happen. So bless these parents. Break any fear and trepidation, and birth a holy confidence in them, I pray. In Jesus' name, amen.

Rachel Winchester [00:19:48]:

Amen. Thank you so much.

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Thanks for joining us this week on the Homeschool Made Simple podcast. Remember, Jesus' commandments are not burdensome. What he calls you to do, he will enable you to do. Blessings.