

Why Your Presence Matters the Most in Homeschooling

Episode 246

Rachel Winchester [00:00:00]:

One of our favorite things to do on the podcast is to share stories of homeschool families who, as Carole says, “have drunk the Kool Aid” of this method and are reaping the fruit of it. In this episode, you'll hear from a family whose story will encourage and inspire you. You're listening to the Homeschool Made Simple podcast. This is a podcast to help you homeschool simply, inexpensively, and enjoyably. I'm Rachel Winchester, a fellow homeschool mom to 3 kids and the director of operations here at Homeschool Made Simple. I hope this conversation spurs you on in your own homeschool journey. Listen in. Well, today, I have the honor of having Hanni go on the podcast.

Rachel Winchester [00:00:40]:

Welcome, Hanni, to the podcast.

Hanni Go [00:00:42]:

Hi. Good to be with you.

Rachel Winchester [00:00:44]:

So first, I wanted for you to talk about your family a little bit, who you are, and, I don't even know, really. I just asked you how many kids you have, so it'll be great for all of us.

Hanni Go [00:00:54]:

Well, we live in Central Florida, and my husband and I are on staff, with CRU, which is a big ministry. And, so we've lived here for, like, a decade. We have 4 kids, almost 14, 12, 10, and 7 on Monday. So we have almost high school and then still a 1st grader, so a big age gap. And, a little bit, my husband is Asian. I'm Norwegian.

So we have kids that are a mixed ethnicity, and so that's another part of our story and things we're navigating, with our kids. And we have been following Carol's method from the very beginning. I listened to a podcast when my oldest was 4 on the Read Aloud Revival, and I listened to Carole and something just totally clicked. And I think I

bought her first seminar, like, that week and started listening to it, and I've listened to it several times since then.

Rachel Winchester [00:01:55]:

So cool. That's awesome. Yeah. It's always cool to hear how people find Carole and first learn about her. And then, if you start with her in the beginning, then it kinda sets your trajectory. So you don't get muddled or kind of have this progression and stuff.

Hanni Go [00:02:11]:

Yes. Yes. It's been great. I will say it took me a while to fully trust the method, which we'll talk about a little bit and what we're gonna talk about. And so that's been a journey of, like, implementing it and truly trusting it too.

Rachel Winchester [00:02:22]:

Yes. I think there's definitely that process even just when you hear it, and then you start to have to live it out. You know, it requires a certain level of trust and focus making decisions about what you really believe is true or not.

Hanni Go [00:02:39]:

Totally. Yep. Yeah. Because it is a little out of the box from what a lot of homeschoolers do.

Rachel Winchester [00:02:43]:

Definitely. So you have about 7 years between your oldest and your youngest. How have you kind of navigated that, or has the method helped you with kind of keeping your kids together or kind of lightening your load, I guess, a little bit?

Hanni Go [00:02:59]:

Yeah. You know, it's been interesting because my youngest is probably the one who's wanted to read. She's just, like, taken reading really quickly. And so when I was consulting with Carole, I was like, "Oh, we're already doing phonics." She was I think she was 5 and a half, and Carole's like, "No, she needs to be, like, baking, and she's like, even if she wants to, you don't and I was like, oh, I just thought, like, she's doing it kind of on her own." And so Carole gave some really good perspective on just, like, I don't she doesn't want, you know, the attention of of my youngest being on academics, but, like, you're a member of the family, and you need to, like you're not even making muffins yet or whatever.

And so I appreciated Carol's perspective because I was just, like, oh my gosh. I'm so glad. Because I had 2 that were really hard were later readers, and it was challenging.

And so to have, you know, someone that was getting it really quickly, I was like, great. Let's get this done and you can read. But I would say so I keep my older 3 together, for history, and my younger one joins us when, you know, when we were doing Greek gods and stuff I had her listen to an audiobook or whatever. So she joins us, but I do a separate kind of little morning time with her.

Like, right now, we're reading fairy tale book and the Burgess Bird book and, you know, Children's Garden of Verses. So it's been a little challenging to meet all the needs of everybody, and then, you know, the youngest one, of course, wants to do what the older ones are doing. So how to include her, and make our family learning good for everybody has been a little bit of a learning curve, but we're finding a good groove.

Rachel Winchester [00:04:31]:

Yeah, you're in the thick of it. It's a lot to do and balance. I mean, I'm just at the beginning, where my oldest is 8. And so I just keep reminding myself, like, it's only going to ramp up, you know, for a while until they're really independent learners and things because nobody is literate in my house yet, you know, like and so there's a lot to learn still, and there's a lot that's gonna be required of me to be involved with. And so I keep just reminding myself, like, this is gonna be a lot more than it is right now, you know, in a good way.

Hanni Go [00:05:07]:

Yeah. It is. But they do get more independent, and they can do, you know, a lot of their individual things alone. But it's you know, my oldest is doing algebra, which is very challenging. And Yeah. So dealing with all the, you know, emotions of I'm not understanding this, then, you know, everyone needs help at the same time or whatever. So, there are days where things run really smoothly, and then there's days where I'm like, oh my goodness. This is really hard.

Absolutely. As Carol says what does she say? That a bad day homeschooling is a better day than any day in public school, so I try to tell myself that even on the hard days.

Rachel Winchester [00:05:46]:

Yes. Yeah. I just told myself that yesterday. Yeah.

Hanni Go [00:05:51]:

Yep. We all I think that everyone thinks no one else has those doubts or whatever, but I think we just all do because we care so much about our children. And so the stakes go high because we care so much.

Rachel Winchester [00:06:04]:

Yeah. Yeah. And it's a very demanding thing that we have signed ourselves up for. It's not laissez faire kind of, oh, who cares? You know, and there's real people. It's not just inanimate like clay or something that we're modeling. We're interacting with real people who have their own bad days, good days, sickness, health, funk, you know, personalities, strengths or weaknesses that may not really mesh with my strengths and weaknesses very naturally. And yet, God saw fit to put us in the same family together. And so, you know, it's not an easy job that we've signed up for, but it's definitely worth it.

Hanni Go [00:06:47]:

Yeah. For sure. Yep. There are those days. I gathered all my kids today because there was a lot of discouragement this morning, and I just said, okay. Let's pray. I can tell we're off to a bad start this morning. And, you know, some of it is knowing when to take a break and when to, you know, let them not do math today and other days, it's like, no. We need to learn how to persevere and push through hard things, and only the Holy Spirit can teach us what to do on which day.

Rachel Winchester [00:07:14]:

Yes. Tell us, do you have girl, boy?

Hanni Go [00:07:19]:

We have 3 girls and one boy. Our boy is the second born. So thankfully, God has provided him with a lot of friends that are boys in our neighborhood, so he handles it well.

Rachel Winchester [00:07:30]:

Yeah. That's good. Yeah. I have one brother who has 5 sisters, so it prepares them for marriage really nicely.

Hanni Go [00:07:39]:

Yeah. I was like, you are gonna be the most amazing man. I mean, he's reading, like, you know, Anne of Green Gables and Noel Streatfeild books with his sisters, but then he's, like, reading all the boy books. And I'm like, you're just so well rounded, and so it will train him for whatever God has for him.

Rachel Winchester [00:07:55]:

Yeah. Nothing really will surprise him. He'll be like, oh, yeah. Girls. You know? Yes. The emotions, the hairdos, the cat fights, whatever happens.

Hanni Go [00:08:06]:

Yeah. We're not quite there yet, but hopefully, yes.

Rachel Winchester [00:08:11]:

So, yeah, talk about you guys your family is in ministry and kinda how does that impact your family life and stuff.

Hanni Go [00:08:18]:

Yeah. Well, it's fun because we get to do some travel together as a family. We were on a summer mission this summer, and so it's fun for my kids to be able to be because we're in an office most my husband works in an office. He's an executive director. We don't get to be on campus with college students like we were early on in our ministry, but we do get to do it, in the summer sometimes. And so it's just fun to be able to take our kids along and see how mommy and daddy do ministry. They get to join us, and this summer, they were in all the meetings and learning how to share their faith. And, so, yeah, it's been it's been fun that we get to do that as a family.

Rachel Winchester [00:08:59]:

That's great. So you said you first heard, Carol on Read Aloud Revival, and then you got the basic seminar, a literature based approach to education. And so then what kind of made you decide, okay. I wanna go to an in person seminar?

Hanni Go [00:09:13]:

Yeah. So last spring well, actually, last year, I realized that she was gonna be in Minnesota. I'm from Minnesota, and my siblings are there, and my brother has, a young child who I wanna spend time with. And so I thought, oh my gosh. I could go. I found a cheap ticket, and I was like, I could go and see Carole, in person, which I've always wanted to do and see all her great books. And I just think thought it I always thought it would be fun, and then I can see my siblings, and so it was kind of a win win. I had a place to stay.

But I think I was in a pretty, weary place, in my homeschool. I think I was kind of a little burnt out from, you know, I've been in the homeschooling. I'm not new to this. It's like last year, you know, I did simple kindergarten things with my kindergartner, but I was feeling the weight of, like, oh my gosh. I am gonna have a high schooler soon, and now I have this young one that I'm doing. So how am I gonna do this? And then there were also some commitments outside of my home that I had committed to that were taking a lot of time and really needed to change that. So I was pretty burnt out, and so I found myself starting to doubt what I was doing and feeling a little bit like I was failing my

kids or I wasn't doing a good enough job. And then, you know, you start hearing what other homeschoolers are doing, and then you're like, gosh.

My kids don't write like that, and my kids don't do that. And so these little doubts crept in. And then, honestly, there was a there's a newer classical school, Christian's like, how they kinda do classical Charlotte Mason, and so they have a garden, and they nature journal. There's no homework. They're reading all this great literature. And I was like, oh my gosh. They could get some of the things that we're doing at school, and there was even a scholarship available. And I wasn't really considering it, really, but it was kind of in the back of my mind.

And I kinda had to stop and go, why am I thinking about this? Like, am I just tired, or is there something shifting in me? And so I just told my husband, I think I need to go and get some, like, fresh perspective. And I just felt like there were a couple of things Carole said at that seminar that I literally felt like she was talking to me. And it was, like, exactly what I needed to hear, and it just totally confirmed that I'm doing the right thing. There's some adjustments I needed to make, but it just confirmed, like, no. This is what I feel called to.

This is what is best for my kids. And so it just reconfirmed that for me and kinda it was like fresh blood. It's like I got a blood transfusion or something. It was just like I needed that fresh perspective because it is when I don't I only have one other friend that I've now like, I've tried to get other people to listen to Carol, but I only really have one friend that's following her method, and she's, like, doing the first it's really new for her. So I'm kind of helping her, but I don't really have many people that are doing what we're doing. And so when my friends at we do go to an enrichment co op and, you know, oh, are you doing, you know, this writing curriculum, and are your kids doing this? And I'm like, no. We actually don't do that much writing, and they're just like, really? Like, isn't that, like, one of the most important things? And so I feel like I'm having to, like, explain why I'm doing what I'm doing.

And I think if you're not sure of why you're doing something, then in those moments, you're like, oh my gosh. Maybe I am really messing this up.

Rachel Winchester [00:12:33]:

Right. Yeah. Totally. Yeah. What would you say was there a difference for you in going to the seminar versus listening to it?

Hanni Go [00:12:41]:

I think there was. I mean, I have listened to *A Literature Based Approach*, I mean, I thought I'd listened to it 5 or 6, 7 times. I don't know. And then I've listened to *Begin with the End of Mind* several times too. But I think it was there was a lot of people there. And so it was like, okay. There's a lot of people doing this.

I'm not the only one, Hearing the panel, you know, people who have been you know, have teenagers or graduated people. And it was so fun to meet Carole in person, give her a hug, and, you know, see the great books that Chelsea brought. And actually I have not met Chelsea, but we have connected online. So I think I was just like, okay. I'm not alone. There are lots of people doing this. This is working for a lot of people, and I just I just didn't feel as alone.

So I think it really was helpful to be in person, trying to rope my friend into maybe joining me next year or something.

Rachel Winchester [00:13:42]:

Yeah. That's great. So after you went to the seminar earlier this year, you came home and you wrote down a little list of things you wanted to remember and not forget. And you shared those things with Carole, and you sent the list to me. So I would love for you to read that and share it with our listeners so they can hear it.

Hanni Go [00:14:05]:

Yeah. So I remember calling my husband on the lunch break and being like, this is the best. Thank you so much. Like, I needed this so bad. And so I actually, on the plane, just, like, got my journal out and just wrote some bullet points. So here's just some of what I wrote. I just said,

Later is better than early. Remember that even when you are tempted to do what everyone else is doing, don't worry so much about how my kids might be behind or different from public school kids.

Focus on reading great books and on my relationships with my kids.

Make more time to get outside. I we live in Florida. It's still, like, terribly hot, so I put try going on Nature Walk after lunch December through April when it's a little cooler. I want to prioritize this, but in order to do so, I'll need to give up other things such as more academics or a really clean home.

Remember, you're creating kids who can read and think and comprehend what they're learning. Public schools kids aren't necessarily being taught this anymore. They're being taught to pass tests and standards.

Don't get distracted or blown off course by what others are doing or a new fancy curriculum. Follow Carol's philosophy. Focus on studying history chronologically and reading great books.

My loving, nurturing presence that isn't distracted is the best gift I can give my kids.

I need to have a more fully developed philosophy of education so I'm not blown around by every new thing or what everyone else is doing.

Read *Better Late Than Early, For the Family's Sake*, and *The Successful Homeschool Handbook*.

Don't listen to young influencers who haven't raised their children. Make sure what I'm doing is research based and given by people with experience.

I'm investing in eternity. I'm discipling my kids for the kingdom of God and to help them be strong enough to live a life of following Jesus. I want them to live according to their values and to have a backbone and an ability to swim upstream against the culture. I'll have to do things differently now for that to happen.

And then I just put limit screens even more. We don't do a lot of screens, but we've definitely limited them even more since then.

Rachel Winchester [00:16:05]:

Yeah. I mean, it's just one of those things. It easily creeps, and then

Hanni Go [00:16:09]:

Totally.

Rachel Winchester [00:16:10]:

You realize, oh, oops. Okay. Let's get back, guys.

Hanni Go [00:16:12]:

Yep. Yeah. Bring it back. Honestly, some of it was how busy I was. I was like, okay. I put a show on for my younger one sometimes because I was in a meeting on Zoom or something, and I just needed her to be and so some of it has been like, okay. I can't I

need to not do all these other things. And so some of it has been adjusting my priorities so that I can follow on my other values and priorities.

Rachel Winchester [00:16:35]:

Right. Yeah. I really liked how you you know, the point about doing nature walks really brought that tension of okay. But to do a nature walk, to be out of my home means I'm not going to be using that time to clean my house or to do more academic studies or to be on a Zoom meeting or, you know, there's real sacrifices or at least decisions that have to be made. You know, if I'm doing this, then I'm not doing this.

Hanni Go [00:17:00]:

Yeah. We can't do it all. And so I feel like I used to be really good at taking nature walks with my kids. We did it every week. On Fridays, we met another friend, and we would go somewhere. And then the last couple years, as our life has just gotten busier, I have middle schoolers now. They're in, you know, sports and stuff. It's just been harder to get everything done, and that's an easy thing to let go, especially half the year in Florida when it's, like, really hot. You're hiking in sand, a lot of the trails.

Rachel Winchester [00:17:34]:

At least you can go to the beach. Maybe some people have pools or something. I guess you might not be near the beach if you're in did you say you're in Central Florida?

Hanni Go [00:17:43]:

Yeah. We're about a 45 minute drive to the beach, so it's not horrible. But it's definitely an afternoon, you know, afternoon from the north.

Rachel Winchester [00:17:50]:

So do you keep this list kind of near you and kind of go through it regularly? Or how is this kind of how is writing this out kinda served you or helped you?

Hanni Go [00:17:57]:

Yeah. I actually have it both in my journal, and then I also wrote it on the notes app on my you know, it syncs with my phone and my computer. And so just on those days when I'm like, oh my gosh. Why am I doing this again? I've pulled it out and just remembered what's true because in the craziness of life and when you're having those days where you're like, oh my goodness. Am I totally messing this up? It's just important to remember what's really important, and it's not what the world says and even what a lot of homeschoolers say.

Rachel Winchester [00:18:35]:

You talked about the power of your presence, basically, like, throughout it. As I was reading the list, I kind of saw some different threads throughout the list that, so I just wanted to we could draw each one out and kinda talk about it. But, yeah, the is the power of your presence. Like, you said it explicitly in number 7, you talked about your loving, nurturing presence being like what your kids need most. Nature walks together. I mean, the point of that is being together, you know, the relationship that it builds number 3, about your relationship with your kids, investing in eternity, discipling my kids, and even the limiting screen time. Like, that's really about there being a relationship there and there being that interact the opportunity for interaction that can happen because we're not on our own screens and stuff. What's kind of the hard part, I guess, or the challenge or what needed to be reminded so much about the power of the relationship, I guess?

Hanni Go [00:19:36]:

Well, I think maybe for me, it was I mean, I can tend to minimize what I do do and focus on what I don't do. Mhmm. And I really do try to be that nurturing, loving presence to my kids. And, you know, it was like my youngest was having a really hard day last week, and she was so sweet. She was like, I need help calm me down. And I'm like, you know, it's like, I need to stop this productive thing, and I need to sit with her, and I need to rub her back, and I need to take some deep breaths so she can take some deep breaths. And it's like none of that stuff is quick, or it doesn't feel, like, productive. Or, you know, my kid is breaking down because they feel really discouraged because they can't do math, and they're experiencing a lot of embarrassment or shame.

And they may be acting out because of that, and so it's like, you know, they're in their bedroom, whatever, and it's like, okay. What's really going on in their hearts? It's not about the math. It's about how they feel about themselves doing math. And it's those moments of discipling our kids, like, what is true about them and their identity in Christ? What's you know, what lies are they believing about themselves? And so those things don't feel like they count. When you look at your homeschool to do list, we don't write down you know, we write down math lesson and study these chapters in history. We don't write, like, shepherd my heart my child through shame. You know? It's like, that's not on my to do list for the day, but that's on God's list for my day. And so I feel like I do I mean, I don't do it perfectly at all, but I do feel like that is a strength of mine. And so Carol just everything she was saying was just confirming, like, yeah, this is what matters. Like, this is shaping my child's identity, their view of God, their view of themselves. And so so, yeah, it matters, and I have to be present. When I'm trying to when I'm trying to plow through our homeschool to do list or my day that's too jam

packed because I've over committed to too many people or too many things, I don't have time to do that. And then I'm annoyed with my child for breaking down, and then that makes them feel even worse. And so I feel like I've had to make some decisions, about the commitments that I've had in this season because I saw myself doing those things. I was getting frustrated. I was putting on more screens. I was, not attending to my kids the way that I want to. And if we're gonna do that, we have to have space and time in our life, or we just don't have what it takes to give like that.

Rachel Winchester [00:22:16]:

Yeah. Absolutely. I think when my kids were younger, you know, when I was in the very early years of mothering and having kids, I really felt the breaks hitting of, like, wow. I have really got to slow down to be able to enter into their life. And the way that the pace that they live at and everything.

Hanni Go [00:22:38]:

Yeah.

Rachel Winchester [00:22:39]:

And I think sometimes I can just see them, like, oh, you're 6 or 8. We can hit the gas, you know, and, like, you're ready to go, but still, they're not at an adult level. And just because I have an impulse to hit the gas doesn't mean that I should really even for my own sake. Like, just because I'm an adult doesn't mean I should, like, put my foot on the gas all the time. And so just really embracing that slowness because that's really what is necessary. Because most of the time, the stress comes when there's so I'm trying to stuff so many things in, and I've got, like, a deadline in my mind even if I haven't communicated it to my children.

And there are things that have to get done. But I feel like that's part of the tension is there are things that have to get done, but me having the ability and discernment to be able to to know what actually has to be done and maybe being able to communicate and also slow down. Because usually if you help your child regulate and get back to, like, calm, then they're probably gonna be able to go forward into the next thing that they have to do in a much better way. And they won't need you. Totally. But when I just keep, like, putting it off, putting it off, you know, and then it's like, they still need me. Yeah. You know? And if I had just stopped and met the need in the moment, it would have been better Yes. From the start.

Hanni Go [00:24:04]:

I have done that so many times. Like, this took, like, a half an hour longer than it needed to if I would've just done the right thing the first time. But that you know, God

is patient with us too as mothers. Like, we are human. We have our own things we're working through. We there's you know, if I've unpacked my story more, there's reasons why I white knuckle my way through life, and there's needs that God needs to meet in my life, so that I can be better for my kids. But so it's like God knows all of that. He knows that we're finite.

He knows the weaknesses that we have. He knows the pain that we have that's not dealt with, that's coming out sideways with our kids. He knows all of that, and so it's not a surprise to him. I am working on giving myself more grace and more self compassion because beating myself up doesn't help my kids either. It just makes me feel worse, and then I show up not in a good place. You know?

Rachel Winchester [00:25:04]:
Mhmm. Yeah. He remembers our frame.

Hanni Go [00:25:06]:
Totally. Yeah.

Rachel Winchester [00:25:07]:
He knows we're dust.

Hanni Go [00:25:08]:
He knows we're dust. And he's not surprised by our fallenness, by our weakness, by the temptations we have to just plow through our to do list. That's not a surprise to him. Yeah. Mhmm.

Rachel Winchester [00:25:23]:
Yeah. I think I need to remember my frame more and understand better the limitations and that to dust, I will return. You know? So what is the mark? And I think that's to your point about the we're discipling our kids for the kingdom of God. We wanna do that, which is gonna be eternal and that which lasts. Pouring into their souls is what's going to last, And we can get really sidetracked by the things that are just temporary. So we have to have, like Carole talks about, eternity imprinted on our mind on our eyelids, you know.

Hanni Go [00:25:58]:
Yeah. Something really shifted for me in my homeschool when I felt like God helped me see that my job is not to make my kids academically successful. My job is to help them become who God has made them to be. And if I am focused on that, he will guide me in what they will need academically. Or academics, they can learn later. Like,

if I'm creating a life learner and there's a gap that I that they have in their learning, like, they don't know how to use commas, well, they can buy a grammar book in, you know, their freshman year of college and take 2 hours and learn how to use commas. Do you know what I mean? It's like Right. But you can't go back to these foundational years where they're forming their identity and their worldview.

And, so I just I'm like, God, who is this child becoming, and how can I partner with you to help them be who you want them to be? Not who I want them to be, which, of course, I have opinions on that. But, like, what does this child need, for what you've called them to be? Absolutely.

Rachel Winchester [00:27:02]:

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