

Becoming a Screen-Free Family

Episode 256

Rachel Winchester [00:00:02]:

Do you feel the pressure to entertain your children? This is where screens often come into the family life as we seek relief from constant demands. However, what if it could be different? Rather than constantly needing to entertain our kids, what if we created space for them to discover their own adventures?

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

Carole Joy Seid has been helping families homeschool for several decades now as a speaker and homeschooling consultant. If you want to work with Carole to customize your family's approach to this method, you can book an appointment at homeschoolmadesimple.net/customize. Her schedule fills up quickly as we move into the summer months. So be sure to book an appointment today through the link in the show notes.

This week, we're back with David and Audrey Ryan to hear more about their journey into homeschooling.

In this episode, they share a lot about their own work to unplug as a family and the challenges that come with that decision. Listen in.

David and Audrey Ryan [00:01:04]:

I have two points I wanted to make sure that I, brought up while we were visiting. One is that I tell people who are considering homeschooling that I feel really lucky that when we, were exploring this, that I had been listening to several podcasts, and I I kept going back to your podcast. And and now, you know, you're the only podcast I listen to. It's just your podcast is the homeschooling podcast for me. Everything else is, like, you know, noise. But, you know, I'm glad. I feel lucky that we, stumbled onto your method first instead

of having to go through some of these other methods and spend a fortune in curriculum and, you know, try to do something that really, wasn't gonna work for us. Your method was an instant, ease, and it was just a burden taken off, and we're still seeing amazing progress.

So, you know, I have some homeschooling mom friends that are still frustrated and beating their head on a table because their kids, you know, aren't aren't meeting these milestones that they have. And, it just seems like we got lucky in in that respect. So I try to, tell moms that are considering, you know, homeschooling, stop right there. Listen to this podcast first. And and if it doesn't work for you, then go to something else.

Carole Joy Seid [00:02:36]:

It ministers to me as you're talking.

David and Audrey Ryan [00:02:38]:

And secondly, you know, we do have another daughter who is so we have a son and a daughter. The daughter is a year and a half younger than our son, Colin. Her name's Gabby. Boy, she lives up to her name because she is very, opinionated. She's a quick thinker, quick responder. So they Colin and she are quite the yin and yang, but I think God put them together as siblings because he knew they would help each other in in different ways. And they do, but, you know, parents that have a special needs child and and their homeschooling process, they may get worried about, is this process going to work in the same way for this child as it would for my, you know, my very quick witted child? And, it does. And it's that's one of the things we like about it is it is so customizable and everyone benefits from stories.

That's why the Bible is a book of stories and God communicates to us through stories. So the stories are going to work for any type of processor, and our other child is free to move as fast as she wants to move in certain areas. Yes. So it works for both kids.

Carole Joy Seid [00:03:54]:

That's really neat to know. Now tell me about your decision to have a screen free life. That's that's exciting. Awesome.

David and Audrey Ryan [00:04:03]:

Remember that last September? Weeping and gnashing of teeth. It was you did not wanna be in our house during the twenty eight days it took to break the habit.

We started the whole journey almost exactly a year ago. So same we we went to Dallas, saw you, went to the conference. And then, right before that, we were at we I I had just recently left my job, with the idea of starting my own company, which is what I'm doing now. But we took a ten day long camping trip through New Mexico. It was the first time ever that I didn't have anybody to answer to. The kids weren't in school, even though the school public schools just started. And I said, let's go, just have some really good family time. We don't have anything to get back to.

I don't know if or when this will ever happen again. So we went camping, and and on that camping trip, it was a lot of tablets in the back seat so they would be quiet while I was pulling a 30 foot travel trailer behind the truck down the highway. And we got there, and they're like, can we go back inside and and play on the tablets? Can we go watch the show on our tablet? And it's like, what did we just create? They are so addicted to these things within a week. What are we doing here? And then we went to your conference, I think, two days after we got back, and and a lot of talk about we we kinda made the decision. We're cutting this off. This has gotten ridiculous. Like, they're they're talking to us like Minecraft is real life and expecting us to answer questions about some game I've never even heard of until they discovered it. And and so at your conference, there was a lot of talk about phones and tablets and screen time, and it it just it really gave us encouragement and and told us we were on the right path with our thinking there.

And so when we got back from the conference, we put the tablets up. The kids haven't seen them. They haven't even seen their tablets in over a year. When we just said no more, and and it was a fight. For three weeks, it was brutal. It was it was overcoming an addiction for a, at the time, a a five and a seven year old. And it was hard to watch because it was a little pain.

They were in pain, because they were so attached to those things. But we had gone, a little overboard as a lot of parents do with, you know, if you go out to eat with another couple and, you know, they they would ask, can can we watch your phone? On the way to any soccer practice, where would it be? As a babysitter.

Can we use your phone? They're they want the phone or the tablet constantly, and we were in that rut when we decided to homeschool. But, you know, the schools were using tablets. Yeah. The schools were watching lots of movies all the time. The schools were doing all this as this is the new thing. They have a certain requirement of tablet time that the kids are required to get at school and it's part of their learning. So, you know, we fell into that and we we didn't really realize it was a big problem until it was a huge problem. But when we went through that September of withdrawal. We had stopped TV. We did cold turkey TV as well.

Carole Joy Seid [00:07:33]:
You did. So all screens. Oh, yeah.

David and Audrey Ryan [00:07:36]:
Yes. For for that month.

Carole Joy Seid [00:07:38]:
You're in the long run, then, you know, as they say in 12 step groups, abstinence is always easier than moderation.

David and Audrey Ryan [00:07:46]:
Yeah. And it was, especially for really breaking that dependency. Now since then, we've reintroduced the kids like to look up, how tos on YouTube. So we what we do is we give them a a think about what you're going to research and look up, and we give them a look up time. I try to move that to the end of the day, and so we do our outside time. And then at the end of the day, they can have their lookup time, or they can also have a, one of their shows. And their shows are kind of funny. They're the shows that before they had the longer TVs, or the TV screen.

All the shows have the the black bars on the, on the sides because they like Magic School Bus, which was an eighties show, and they have they have Bernstein Bears. But, you know, you you can't even let that it can get out from under you real quick.

Carole Joy Seid [00:08:48]:

It's this slippery slope. People say to me, Carole, we thought we could, you know, reintroduce and manage, but it's like it's like giving someone a drug that they've already been through withdrawal from, and then you're right back where you started. And Mhmm. They say to me, it's just so much easier to have none than to have Mhmm. Because you're policing all the time. And it's in the minded. Well, how much of this? And can I have an half hour? What about an hour? What about and and and even if the shows are not harmful in themselves, it it recreates that cycle. And I'm reading, Davey Wilkerson's book, the cross and the switchblade, which is the story of of him going into New York City in the early sixties and working with gang members that were teenagers, young teenagers.

Some of the girls, 12 years old, that were heroin addicts. And, he talks about the whole cycle of cold turkey withdrawal, what that looked like, how the holy spirit came in and and carried the kids, but how just one foray back into that culture and the kids are worse than where they started at the beginning of this. And because addiction is progressive. So when you give something up, and then and you reintroduce it, you don't start where you gave it up. You start in other words, you don't start at the beginning. I'm sorry. You start where you gave it up. It's progressive.

And so you don't you're not reinventing the wheel. You're jumping right in where you were drowning at Mhmm. And that's where you go back, and then it gets worse and worse and worse. And so any addiction is progressive and we have to reverse that. That's Yeah. Have a child that's addicted to a screen saying, well, we're just gonna limit it. Very often, families say to me, that did not work.

David and Audrey Ryan [00:10:40]:

Yeah. Yeah. Honestly, we can I can say that we're starting to, see that? Well, what you you know, you made a good point because even even though they make

they they like to watch one show. Well, when that show is over, oh, I I'm looking forward to the the next time we can listen to this show instead of, oh, let's get to that next chapter in our book. Now as soon as I start reading, then they're back they're back in. But it's it takes me being the vigilant person to to redirect. But if we didn't have that that little bit of TV time, then they would be the ones coming to me saying, oh, let's finish this last chapter of the book instead of me introducing it again and and, directing their attention back to our books.

Carole Joy Seid [00:11:31]:

Yeah. You're competing with multimillions of dollars that have been spent to target your child. That's what I dislike so much about YouTube is the that you finish one, they're already feeding you the next and the next and the next and the next. And they the whole thing is designed to create an addiction cycle. And

David and Audrey Ryan [00:11:52]:

yeah. And and the ads they plug in there. Like, you have to be aware of what your kids are watching if they're watching any TV. I mean, we we have to be there with them because the ads that YouTube tries to sneak in there on on children's programming is alarming. Mhmm. And and so you almost have to sit there with your hand on the power button and just shut it off.

You absolutely. Yeah. Yeah. Wow. So we're about to start the September, or actually going into October again where we, we do the cold turkey attempt again. We haven't told them that yet. But I it is absolutely the way to go.

Carole Joy Seid [00:12:34]:

And then you're like, wait a minute. We we feel so much happier. We're not fighting. We're not, you know, hyperactive. We're not this. We're not that. We're, like, present. We're present.

The screens replace people, and that's the whole point of a screen is you can't compete with Hollywood. You can't compete with Disney Studios. You will never compete with them. There's no book that will compete because their your children have been stimulated on so many levels of sensory stimulation. Mhmm. Is how it's created. And so when you break that lock on them, and they learn how to entertain themselves. And just Mhmm.

You said, David, about what he does outside just was making me giggle. The bows and arrows, my son would make those with his best friend Nathan, and they would be shooting at at, you know, Hana and, you know, their Nathan's little sister and just like living the typical kind of storybook life, you know, like the Tom Sawyer life. And that's what our kids love. And Mhmm. Digging holes. My grandchildren built dig these holes that are deeper than there. They can stand in it and disappear. And when their friends come over, they're like, oh, that's amazing.

And then they're coming in the hole. And this is like a free thing, like a shovel and dirt. You know? But this is a kit. This is what children are longing and think we have to entertain them quote unquote. Yeah. They don't wanna be entertained. They want to create their own adventures.

David and Audrey Ryan [00:14:06]:

And parents sometimes will, you know, they use the screen as a conflict resolution to keep the kids from arguing. And especially if they have something to to get done, they they stick them in front of the TV or promote that because they think, well, I won't have to this is that my time. I won't have to break up fights. But actually, the exact opposite we noticed when we when we don't have TV, they, our kids who fight a lot, if if otherwise, they're they get along better, and it's actually easier on us. We're not having to spend our time breaking up fights because they're off exploring or they're they do work out their own problems maybe because they're not agitated by the stimulation. But it ends up being, less less elbow grease for us than Wow. Parents would think if they choose a television.

Carole Joy Seid [00:14:59]:

Beautiful testimony, and I think you're absolutely right. Wow. I could talk to you guys all day. David, anything you wanna add before I ask you to close this in prayer?

David and Audrey Ryan [00:15:10]:

Yeah. So, I mean, the the big thing and I I shared this story with you last year in Dallas. Audrey was was all for the homeschool idea. She substitute taught in the public schools here for the last half of last year, and that was really eye opening

for her, mostly about what what kids do on a daily basis and how little time is actually spent learning. And she's like, I can do this. I know that I can. I was I had my guard up, just just being completely honest and transparent. And I was my biggest concern was Colin's struggles in his previous school versus his new school, and we felt like he had an awesome support staff, And he had a social life.

He had friends. He had people that that he was gonna get to grow up with in the small town and go to school with that would always just know him as Colin, and nothing else. And and so I struggled with that a lot. I used to have a a forty five minute commute to work every day. And and on my commute, I said, you know what? I'm gonna start listening to some homeschool podcast and get some more clarity here and and see what we're really diving into. And and the very first one that I came across was bare better late than early. And I listened to that and called Audrey before I got to work, and I said I'm on board. So, if anybody has concerns about, you know, a child that's not reading on time or or if you're a child that's struggling in public schools, if this is the right move, I would strongly suggest starting with that podcast and listening to it and everything that it says, we have found to be absolutely true.

Carole Joy Seid [00:16:54]:

Yeah. I'll have her link the Homeschool Made Simple number of the podcast in the show notes so people don't have to dig through it. But that, podcast was really an eye opener for me interestingly because I've been in this method now for about forty years. And, interestingly, I reread that book for probably the fourth or fifth time right before I did that podcast, David. And I was I was stunned by how radical the book was because I had forgotten, you know, because it had been several years since I had read it. I'd read it so many times, but I'm like, doctor Moore was even more radical than I remembered.

David and Audrey Ryan [00:17:35]:

I I love your story about the book, about borrowing it from a friend and thinking it was just ludicrous that anybody could think that way and then putting it on your bookshelf and not ever opening it for a long time. And then, you know, making the drastic changes just like we did after after reading it. But when you

look back even one year later, it's it's really not that drastic. It's the best thing for your kids, and it's evident. So

Carole Joy Seid [00:18:01]:

I think you'll ever regret giving up screens ever, ever, ever. On your deathbed, you're not gonna be like, I wish we'd watch more television. Like, who would ever say that? But you'd say, I wish I'd spent more time listening to my children or buildings or hiking or bird watching or remodeling the garage or reading, reading, reading. Those are the things you're gonna be so glad that you did and the investment you made. And you'll see that in your kids every year. You'll see it more and more, the joy that your children are people. When I stand in, supermarket checkout lines and I hear women going, oh, September 3 is coming, and I'm counting the day so that little yellow school bus pulls up or whatever. And I think that is the most heartbreaking conversation I've ever heard.

Because homeschool parents, we enjoy our kids so much. We don't even want them to go, like, to grandma's or to go spend the night with their best. Yeah. Like, we like our kids.

David and Audrey Ryan [00:19:02]:

Yeah. Yeah. And you've learned to live together as a family. I mean, that was one other thing. Like, we didn't realize that how far apart we had been pulled from each other because of the separation through our daily lives. And then when I substitute taught, I I saw that these kids, it reminded me of my own childhood. You know, they have their own separate life. Then they come home and they have their home life.

They have their home life and their school life. And that life, you don't know anything about. You're not a part of it.

Carole Joy Seid [00:19:33]:

Right.

David and Audrey Ryan [00:19:33]:

We don't have that anymore. We have all one life together

Carole Joy Seid [00:19:50]:

I love you guys. Well, David, we could talk forever about how about if you pray for these families that are maybe in the place you are, they're doubting, like, should we do this? Is this the craziest thing we've ever heard of? Doesn't our children need all the bells and whistles that the school system can offer? Would you pray for them to have the wisdom and the divine appointments that you that the Lord brought to you?

David and Audrey Ryan [00:20:14]:

Yes. Absolutely. Yeah. Dear heavenly father, thank you for this time. Thank you for bringing Carol into our lives. Thank you for bringing this crazy idea of homeschooling into our lives. God, we just ask that you open up other people's hearts, open up their minds. I I just hope that something that was said today resonates with the people that are listening and that they take it seriously and really, you know, take the time to do what's best for themselves and their children.

We ask that you just, you know, help eliminate any fears that they may have, any hesitation, and just trust in you and trust in their kids and trust in themselves that this is the best path for them, and that they could just learn from us, learn from Carol, learn from her other guests on our pod podcast, call Carol, have a conversation, and and really just open up their minds to this whole idea, and just know and trust that their their kids and themselves will be better off for it. It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Carole Joy Seid [00:21:21]:

You know, I have to share one thing as we leave. The air is that on your file from when we consulted, I in a big circle podcast. I on the podcast, and I didn't wanna Sometimes I think about it, and then I put I it gets filed. And then I'm like, now who was the family I was thinking? But I put it very large on your Yeah. Would just be perfect than you were.

David and Audrey Ryan [00:21:50]:

Thank you so much. And thank you for your encouragement and everything you've done for us. We really appreciate you.

Carole Joy Seid [00:21:56]:

You're a blessing. Long may your tribe prosper.

Rachel Winchester [00:22:01]:

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