

From Waldorf to Unschooling

Written by Luminara King.

My husband and I have been Unschooling our daughter (age fifteen) and son (age nine) for nearly seven years. I'm a former Steiner Waldorf Class teacher turned Unschooling Mum, as well as an artist and blogger. We are very blessed that my husband works freelance and is a very hands on dad. He's a filmmaker, editor and all round computer genius which is very useful for our children, who have a keen interest in creative technology.

What made you decide to Unschool?

We didn't ever plan to unschool. In fact, when I was a Steiner Class teacher I thought "Home Schooling" was a cruel thing to do to a child....ha!....how far we have come!

Our daughter was in a Steiner School until she was eight years old. Although she blossomed in Kindergarten we noticed that she began to shut down once she got into Class One. I had left my position as a class teacher due to illness during my pregnancy with our son. With me at home all day and our daughter struggling at school, home schooling became an obvious choice. I was very blessed to have a friend who had started homeschooling her two children a couple of years before us. She was an angel in supporting and encouraging us during the first couple of years. Our daughter did try secondary school when she was eleven, but that only lasted four weeks. Our son has never been to school and he likes it that way.

Do you use a curriculum?

When we first started, we did what many homeschoolers do and did, "school at home". We used the Christopherus Homeschool curriculum. It is a very beautiful curriculum which I enjoyed working with, but after the first year, I noticed our daughter becoming more and more reluctant to sit down and do the work presented to her each morning. I knew that no valuable learning would happen if I forced her to learn something she wasn't interested in, so, I decided we should take a break for a few weeks, which turned into months, and then years. Finally, we ended up never using a curriculum again.

Unschooling found us, as opposed to us finding it. I didn't even realise there was an unschooling movement. We were just living our lives and following our own interests. Although, I did need some hand-holding during this transition and remember ringing another unschooling mum with boys of her own and explaining in a worried tone that, our son didn't seem interested in all the lovely, hand crafted, wooden Steiner Toys we had brought him, and was instead climbing the walls. Her advice was invaluable - "LEGO, get him Lego!". We drove to the Supermarket that very same day and brought a massive tub

of Lego. That was the start of our son's love affair with those little plastic bricks that give him hours and hours of creative and learning fun (and our walls a rest!).

What does an average day look like for your family?

No two days ever look the same in our house. As we don't follow a curriculum, the children do whatever they feel like doing that day. Some days our son might join me on the morning dog walk before heading off to his room to spend an hour or two on Minecraft or building with LEGOs. Often he hangs out with a friend for the day and they play whatever they wish for the whole day.

When at home, our teenage daughter is usually in her bedroom, which is also her, art studio, dance studio, craft space, personal cinema, and a café, judging on the amount of cups and plates I find in there most days. If she needs me or her dad's help she will come and find us to ask for it. During the day, she will pop out of her room periodically to proudly show us her latest creation or ask for a lift to one of her friend's houses. She will often accompany me to do the weekly shop or pop out on errands or visit art galleries or visit friends.

As a family, we spend a lot of time together. Over the years, this has deepened our relationships not just as parent and child, but as people sharing life together. My husband and I learn just as much from our children as they do from us.

What has been the best thing about your decision to unschool?

The best thing about not sending your children to school is the freedom to do what you want, when you want...within reason of course. We can go to the swimming pool when it is quiet, or go to the cinema in the middle of the day and get a good seat. We can have museums mostly to ourselves or we can just have a lazy day at home watching movies and drinking hot chocolate.

What advice would you give to a family considering unschooling their children?

A friend once told me her grandmother used to say "Everything passes, everything changes."

If you choose to homeschool or unschool, this is true. So, on the bad days (there will be some) know the problem will pass if you trust in your children.

Trusting our children doesn't really come naturally as we have been brought up in a culture that believes adults have all the answers and children have to be taught. I learn from my children every day. Yes, they need guidance sometimes, but you also need to know when to take a step back and not interfere. Other unschooling families with older children can be a godsend as they have often been through what you are going through and can reassure

you that your children are going to be Okay. Finding an unschooling community, either locally or on-line, is a life saver, too.

Luminara King is an unschooling Mum, author of the blog *Living the Education Revolution*. She is also an Unschooling and Conscious Parenting Coach, helping families to live in joy and freedom.

Originally published at Self-Directed.org.