

Beyond Stereotypes : The changing face of homeschooling

By Misha Thompson



Recently I posted a question on my Facebook page. Can you tell me honestly, I asked, all the reasons you would never homeschool your kids? Within less than a day I had over 50 strong opinions posted and some even stronger ones in my private in-box.

“Before I started homeschooling,” one friend said, “I was frightened I would lose my sense of humor—and start wearing jumpers.” “I would never have enough patience. – I’m not organized enough. – I’m not smart enough.— I don’t think I’d have enough energy. – I am an introvert. – I would be too lonely.” “I want to have a career. – I would never be able to make friends. – My kids need socializing.”

We have all have felt these worries and many of us have had them spoken from friends or family members.

Here are three things to remember as you consider homeschooling:

1. There may be many good reasons not to homeschool. But stereotypes should not be one of them. The new face of homeschooling does not look anything like it did thirty years ago. In fact it looks nothing like it did even just five years ago. The new face of homeschool is as varied and modern and beautiful as mothers and fathers and children and all of their needs are. The new face of homeschooling is inner city, rural, suburban, hip, trendy, multilingual, simple, crafty, classic, apprenticeship-based, nature walking, take-out eating, conservative, liberal, intentional, frugal, community based and neighborhood connected. In short, it is everything you are. Whoever you are, whatever your values are, the way your family loves and lives life – that is exactly what kind of homeschooler you will be.

I am still learning who we are as a family, what we love and who we can become. I am being educated right alongside my children and that is one of my favorite things about homeschooling. I never planned to live this life. But I have found that every single stereotype I had heard (or even believed) was totally wrong.

2. For every one of those aforementioned concerns, there is a family out there making them a moot point.

I ‘ve seen a single mom juggling a handful of kids without an organized surface in site and enjoy it sincerely, exhausting though it may be. I have seen a mom with thirteen kids, and a mom with a newborn and two young ones, both teach their kids and still deal with the laundry. I have seen moms who juggle full time careers and trade off with dads. I have seen both parents who get their kids up early enough to homeschool them before they go to work and I have seen parents discover their careers though homeschooling.

There are now a myriad of families homeschooling in cultures all around the world. There are professors watching for them in universities because they have learned that homeschooled kids can be remarkable initiative takers, confident and poised communicators. There are countless studies out there about all the reasons homeschooling is a positive choice.

3. Homeschooling is a mosaic made up of millions of unique lifestyles and faces. Be confident to be yourself! I have found that what I teach my kids has less to do with what we do together and more to do with who I am as their mama. That has been hard to face. It’s easier to teach than be. It’s easier to stereotype than be confident. So although in our home we love books and researching, polka dot umbrella walks and dancing to piano practice before dinner time, our greatest work is in trying to embrace life and enjoyment in such a way that it will color our children’s days with joy and fearlessness and allow them to do the same. “The point is...what makes our children thrive,” I had a friend write to me recently, “what gives them the opportunity to be their best selves.”

We are not stereotypes, we are all beautifully able to be as individual as the children we are raising and teaching.

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