

What is Deschooling?

by Lenore Colacion Hayes

Deschooling is the process by which one adapts to the abandonment of traditional learning concepts. This presents itself differently in two varied populations - how it applies to and is processed by the children involved and how the parents of these children learn to cope with the concept of "oh-no-what-do-I-do-now-that-my-children-are-not-in-school?"

Children are generally able to cast aside schoolish notions rather seamlessly. While their parents fret that they are going to do nothing more than watch television or play all day long, the children will naturally gravitate toward observing their environment. This process could include whatever the child is passionate about: art, music, reading, building, cooking, listening, talking and yes ... even watching television. During this process the child will learn to allocate time to each endeavor so that everything beloved can be accomplished. After a time, the child will learn that rushing through one project to get to another is no longer necessary as it once was in school. The child will thrive upon realizing that learning is an every day, hands-on experiment with life. Many homeschooling veterans feel that children need approximately one month per each year of schooling in order to "recover" from the stifling confines of organized education.

Deschooling the parent is a more onerous effort. Most of us have "survived" the traditional educational paths, thus it is a difficult task to abandon the dogmatic notions that all learning must take place within an organized classroom. The parent who is aspiring toward deschooling will experience many days of vacillating between thoroughly embracing your child's freedom of real-life learning with utter disbelief that you have opted out of "real" school. You will need to remind yourself on a daily basis that life as a homeschooler is "real" as opposed to the life of a child sitting in a classroom with same-age peers, being fed contrived lessons which may not have any pertinence to anything in their young lives.

Deschooling can be viewed as a bridge leading your family from the edge of a precipice to a solid foundation for learning.