

DETOX

by Barbara Frederick

Someone once said that beginning to homeschool was like moving to another country. In many ways, they were right. When traveling to another country, it is important for all new citizens to take inoculations. When traveling to Homeschoolland, it is necessary for all new citizens to "detox"--to rid themselves of the deleterious effects that Publicschoolland has had on their education.

Before beginning this "detox" process, one must carefully analyze the learning environment that exists in Publicschoolland and take note of its inherent qualities. In Publicschoolland all of the citizens are carefully controlled. All movement occurs at the sound of a bell. Performing necessary bodily functions is discouraged, and access to the bathroom is monitored by a teacher. The citizens are told what to learn, when to begin learning, and when to stop learning. Failure to learn at the proscribed pace (be it too slow or too fast) is punishable with failing grades and/or sheer boredom. Citizens are not permitted to leave Publicschoolland for 12 years, unless they obtain an exit visa and travel to Homeschoolland. Once Publicschoolland citizens obtain their exit visa, they will need help acclimating themselves to the new learning environment of Homeschoolland. These new citizens will need the following things from the Homeschoolland "Consulate General" (the parent) to aid in this "detox" process:

1. Freedom. The freedom to move about during the day from one subject area to another according to the citizen's own interests.
2. Faith. Faith in the fact that human curiosity and intelligence need not be "stimulated" in order for learning to take place.
3. Patience. Patience during the entire "detox" time.
4. Time. Time to distress from the regimented learning process. (This time period can last anywhere from one month to one year).

Upon arriving in Homeschoolland, new citizens often feel a little disoriented and confused. In this first phase of "detox", they will expect a teacher to tell them everything that they need to know about a subject. They may not know where to look to obtain knowledge for themselves. While textbooks are familiar, the new citizen will, most likely, hold them in contempt. Stay as far away from textbooks as possible during the "detox" time. Allow the new citizens to fill their first days in Homeschoolland with unstructured playtime and healthy, positive, social interaction with siblings.

When the new citizens express an interest in "doing something" or "learning about something", phase two of the "detox" process has already begun. Respond gently and slowly to the citizens first tentative steps into Homeschoolland. Share in their sense of wonder, as they begin to see all of the learning possibilities that exist in Homeschoolland. The Consulate General must reassure the citizens that he/she is "here for them" and will help them find the information they need; without giving it to them. The tricky part of phase two is keeping a clear head. The Consulate General must resist all urges to "teach" or to make the new citizens "get something out of" a teaching moment. The Consulate General may guide, encourage, and cheer, but they should not contrive "learning experiences" or "lesson plans". Soon enough, the new citizens will be so stimulated by the learning environment in Homeschoolland, that the Consulate General will find it hard to keep up with them. When this happens, the citizens have entered phase three of the "detox" process.

Though the Consulate General will be tempted, he/she must not rush the new citizens through phase three. This phase is the most important phase of the "detox" and transition process. During this time, the citizens will be rebuilding their fragile sense of self-esteem as well as relearning how to learn. They may revert to easier tasks or simpler reading books, but do not be alarmed. They are simply rediscovering the thirst for knowledge that they had at a younger age--but were forbidden to quench in Publicschoolland. Be Patient! Some citizens require more time than others to "detox" and adjust to Homeschoolland.

The Consulate General should use this "detox" time period to decide which learning method, materials and

approach will be most effective for the new citizens. In the near future, the citizens will be willing and able to offer input into this decision making process. When this happens, the Consulate General will know that the "detox" process is complete. Now, the new citizens can relax and enjoy all of the educational opportunities that Homeschoolland has to offer. Remember, Homeschoolland is much more than a nice place to visit, it is a GREAT place to live!