

Mom to Mom

by Sue Patterson

If I could sit down with any new homeschooler, I'd love to share what we've learned. I certainly didn't do everything "right." But we are all surviving – and thriving! Even though our path may not be the same as yours, there are some tips I can share to help you along.

First, talk to a lot of people. This will remind you that there is no ONE CORRECT way to homeschool children. You'll also find fun things that they're doing with their kids that maybe you didn't even think of. Be flexible and be open to whatever opportunities present themselves!

Talk to your children about all the fun experiences that are available to them in the community. They have no idea what's out there. You'll have to investigate and find out for them. Help them learn to explore their own interests.

Try not to pass your own anxiety onto your children. You have a lot of thoughts in your head because you equated learning with schooling – after all, you spent a lot of time there. So it makes sense. But just because it's familiar doesn't mean it's best. Don't be surprised that when you're having a bad day, you think of all the things you're doing wrong (or your child is doing wrong). Resist sharing that with your child! Remind yourself that you need time and confidence to undo some of the thought patterns that still linger in your brain. Take the first year to let your child explore to his heart's content. And YOU take that first year to read as many books about learning and homeschooling as possible. Join some email lists. Meet other veteran homeschool moms for coffee. You have some work to do on yourself!

When you think of "great" classrooms, remember that THEY are trying to duplicate HOME. Not vice versa. They try to create cozy reading areas. They try to read poetry out in the field. They try to take the kids to a museum once a year, or an opera, or a farm. But when you homeschool, you already HAVE a cozy living room. You have access to the outdoors or the opera or a farm - whenever you want! You don't have to ok it with the school board or make sure that you've met criteria for number of days in the classroom. You get to live life to the fullest and show your child how to do just that. So don't go backwards and try to duplicate school because it's familiar. Keep walking forward. You'll love it!