Educational Philosophy

3 July 2015

Belief Statement

As a family we are quite a mix of moral, ethical and philosophical beliefs. I am from South Africa and grew up in a very outdoorsy, respectful and hardworking family, and went through many of life's hardships. My husband led a fairly sheltered life, but with the difficulty of severe dyslexia due to, I firmly believe, starting school too young. All in all though, I feel that we encompass good morals and ethics with a generous dose of fun and creativity.

I am your classic "hippie" I suppose, I prize humility and a love of the Earth and nature, value skills that encourage independence and freedom from industrialisation, constantly seek better understanding of the human body and how to achieve health in our toxic world, and have more creativity than I know what to with. I have a good understanding of herbs and have successfully treated and healed mine and my family's minor ailments and eczema through diet, lifestyle and herbal knowledge for the last four years. I am currently a Functional Diagnostic Nutrition Trainee. I love crafts of all kinds; I sew, make jewellery, prepare all my own detergents and toiletries that I don't buy organic and eco versions of such as soap, washing powder, shampoo and skin creams, and I investigate and employ all manner of crafts for the kids to do.

My husband, as a network engineer for a big data centre in London, is the antithesis of me in many ways. He loves technology and is fascinated by its development, but he is also a true family man with strong values and a love for woodcraft, videography and cooking. We complement each other very well. As a family we follow a paleo diet, which is one of the main reasons we removed the children from school the first time. It's not the easiest of diets to follow as it requires everything cooked from scratch with primarily foods that would have been available to palaeolithic man, but it's been proven time and again to be the most health promoting basic diet "out there". This has been true for us too, though it has been hard for the children to get used to the strict control of processed foods and sugar. Happily, they are now more than satisfied with home made treats and good wholesome cooked foods, but it took time to get there and the school undermined our efforts at every turn.

The both of us together believe that our children are the most important beings in our world and have been unhappy with their development and wellbeing in the school system. We truly believe that we can give them a better education than they will get at school. We will provide them with the most important education of all; an understanding of how the world works and how to be a contributing citizen, practical life skills such as how to get a job, buy a house and manage your finances, and the ability to think for themselves, empowering them to handle anything life throws their way.

Resources

Some of the things the kids want to do/learn about:

Visit castles and museums

Make fruit salad faces

Learn about animals and sea creatures

Wildlife conservation

Make bows and arrows, swords and shields and catapults

Science experiments eg coke and mentos rockets, square bubbles etc

Make Christmas decorations and presents

Learn about famous people

Write our own stories

Learn about volcanoes and natural disasters

Learn to cook and bake

Some of the things we want to teach them/do with them:

Raise chickens and rabbits to teach them responsibility and to earn money from selling eggs/baby bunnies

Identify and use edible and medicinal plants in the wild

Make things rather than buy them whenever possible, especially via recycling

Basic DIY skills

Lots of camping and hiking / outdoor sports and activities

Independence through carefully structured activities, such as camping in the garden

Encourage self-exploration to discover who they are and what they want in life

As they get older:

Accounting and financial management

Human rights and how to protect them

How to choose and develop a career

How to buy a house

How to plan a wedding

How to plan for a baby

How to look after children

How to plan for retirement

How to deal with difficult family and friends

How to look after the environment through everyday good choices

Some of the resources we plan to utilise are obvious such as books, computers, museums, National Trust and English Heritage sites, notepads, craft items and such. But our location lends itself very well to take full advantage of what nature has to offer, through foraging for foods and materials and exploring the woods for animal activity. We have several teachers in the family who are happy to help out when we need some ideas and who could assess the kids from time to time to make sure they are progressing well. We have found many great websites with free lessons, activities and printables to help us structure occasional formal lessons for the core subjects. We are also people who love to learn continuously so we're looking forward to the learning we'll be doing alongside our kids.

A basic week (8 days long, as my husband works in shifts of four days on and four days off) could look something like this:

1 - am: Walk the dog and hike through woods for an hour or so depending on weather; this would also be foraging time in the correct season. Return home to do a craft activity till lunchtime. Pm: Attend to household chores. Ethan helps cook dinner.

2 - am: Walk the dog. Return and play bingo / hangman till lunch time. Pm: Chores. Leon helps cook dinner.

3 - am: Visit with family / homeschooling group. Pm: Play computer games. Leela helps me with dinner.

4 - am: Attend local market with craft items and eggs to sell. Pm: Accounting of our earnings. Leftovers for dinner.

5 - am: Walk the dog. Paul's day with the kids. I spend time doing something for me. Pm: Ethan helps Paul cook dinner.

6: Day out to planned destination with picnic. Treat day!

7 - am: Walk the dog. Kids have friends over to play. Paul spends day doing something for himself. Pm: Leon helps cook dinner.

8 - am: Walk the dog. Return for activities till lunch. Pm: Household chores, and cooking for lunches for the following week. Leela helps cook dinner.

Report

Having had Leela at home for the last two weeks now, I have seen a dramatic improvement in her general wellbeing. Her eczema is much better and easier to control with the reduction in stress and she is much less inclined to be cheeky or argue. I have actually been able to spend some time with her doing things I never could before. This afternoon (writing on the 4th of July) we received a bunch of hama iron together beads and the kids (especially Ethan) took to it immediately and displayed great creativity and design skills while exercising fine motor control and concentration with the little beads. Leon even learned a bit of patience and to finish something before moving onto something else; this is a big deal for him.

I am feeling very positive about the future. It's not going to be easy since we are a family who clashes a bit but I'm already working hard and seeing improvements in their responses to me as I've gradually changed my attitude towards them and changed the example I set for them. I believe my children are highly intelligent in many ways including emotionally. I feel certain that homeschooling will really help to develop their natural born talents and intelligence, without the pressure to conform, or the confidence-depleting stigma attached to low grades in subjects that don't actually equip children for the real world.