



Grace in Homeschool EP 05
10 Reasons You Can Homeschool
Reason 5: Play
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Amy: Your child is not behind if they're not doing their handwriting lessons at four and five years old, or they're not reading those three letter words phonetically, or they don't have that sight word list memorized and reading that. That's okay.

(Opening Intro Music)

Amy: Hi, friends, and welcome. I'm your host AmyElizSmith. I'm a homeschool mom of three and have homeschooled each from the start. While I have a Master's in Elementary Ed, I want to teach other mamas that you don't need a fancy degree to have the passion and knowledge to educate your children from home successfully.

I hope to encourage you to jump in and start your homeschool journey and provide my absolute best recommendations to help you begin your homeschool journey. Thanks for joining us along for this crazy, messy, grace-filled homeschool ride.

Amy: Hi, friends, and welcome back. We continue our conversation about the "Top 10 reasons Why You Can Homeschool ." Today we will focus on play during those early years and delaying formal lessons until your child is developmentally ready. Unfortunately, in government schools, children are pushed academically way too soon.

I see students being taught their sounds and learning to read as young as three or four. This can really stifle their growth, and I prefer advocating to start formal lessons and waiting until age six rather than teaching something too soon. And ensuring concepts are understood before moving to the next thing.



I love that I've been able to create individualized education for each of my children; their own interests guide that. For example, when my son was young, we did many tot trays that involved some Montessori principles like practical life and sensory. Those things were very, very fun, but we want to wait until our child's developmental readiness is cognitively there for them to begin rigorous learning.

A child does not need formal lessons. They need play. After all, the reasoning part of the brain is not starting development until age seven or eight, and it is not fully developed until they're 25. So some people could argue that people are still children until age 25. There is time for them to learn.

Play is so important to optimal child development. It has been recognized by the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights as a right of every child. Play is the right of every child, and play improves the cognitive, physical, social, and emotional well-being of our children.

Through play, they learn about the world, and they learn about themselves. They learn skills through play. Charlotte Mason said in her first volume, "The consideration of out-of-door life in developing a method of education comes second in order because my object is to show that the chief function of the child, his business in the world during the first six or seven years of his life, is to find out all he can about whatever comes under his notice by means of his five senses. That he has an insatiable appetite for knowledge.

Got in this way and that therefore, the endeavor of his parents should be to put him in the way of making acquaintance freely with nature and natural objects that in fact the intellectual education of the young child should lie in the free exercise of perceptive power. Because the first stages of mental effort are marked by the extreme activity of this power, and the wisdom of the educator is to follow the lead of nature in the evolution of the complete human being."



I've read this passage many times, but even rereading it inspires me. All three of my children didn't learn to read early, and learning to read wasn't particularly easy for them either. I'm so glad I didn't pressure them or make those lessons into a drawer where they had to complete them, or else I gave them the time they needed to learn.

And Charlotte Mason continues here, saying, "The educational error of our day is that we believe too much in mediators. Now nature is our own mediator, undertakes herself to find work for eyes and ears, taste and touch. She will prick the brain with problems in the heart with feelings. And the part of a mother or teacher in the early years, indeed, all through life, is to sow opportunities.

And then to keep in the background ready with a guiding or restraining hand only when these are badly wanted." But, of course, our children should badly want to learn these things, so there is no benefit to begin that those academic learning lessons before age six; in fact, more harm than good could be done because too rigorous of reading lessons or drilling those math facts too soon can inhibit academics in their later years.

The University of Cambridge discussed this in 2013. As a result, over 130 early childhood education experts signed a letter advocating for an extension of informal play-based preschool and a delay in formal schooling in England until age seven. Instead, children should spend their time outdoors reading stories rich with noble characters and wondrous ideas.

They should spend their time in nature learning how to draw and using those utensils for their fine motor skills, running and jumping for their gross motor skills, and teaching and developing proper habits that will last a lifetime.

Rudolph Snyder agrees with Charlotte Mason, and this was some decades after those passages I just read. But he also, and this is of the Waldorf Philosophy, but he expressed the importance of changing teeth and delaying formal lessons



until a child's front baby teeth had been lost. He references spiritual and a physical change, which he discusses in many lectures. He said, "The time of the change of teeth was increased, the age at which the child was given over to public education."

I find that so fascinating, and further, according to a 2016 Waldorf publication, Waldorf teachers know that the second teeth are the hardest substance a child can ever produce. "The final efforts of a physical mastery display in the pushing out of hereditary teeth and the growing in of second teeth to observe child development rightly, the child's job in the years from birth to this change of teeth, is that physical mastery, uprightness balance, walking, speaking, singing, hand-eye coordination, large and gross motor skills, jumping, running, tumbling, tracking things with their eyes, those fine motor skills, sensory discrimination, rhythmic sleeping, having proper eating habits. All of these things will help produce a healthy life and robust development and a foundation of clear thinking for the child."

So in the Waldorf view, it is a distraction for a child to read or do math or study facts before they can have those important skills and capacities. And the capacity is not created until those second teeth. I find that fascinating, and I love where these philosophies, Charlotte Mason and Waldorf education, collide.

We'll discuss their differences in future episodes, but I love that they agree here. There is another philosophy, classical education, which I ascribe to quite a bit, but classical education does encourage memorization fairly early with their grammar. I don't discourage this if this is done playfully with music, but it needs to remain lighthearted and playful rather than being attached to any pressure.

So this is an encouragement that your child is not behind. Your child is not behind if they're not doing their handwriting lessons at four and five years old, or they're not reading those three letter words phonetically, or they don't have that sight word list memorized and reading that. That's okay.



Just take a breath. Let your child have the sense of wonder that play can bring them. Take away that pressure. And truly, if your child isn't in school, they won't know any different. They won't know that other children are obligated to learn these things so soon. I hope that's an encouragement to you that you can slow down childhood.

And indeed, that is what's best for a child in their lifelong development, and thank you so much for joining us today; we'll see you next time.

Thanks, friends.