

More on Socialization

Socialization--we all have to answer that question, don't we? Someone recently asked me about it on my blog with concerns that if some homeschoolers over-shelter their kids (ugh) that their kids will be like sheep being fed to the wolves once they got into the "real world".

I couldn't let that one go, so here's how I responded:

"I really think the socialization concern stems more from the fact that most of us in our generation didn't grow up with homeschoolers, or if we heard of a few of them, they were considered backwards or something. Now as more and more families are homeschooling, I think more people personally know homeschoolers and are seeing how wonderfully they are able to handle themselves. *The Old Schoolhouse*[®] *Magazine* recently did an article showing some actual research.

Instead of thinking about how homeschoolers may be over-sheltering their children, you might consider that they are actually spending more time preparing and strengthening them for what lies ahead.

Parental involvement in their children's lives is directly related to their well-being and character development--that's why schools are always trying so hard to get parents involved.

Homeschooled children are thriving beyond high school. They are contributing citizens in their communities and dedicated to their families. Don't necessarily think of them as sheep being fed to the wolves. After all that time with their families, they might be more like shepherds leading and protecting the sheep from the wolves."

So that's my 2 cents on socialization.

~Nancy Carter

Let me just say this--in all of my experience with homeschooled children, I have always found that they are a more socialized group than any other--hands-down. And not just my experience, but there are also many studies that have been done to prove just that. You can find out more from the National Home Education Research Institute.

Although in the traditional sense homeschooled children seem to be masters of socialization, the thing about the word "socialization" that's scary to me is that our culture is redefining the definition, and according to their new definition, our children just may not fit (and gladly so!)

Let's look at one of the new cultural definitions of socialization:

From Dictionary.com:

The adoption of the behavior patterns of the surrounding culture; "the socialization of children to the norms of their culture"

If socialization is a matter of "adopting society's behavior patterns" and "conforming with its values" no matter how wicked, then no thank you! We have a much higher authority than society to guide us. What does the Bible say about socialization?

"He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed."
Proverbs 13:20

"Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." 1 Timothy 4:12

"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." James 1:27

~Deborah Wuehler

Long ago when homeschooling was just beginning to grow in the U.S., I heard a short, snappy answer to the socialization question that I think can still be used. "What about socialization?" The homeschool mom replied, "I call it negative socialization in the schools." That stopped any further argument on the topic. Nothing else could be said.

In those days everybody heard the socialization question along with "What if you are teaching and the baby's diaper needs changing?" We all thought the socialization question would fade away in time, but it didn't, and you can still be ready with a short, snappy answer. Starting a long worldview discussion is rarely effective. The diaper question has faded away.

One of the long discussions might be about children spending many waking hours with herds of age-mates, with little chance for meaningful conversation. That does not develop good social skills. How did our society ever reach that view? A family setting is the best to grow up in, plus a bit of participation in the community. A homeschooling family here helps twice a month to serve food at the luncheon meetings of seniors, and the oldest boy plays his violin for them.

You could add scouts or music or athletic groups as you feel the need. But don't overdo that, and don't brag about those activities when you meet the socialization question. That leaves you saying in effect "Well, I believe in age-mate socializing the same as you. See all the activities my children are in?"

Try the short, snappy answer instead.

~Ruth Beechick

I can't believe I even need to say anything about socialization. I mean, we all *know* that the old, "What about lack of socialization?" question just doesn't hold water . . . I mean none . . . not even a teaspoonful of it.

You know that; I know that; we all know that. But when the question comes, we still find ourselves thinking, "Well, maybe they've got a point . . . maybe they do need to be around other kids more."

Mom and Dad, stop it!!!! Don't fall for that old lie. Your kids are fine; they certainly don't need to be around kids all day long to be socialized. You know it. Don't waiver. Don't get weak in the knees. Stand firm, not only in your response to the "questioner," but even more importantly, in your own mind and convictions.

Now Dad, here's where you are vital because sometimes dads fall for the lie even more than moms. Oftentimes, it's the dad who hears one of the 'questioners' and then all of a sudden becomes a "questioner" too.

"You know maybe it would be good for Josh to take a couple of classes just so he can be around other kids and learn how to interact," a dad might say to his wife.

NO!!! Don't go there. If you do, you'll only increase the uncertainty in your wife's mind, and you need to be the one who stands firm and leads the way.

Now hear this!!! There is no uncertainty! Your kids are perfectly socialized, and they don't need other kids to be better socialized.

It's the TRUTH. Believe it, cling to it, and don't make me come over there and write another article about it!

Be real,

~Todd Wilson

Biographical Information

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Nancy Carter is happy to call herself a relaxed homeschooler. After years of teaching in the public school system, she cherishes being able to learn together with her own children. She and her husband Tony have three sons and are learning all kinds of new things together on their farm. You can read more of her family's Lessons Learned on the Farm at www.HomeschoolBlogger.com/tn3jcarter or you can email her at tn3jcarter@wildblue.net.

Dr. Ruth Beechick is a lifelong educator who now writes mostly for homeschoolers, whom she sees as bright lights in these days before Christ returns. Dr. Ruth Beechick has taught hundreds of people to read, Her own newest books are World History Made Simple: Matching History with the Bible (www.HomeschoolingBooks.com or 1-800-421-6645. and A Biblical Home Education.

Todd Wilson, “The Familyman,” author of Lies Homeschooling Moms Believe, Help! I’m Married to a Homeschooling Mom, and The Official Book of Homeschooling Cartoons, is a dad, writer, conference speaker, and former pastor. Todd’s humor and gut-honest realness have made him a favorite speaker at homeschool conventions across the country and a guest on Focus on the Family. Todd and his wife Debbie homeschool their eight children in northern Indiana when they’re not traveling around the country encouraging moms and dads. You can visit Familyman Ministries at www.familymanweb.com.

Deborah Wuehler is the senior editor for The Old Schoolhouse® Magazine. She resides in Roseville, California, with her husband Richard. They are the parents of eight children: three teenagers, three elementary, a preschooler and a baby. They have been homeschooling since the birth of their firstborn who is now graduated from high school. Many of her articles can be found on www.Crosswalk.com, and many other homeschooling sites. She is a group leader in her local homeschooling support organization and she loves digging for buried treasure in the Word, reading, writing, homeschooling, and dark chocolate! Email her at senioreditor@TheHomeschoolMagazine.com.