

What to Do When You're Nice & Crispy

By Mary Hood

This morning I sat down to write an article on avoiding burnout. I've written articles about that subject many times and have a popular CD on the subject titled *Burned Out vs. On Fire*. Unfortunately, I was too burned out to write it one more time, so instead I did what many of us do nowadays: I turned to Facebook and complained about it. One of the people who responded asked me: "What are you writing about? Recognizing the signs of burnout? Avoiding burnout? Or what to do when you are nice and crispy?" That's it! I can't write about avoiding burnout when I'm already turning brown and crumbly! So instead, today, I'm going to make some suggestions about what to do when you are already nice and crispy. Perhaps, somewhere along the way, I'll figure out what I'm supposed to do too!

1. Get away by yourself. If you have young children, find a babysitter, put them in Mother's Day Out, or toss them in the general direction of your husband. Do whatever you need to do! Just because you made the decision to homeschool does not mean you need to be joined at the hip every single moment of the day! (Side Note: For me, when I had a nursing baby, that baby was an extension of me. It wouldn't have helped me to get away from the baby; it would have hurt me. Maybe that was just me. Do whatever works for you!)
2. I recommend having your alone time outdoors if at all possible. Take a walk in the woods or down by a pond. There is a reason Psalm 23 says, "*He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters, He restoreth my soul.*" Go outdoors and commune with your Maker!
3. If you can't go outdoors for some reason, find (or create!) one small area of your home that is neat, clean, and conducive to restful contemplation.
4. Start by getting yourself in a receptive spiritual mood. Perhaps you could read the above psalm or another Bible verse or a chapter in an inspirational Christian book. If you are out in the woods, recite a favorite Bible verse or two that you have already memorized.
5. Get your hands off that computer! Facebook is not the place to look for answers. (It can, sometimes, be a place to release steam or get the inspiration for an article for *The Old Schoolhouse® Magazine* . . . but that isn't what you need right now.) Seriously, limit your time on the computer and your cell phone. Get out and exercise or read a good book or find a real friend instead. (I think I might have just put a finger on part of my current problem! Between my work in real estate and my ministry to homeschoolers, plus a little totally unproductive wasting of time, I do spend too much time on the computer these days.)
6. Okay. Now start asking yourself questions. Learn the fine art of talking to yourself (and bringing God into the discussion as appropriate).

First, start with a spiritual checkup: Have you been rooted in God lately? Many of you are gardeners or wanna-be country folks. You need to be rooted in good soil, watered and fed daily. Have you been too busy to spend a little time every day with God? Are you familiar with spiritual warfare? Do you have your armor on? (Read Ephesians 6:10-17.) In two weeks I'm giving my talk titled "Homeschooling Moms: Soldiers in a Spiritual War." Of *course* the enemy is after me right now! If he can get me spiritually burned out,

physically exhausted, and depressed, I won't be able to do a good job! He loves to attack homeschooling moms with his favorite tools: depression, exhaustion, and feelings of incompetence and unworthiness. Brush that little devil off your shoulder and tell him where to go.

Second, give yourself a physical checkup. Are you taking care of yourself? Are you drinking enough water? Are you getting enough sleep? Eating good, real food? Are you avoiding anything that you should be avoiding, like maybe chocolate (gasp!), caffeine, dairy, or wheat? Not all of us have the same bad reactions to some of these things. You know your own body; take care of it!

How about physical exercise? Having several children is no excuse for not taking care of your own body. Start out each day with flexibility exercises and get some aerobic exercise at least a few times a week. This is one area where you can take the children along, so you really don't have any excuse. If you are seriously out of shape, remove most of your clothing, stand in front of a mirror, and repeat these words: "Thank you, God, for my magnificent body that you created. I love the way I look right this minute! However, I need your help. Let's get it in a little better shape together." Repeat at least twice a day until you mean it!

What about your own needs in other areas? Do you have any friends? Are you desperate for adult conversation? Are you putting off your own desires in order to "be a good mother"? That's not being a good mother! You can't take care of everybody else if you don't start from a position of strength. Have you always wanted to learn to play piano? Do it, even if you have to have two toddlers on your lap while you are practicing. Have you always wanted to get a college degree? I got my Ph.D. one class at a time while I was homeschooling. You are allowed to set goals for yourself as well as your kids, and if they are goals that fit in with God's overall plan for your life, He will help you reach them, one tiny step at a time.

Is something driving you crazy about your kids, your homeschooling, or your curriculum? Take the time to figure out what it is and why. Don't just keep plodding along, beating the same horse, because you "have to finish the second grade textbook by the end of second grade." Remember that new wine doesn't belong in old wineskins. Throw away all the assumptions you've been carrying around from your own days in school, set your own goals for your children, and don't make the mistake of worrying more about the curriculum you are selecting than the needs of your kids as individuals.

Relax and become a family again! Isn't that why you chose homeschooling in the first place? If we can help in any way, feel free to contact us at www.archersforthelord.org . We are an army of homeschooling moms who are learning to relax and enjoy our children! Now, join me as I turn off the computer and go for a walk in God's beautiful world.

Mary Hood, Ph.D., and her husband, Roy, homeschooled their five children since the early 1980s. All have successfully made the transition to adulthood. Mary has a Ph.D. in education and is the director of ARCHERS for the Lord, Inc. (The Association of Relaxed Christian Home Educators). She is the author of The Relaxed Home School, The Joyful Home Schooler, and other books, and is available for speaking engagements. Contact her via her website, www.archersforthelord.org .

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