

Advice From the Oracle

Not every family is blessed by having a Great Oracle of Wisdom such as myself in their midst, but my family is lucky. I am always ready to dispense Advice and Instruction whenever I'm asked for it, and often when I'm not asked! (Isn't that nice of me?) And although my Vast Talents occasionally go unappreciated by my thankless family, I have no doubt that you will appreciate the tips on homeschooling and childrearing that I, the Homeschooled Oracle, have to offer. I share these Fabulous Tidbits out of my store of Personal Experiences, Personal Observations, and from the Stock of Truisms I learned from my Venerated Parents.

A-a-hem. Here it goes.

Kids will be kids. But that doesn't mean they can't learn to act like well-behaved adults—usually at a younger age than parents give them credit for.

Just because an “expert” says something doesn't automatically mean it is the only way—or even the best way—for your children. Don't be afraid to think independently. You know your children better than the experts do.

Children are much more likely to remember the ice cream they had at the end of an Expensive Educational Field Trip than they are to remember anything else about it. (This pearl I share from my Personal Experience as a kid.) Unless you're filthy rich (or you're going on the field trip because you want to go), save the expensive field trips till the kids are old enough to truly appreciate them.

Your children are not you and may disagree with your opinions in many areas. But as long as they are in your home, living on your nickel, you have the right to require certain standards of dress and conduct from your children, even if they do squawk.

Just because a book is an incomprehensible “literary classic” doesn't mean your children will be ignorant morons forevermore if they don't read it.

Kids need pets. You probably don't need their pets, but they do.

Criticizing or making fun of your children in front of others is a great way to have a bad relationship. Don't do this.

It's not the end of the world if your children spend the first couple weeks of school in September finishing up their books from the previous year. (Another gem from Personal Experience. Do you know how many times this happened to me? And look, I still turned out normal! Er, um, assuming you think I'm normal...)

It does no good to homeschool and shelter your children from the world if you invite the world back in through harmful books, movies, video games, TV shows, or websites and bad peer influences.

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Kids need dirt to play in. If you don't have that dirt you're able or willing to let them wallow in, let them grow some indoor plants from seed.
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Include your children in your conversations with other adults. Your kids will learn a lot.

Homeschooling in and of itself doesn't earn God's special favor. What counts in God's eyes is your heart and attitude.

If you value your own reputation, teach your children not to touch, taste, or handle things or explore the house uninvited when you take them into someone else's home.

Kids need hugs. So do you.

Not every child who begs for a chemistry set is responsible enough to own one.

Your children's overall behavior will usually conform to the level of your expectations. If you expect them to be rebellious little pills, they probably will be. Keep your expectations high.

Turn off the TV. Yes, turn it off. Really. It is possible.

Your children do not have to go to college immediately after high school. If they wait a year or two to and spend the time working and rounding themselves out with other valuable experiences, their lives aren't going to come to a screeching halt.

Kids don't need friends their own age nearly as much as they need to find their best friends in Mom and Dad.

Teach your children telephone etiquette. "Hellowhoozit?..... Hey, MOOOOOOOOOM! MOOOOOOOOM!" doesn't cut the mustard. For safety reasons, don't let young children answer the phone or have their voices on the voicemail recording.

My mom says that your life will get crazier the older your kids get. That's a truism I trust her opinion on, even though I quite frankly don't have any idea what she's talking about. Do you?

Children do not have to grow up despising their siblings. Encourage and insist on siblings treating each other with love, kindness and respect.

Baking soda and vinegar experiments should take place outside.

If you're indefinably uncomfortable with who your children hang out with, your gut instincts are probably right. Don't be afraid to politely sever relationships.

The old adage that "What you do in moderation, your children will do in excess" is usually true.

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Take time for family fun now and then. Schedule it on the calendar if you have to.

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Teach your sons to cook too.

Once in awhile homeschooling is a lonely and difficult road. It's still worth it. You'll be glad you did it. I mean, just look at how I turned out!

Raquelle Sheen was home-schooled all her life and obtained her college degree from home also. She and her family have been active in the homeschooling community for many years, having served with state homeschool organizations in several states. For more articles by the Sheen family visit www.homeschoolfamilyforum.com.