

JOYFUL HOMESCHOOLING

10 Ways to Build Your Home School on a Foundation of Joy

**The Key to Successful Homeschooling is NOT Curriculum,
It's Mindset!**

Rebecca Kochenderfer

Joyful Homeschooling:

10 Ways to Build Your Home School on a Foundation of Joy

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**Thank you for all that you do to make
homeschooling a joyful option for families.**

Welcome!

It's amazing what a change of attitude can do! Have you noticed that when you wake up on the "right side of the bed" and approach your day with enthusiasm and optimism, your day goes more smoothly and you enjoy yourself more?

Your attitude and the way you approach your day affects the quality of your homeschooling, too. In fact, the key ingredient to successful homeschooling is not curriculum; it's mindset.

Trust me. For over 20 years, I was a homeschooling mom (from birth to college). I did it bad ways and good ways and discovered that a homeschool that focuses on joy and gratitude is the best kind.

It starts with you. You are the captain of your homeschooling ship. Your attitudes toward your day and toward your children's efforts profoundly affect the outcome of your homeschooling. When you focus on the joys in your life, your days flow better and you accomplish much, much more.

Joyful Homeschooling introduces you to ten "mindsets" -- a different mindset each week. And it provides you with prompts for the week to help you put this new mindset into action and turn it into a habit.

One of the best things you can do for yourself and for your homeschool is to take a couple of minutes each morning to "get your head on straight" before you launch yourself into your day. This will elevate your attitude and will improve not only your homeschooling but also your life in general.

Here are the mindsets we'll be focusing on:

Week 1: Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

Week 2: The Power of Visualization

Week 3: Growth Mindset Versus Fixed Mindset

Week 4: What Brings You Joy?

Week 5: Say Yes More Often

Week 6: Catch Them Being Good

Week 7: Focus On What You Want, Not On What You Don't Want

Week 8: Life is a Daring Adventure

Week 9: The 5 Love Languages

Week 10: Taking Care of Yourself

Final Thoughts: Create Art

So turn the page and let's get started. It's time to build your homeschool on a foundation of joy.

Week 1

Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

Self-fulfilling prophecy is a negative or positive prediction you have about yourself that invariably comes true. “I knew that was going to happen.” “I knew I wouldn’t be able to do that.” Our minds link our beliefs and our behavior; we become what we expect to become.

Self-fulfilling prophecy is subconscious for most people. For example, if you believe that math is hard, it *will* be hard. If you believe you are uneducated and “dumb,” you will feel dumb and act dumb.

Many times, the expectations you have for yourself come from the way you were raised. When asked why she hadn’t applied to college, my daughter’s friend replied, “I’m a Taylor. We don’t go to college.” Conversely, another child may reply, “I’m a Peterson. We always get into the college we want to attend.”

As parents, we want to make sure our children hear us having positive expectations for ourselves and for them. From that, they will learn to develop their own positive expectations.

- “I can do anything I set my mind to.”
- “I have a green thumb.”
- “I have a knack for...”
- “Things are only as hard as I make them.”
- “I’m a learning machine.”

Our children hear beyond our words; they internalize the message we send with our actions as well. How do you project your homeschooling journey? If you refer to something as hard, it will be hard for them. If you say something like, “I know this is boring,” it will be boring for them. If you make a habit of showing a frustrated face or sigh while planning their activities, they will come to believe that homeschooling is a chore and an unwelcome sacrifice, instead of a gift.

You can leverage the power of self-fulfilling prophecy with affirmations. Affirmations are positive statements about yourself that you write down and say aloud every day. For example, you might say, “My days are fun, productive, and filled with delightful surprises.” Eventually, you will believe that it is true and it will *become* true.

Gratitude is another tool for setting positive self-predictions. In the pages that follow, I ask you to say what you are grateful for and WHY you are grateful for it. Recognizing *why* you are grateful for something sets up a type of positive self-fulfilling prophecy. For example:

- I’m grateful for this beautiful weather because I can spend some time out on the deck and I can go for a walk.
- I’m grateful someone unloaded the dishwasher because now I don’t have to do it and that gives me extra time to do other stuff. I also feel more appreciated when others pitch in.
- I’m grateful for my good health because it feels good to feel good and I don’t have to worry about getting sick.
- I’m so grateful for my kids because I love them and they make my life so much richer and fuller.

Gratitude is a powerful force.

Use this week’s prompts to become aware of both the positive and negative ways you are using self-fulfilling prophecy, and make adjustments to your thinking. **If you are going to be making predictions about your future and about your children’s future, make sure they are positive predictions.**

Monday

What positive outcomes are you predicting for yourself today?

What positive predictions are you making for your children?

Write down five positive affirmations for both yourself and for your children.

Are there any academic subject areas you have been referring to as boring or hard? How are you going to fix that?

What are you grateful for today and *why*?

Weekend Wrap-up for Week 1

Saturday & Sunday

What did you discover this past week about self-fulfilling prophecy? Do either you or your children have a habit of making negative statements like “I can’t _____”?

What predictions do you want to make for your future?

What predictions do you want to make for your children?

Where do you think most of your predictions come from (e.g. family, friends, or society)?

What can you do to make sure you have only positive predictions about your future?

Week 2

The Power of Visualization

When Michael Phelps was training for the Olympics, his coach had him visualize different types of races in his head every night before he went to bed. Once, in one of his real races, his goggles fogged up and he was unable to see the lane dividers, the line on the bottom of the pool, or the wall at the end of the pool. Because he had repeatedly practiced this type of scenario in his head, he knew exactly what to do and was able to win the race.

Prisoners of War (POWs) use visualization, too. They will play golf in their head or envision practicing the piano. When released, they find that their golf game or their piano playing has improved—even though they only practiced it in their imagination.

This is amazing stuff. The question is, how can you use visualization to improve your own life and your homeschool?

Take a few minutes each morning to visualize how you would like your day to go. See yourself flowing joyfully from one accomplishment to the next. This is not a visual “to-do” list; this is a mini-movie attached to strong positive emotions, like happiness, excitement or peace.

Sometimes, it’s helpful to pretend that your perfect day has already occurred. For example, in the morning before your day has started, you may say or write down something like this:

“I had the greatest day today. I woke feeling totally rested and eager for my day. The kids woke up in good shape, too. Our homeschool was just awesome today. We got so much done and we really enjoyed ourselves. When dad came home in the evening, the kids were so excited to tell him about all of the neat things they had learned today. I feel so light and happy. I’m so grateful for all the wonderful things in my life and I’m so glad that I’m able to spend this time with my children.”

Another way to use visualization is with goal setting. Once again, do not approach this as a robotic to-do list. You must attach these images to strong, positive emotions.

For example, let's say one of your goals is to get all of your school supplies organized. Before you start on this project, visualize your already successfully organized supplies. Add positive affirmations to your visualization. You might say to yourself, "I feel so proud of myself. I thought organizing our supplies was going to be hard, but it was so easy! And it took much less time than I'd expected. The kids pitched in, and we ended up having a great time. In addition, I learned a lot about the kinds of supplies the kids are and aren't interested in using. Now I'm looking at our bookshelves and our files and they look so beautiful. This is awesome!"

This week, take the time each morning to visualize what your happy homeschooling day is going to be like. See it as if it has already happened. Then let it go and just flow through your day.

Monday

Take a few minutes this morning to visualize your perfect day. Perhaps start with:

"I had the best day today . . . _____

Is there a particular goal you are working on? If so, see it in your mind as if it is already joyfully completed.

What are you grateful for today, and *why*?

Weekend Wrap-up for Week 2

Saturday & Sunday

What was the most powerful visualization experience you had this week?

Do you think visualization might help your children, too? Perhaps they can visualize the joy of receiving a 100% on their spelling test. How can you make positive visualization a part of your homeschooling?

What goals did you achieve this week? List them here.

Week 3

Growth Mindset versus Fixed Mindset

People with a “growth-mindset” believe they can develop intelligence and they see themselves as a work in progress. People with a “fixed mindset” believe that intelligence and talents are fixed—you are what you are and nothing will change that.

Viewing the world through a fixed mindset is a joy killer because you are constantly judging yourself and coming up short. “I’m not good at that.” “I’m bad with numbers.” “I stink at sports.” A lot of this comes from our culture. Report cards do not describe how you have grown as a person or improved in a subject area. You either “need improvement” or are excellent, average or a failure.

The problem with a fixed mindset is that it does not encourage you to change and grow. When you are in “fixed mindset mode,” you avoid “failure” at all costs and may stop yourself from trying new things. When you are in “growth mindset mode,” you take on challenges, knowing you will learn something from the experience.

This is where homeschooling holds a big advantage over conventional classroom learning. Instead of your children judging themselves as either good or bad, they can ask themselves, “What did I learn from this? How have I grown? Where do I want to go next?” This is a much more powerful frame of mind.

Communicating a growth mindset to our children can be tricky. We think we are praising our children when we say, “You learned that so quickly.” What some children internalize is, “If I don’t learn something quickly, I’m a failure” or “I shouldn’t do something unless I can do it quickly.” We may say to our children, “That’s easy for you” or “You make that look easy,” but what they hear is, “If it isn’t easy for me, I’m a failure.”

Listen to your inner voice. Is it encouraging you or criticizing you before you even try something? Listen to the way you speak to your children. Be sure to remind

them that no one is perfect and mistakes are a part of life. Allow your actions to show them that there is no such thing as failure. Failure is just an outcome. They can do it differently next time and get a different result.

This week, I want you to pay close attention to both your inner and your outer voices. Make sure those voices are growth-oriented.

Monday

What growth-oriented challenges are you going to take on today?

What new things do you want to try today?

How can you adapt your homeschooling so that it is more growth-oriented?

What are you grateful for today and *why*?

Weekend Wrap-up for Week 3

Saturday & Sunday

What did you learn this week?

Did you encounter any “failures” this week? How did you handle them? Did you focus on what you can learn from the situations?

What did you discover this week about your inner voice? Does this voice encourage you, or does it tell you everything that could go wrong?

Think of something that you are “bad” at doing. How can you approach it again from a growth mindset?

Week 4

“What Brings You Joy?”

I'd like you to try an experiment. Make a pledge to yourself that for the next 5-7 days, you are *only* going to do things that you enjoy doing. No have-to's or should-do's. This is a week for *want-to's*!

I tried this experiment for a week and the results surprised me.

On Day 1, my happiness and joy came from watching TV and from eating pizza (basically, from resting).

On Day 2, my happiness came from walking eight miles and by being productive.

Day 3 was not a joyful day, no matter how much I wanted it to be. I really wanted something I did not get. I didn't know it at the time, but there was a reason I wasn't supposed to have it. There was a lesson I needed to learn by not getting it.

The week progressed and joy took on a different form each day. If I had stopped the experiment after Day 1, I would have thought that the key to joy was rest and pizza. It turned out that each day was different. Sometimes, joy came from resting while other times it came from keeping busy. Sometimes joy can come from being alone and sometimes we experience it by being around others.

When I started out the week, my goal was to feel joy every minute of every day. However, I discovered that (at least for me) joy is not possible or even desirable every minute of every day. Sometimes, there is a bigger purpose at work.

We work this week on switching from a have-to mindset into a want-to mindset. “Have-to” is a joy killer. A close cousin of have-to is “should-do” (e.g. “I should do this” or “I should do that”). It's exhausting.

“Want-to” is a joy enhancer. Choose to do something because you *want* to do it, not because someone says you have to or should do it.

Pay attention this week to what brings you joy and transition from one joy to another. If you feel like doing the dishes, then you’ll do them. If not, then you won’t do them. If you want to do math with the kids, then you will. If not, then you will follow your joy and see where it leads you. Perhaps it will lead you to making edible play-dough or to going outside for a science experiment. Perhaps it will lead you into taking the day off and reading a good book. Everything you do and don’t do this week is ok. It all balances out.

Follow your joy each day and see where it leads you. To everything, there is a season. Follow your joy. Rest when it leads you to rest, play when it leads you to play, and be productive when it leads you to work.

Joy is no small thing. It is unique to each person and it is often elusive. Homeschooling keeps us so busy we forget how beautiful and fleeting this time with our children is.

Your mission this week is to enjoy your life more. Focus on what you *want* to do, not on what you *have* to do or *should* do. Find out what makes you happy and what makes your children happy. You are probably going to discover that it is different each day. Go with the flow and follow your joy.

Take a few minutes each morning to answer the prompts. These questions are different each week. However, one question you will find on every page is: “What are you grateful for?” Gratitude is an important daily habit because it focuses your attention on the joy that is already all around you.

Monday

What joyful things are you looking forward to today?

What do you think your children would enjoy doing today?

Is there anything that you don't want to do?

Is there something that you think your children may not want to do today? What would they rather do instead?

What are you grateful for today, and *why*?

Weekend Wrap-up for Week 4

Saturday & Sunday

*Today is a day for freedom,
Not a day for have-to's or should-do's.
It's a day for want-to's.*

*Today is a day of exploration.
Armed only with a notebook, a pen and a cup of tea,
You set off on a journey of self-discovery.*

*Today is a day for asking for what you want.
Table inside too noisy? Politely ask to move outside and voila! You are there.
Why don't we ask for what we want more often?*

*Today is a day for choices.
Will you go to the gym? Maybe, maybe not.
Reading out on the deck? Absolutely.*

*Today you are the leading role, the above-the-title player.
Not your partner, not the kids,
You are the heroine, the protagonist, the leading lady in your life.*

What did you discover this week about your have-to's, should-do's, and want-to's?

What did you discover about joy?

Are there any changes you want to make in your life and in your homeschooling based on what you learned this week?

Week 5

Say 'Yes' More Often

In Jim Carey's movie *Yes Man*, the main character has a life-changing experience when he decides to say "yes" to every opportunity presented to him. I thought this was a great idea so I decided to try it. For one week, I said "yes" to everything. "Can you join us for a movie?" Yes. "Want to come to my daughter's concert?" Yes. "You really should replace your old phone with a new phone. I think you'll love it." Yes.

I invite you this week to play The Yes Game. Try it for a full week, but don't tell anyone what you are doing. That way, you will get honest results and you won't have to worry about anyone taking advantage of you.

When I played The Yes Game, I learned a lot about myself. I discovered that I say "no" a lot. Oftentimes, my knee-jerk response is, "No thanks. I don't have the time, the money or the energy." Yet, when I did say "yes" to everything, I felt great. I *did* have the time, the money and the energy. And it was so much fun!

I also uncovered a hidden dream of mine. One day, I found myself sitting in the car, watching planes take off, wishing that someone would ask me if I wanted to take flying lessons. Why didn't I think that flying lessons were an option unless I was playing The Yes Game? Was it because the lessons would be too expensive? Was it because I wouldn't have had the courage to try flying unless I "had to?" Or, was it because I thought it was selfish of me to even consider something so extravagant?

I learned a lot about human nature that week, too. I discovered that a friend of mine never asks for anything. Ever. Why? Does she feel she would be imposing? Does she feel she would lose her independence if she asked someone for help? I also discovered, surprisingly, that sales people seldom ask for the sale. They dance around it but they seldom directly ask, "Can I ring that up for you?"

You know who is good at asking for what they want? Kids. This week, pay special attention to what your kids are asking for. See if there is a pattern.

Are you thinking right now that you are going to skip this exercise and that you are not going to play The Yes Game? Why is that? Is it because you fear what will happen? Are you afraid you'll spend too much money? Are you afraid people will take advantage of you? Or, are you a person who already says "yes" all the time, even when you want to say "no?"

The Yes Game is important because it uncovers your response habits and your fears. It's important to your homeschool because it helps you to look at your decisions in a new light. It helps you to get rid of any emotional baggage you may be carrying. **This way, when you are making your homeschooling decisions, you know you are basing your decisions on joy and not on fear.**

Monday

What are you going to say “yes” to today?

Is there anything you want to say “no” to? Why do you want to say no?

What do you think your kids are going to ask you for today? How do you feel about that?

What do you want to say “yes” to more often?

What are you grateful for today and *why*?

Weekend Wrap-up for Week 5

Saturday & Sunday

What did you learn from your experiences this week?

Are there things you want to start saying “yes” to?

Are there things you want to start saying “no” to?

What are your children asking for, repeatedly, in their homeschool?

What other ways can you use visualization to improve your life—perhaps to improve your finances, your health or your career? See more and more checks arriving in the mail. See yourself looking fit and beautiful. See yourself at work feeling happy, productive and appreciated.

If you could have anything or do anything, money wasn't a concern and there was no chance of failure, what would that be? What would you do? Now visualize that and attach it to strong positive emotions.

Week 6

Catch Them Being Good

Have you ever heard the phrase, “catch them being good?” The idea behind this simple reminder is that we should spend more time praising our children for what they are doing right, and less time criticizing them for what they are doing wrong.

For example:

- Notice when they make their beds instead of when it is unmade.
- Praise them when their room is clean and spend less time pointing out when their room is dirty.
- Thank them for asking nicely for what they want.
- Give your kids your attention when they are playing nicely with each other—not just when they are fussing.
- Circle the number of questions they got right, not the number of questions they got wrong.

You may have some misgivings about this idea. We live in a society that believes that when raising children, we should emphasize the stick, not the carrot. The problem with this philosophy is that we end up criticizing our children too often.

This carries over into criticizing others as well. We criticize our spouse when he doesn't take out the trash or mow the lawn, but we don't thank him when he does do it. When is the last time someone thanked you for doing the dishes? Don't you think it would be easier to do your chores if you knew people appreciated them?

This week you are going to notice the good things that are happening around you.

- “Nice job brushing your teeth without being asked.”
- “Oh, your bed looks so pretty today.”

- “Wow, look at how your handwriting has improved.”
- “Thank you for taking the time to make such a healthy, delicious dinner.”
- “Thanks for getting up early and going to work. I really appreciate it.”
- “Thanks for coming out to the car and helping me bring in the groceries.”

This week you are going to catch *yourself* being good, too.

- “I went to the gym today. I rock.”
- “Wow, I really did a good job preparing those lessons.”
- “This is one of my better meals. I’m awesome.”

Let “catch them being good” become your daily mantra. It will change your homeschooling and your life.

Monday

How are you going to catch your children being good today?

How are you going to catch your spouse being good?

How are you going to catch yourself being good?

What are you grateful for today and *why*?

Weekend Wrap-up for Week 6

Saturday & Sunday

Now that you have had a week to notice the good instead of the bad, are there changes you would like to make regarding the way you speak to others?

Portfolios are a great way to emphasize the good. For example, you can take a photo of your child surrounded by all of the books she has read. Or, you can show how her handwriting has improved over time. Alternatively, you can include some of those spelling and math tests where she scored 100%. This doesn't have to be fancy. You can just tape a photo to a piece of paper and write a few words below it. What types of photos could you take? What other things could you include in her portfolio?

In what ways did saying "thank you" and "noticing the good" improve your relationship with your spouse?

In what ways did “catch them being good” affect your child’s daily chores and hygiene? Did you find that you didn’t need to nag as much to get things done?

Week 7

Focus On What You Want, Not On What You Don't Want

Mother Teresa once declined an invitation to participate in an anti-war event. She told them that she was not interested in an anti-war rally but that she would be happy to participate in a pro-peace rally.

Why do we spend our time focusing on what we DON'T want, instead of focusing on what we DO want?

Why do we focus on the parts of our body that we don't like, instead of on the parts we do like? Why do we notice our aches and pains, instead of how great we feel? Why do we talk about everything we can't afford, instead of appreciating what we can afford?

If you focus on "not enough," you get "not enough." This applies to time, as well as money. Instead of relaxing and enjoying the day with our children, we race against the clock and stress ourselves out because "we don't have enough time to get everything done."

Most of us have the unfortunate habit of looking for the negative, instead of for the positive.

I have what I laughingly call "good parking karma." One day, however, I had an appointment downtown and the parking lot was crazy. I mumbled to myself, "I'm never going to be able to find a space this time of day." Sure enough, I didn't see any open spaces. Then I stopped and reminded myself about my "good parking karma" and sure enough, when I looked around again I discovered that there was an open space right in front of me. It had been there all this time, but I hadn't seen it because I hadn't expected it to be there. It was as if I was blind to what was right in front of me.

The moral of the story is this: focus your attention on what you want, not on what you *don't* want. The things you desire are right there in front of your eyes.

If you want more abundance in your life, you have to focus on the abundance you already have. If you want better health, you have to focus on the good health you already enjoy. If you want more time, you have to be more grateful for the time you have.

This week, you are going to pay attention to those things in your life that you like and that you wouldn't mind having more of if you could. You are going to become aware of the words you use throughout the day that may be focusing your attention on what you don't want, instead of on what you do want.

Focus on what you want, not on what you don't want. Remember, that open parking space is right there in front of your eyes...but you won't see it until you *expect* to see it.

Monday

What positive experiences are you going to have today regarding money?

What positive experiences are you going to have today regarding time?

How will you experience love today?

How will you enjoy your good health today?

What are you grateful for today and *why*?

Weekend Wrap-up for Week 7

Saturday & Sunday

What did you discover about yourself this week?

Did you catch yourself saying or thinking negative things this week? If so, what were those things? Did you notice a pattern?

Is there an area of your life and your homeschooling where you consistently focus on the positive and use positive words? Why do you think you feel so good about this area of your life?

Did you have a chance this week to pay attention to the way other people speak about money and time? What did you notice?

Are there any money-related changes you want to make in your life?

Are there any time-related changes you want to make in your life?

Week 8

Life is a Daring Adventure

Helen Keller once wrote, “Life is either a daring adventure or nothing at all.”

It’s important to pay attention to the exciting parts of your life and your homeschool. These special moments fuel your day and make you want to get out of bed in the morning.

Everyone has a different idea of what is exciting. For one person, it is writing a book. For someone else, it is decorating a room or taking care of animals.

Is your life an adventure? Do you like what you are doing? Do you like where you are heading?

Ask these same questions about your homeschool. Is it an adventure, or are you playing it safe? Do you like what you are doing in your homeschool, or are you just doing what someone else told you to do? Do you like where you are heading with your homeschooling? Does it reflect who you are and who you want to be?

This week, you are going to make your homeschooling a daring adventure. Ask your children about their dreams. If you have a child who wants to be a ballerina, take him or her to a live ballet or to a ballet class this week. Read a book or see a movie about ballerinas—anything that moves your child toward that dream. If your son or daughter wants to be an astronaut, build your curriculum around that this week. Watch movies about astronauts, glue stars onto the ceiling or borrow a telescope from a friend. Do anything that acknowledges his dream and moves him in that direction.

This week, ask each of your children, “What is your #1 goal?” When I asked my son that question, he said that his #1 goal was to learn how to drive every kind of boat. Sure enough, I found a boating camp near us that introduced kids to a different kind of boat each day for five days. He took that camp three summers in

a row, and I never would have known it existed if I hadn't have asked him that important question.

You get to dream, too. What is it that excites you? What is your #1 goal? Let your children see you growing and trying new things, too. Going after your dream is not selfish; it's good role modeling. It's also a good habit.

This week, make sure your life and your homeschooling include a bit of adventure. Explore the unknown and see what happens. Build some excitement into your life. After all, homeschooling at its best and boldest is a daring adventure and a leap of faith.

Monday

What can you do today to make your life more of an adventure?

What can you do today to make your homeschooling more of an adventure?

How can you help your children move forward with their #1 goal?

What can you do today to make progress on your own #1 goal?

What are you grateful for today and *why*?

Weekend Wrap-up for Week 8

Saturday & Sunday

How do you feel this weekend? Do you feel lighter, happier and less burdened? If so, why do you think that is? If not, why not?

Have you noticed that you get more done when you are happy and enthusiastic about what you are doing? Write down or say everything you accomplished this past week.

What are the types of things that make you happy?

What are the types of things that make your children happy?

How can you feel happy, enthusiastic and joyful more of the time?

How can you continue to make your life and your homeschool more of an adventure?

Week 9

The Five Love Languages

The book *The 5 Love Languages* by Gary Chapman helps me in my marriage, my parenting and in my homeschooling. I think you will find it helpful, too.

According to the author, there are five love languages. Here's how it works:

- If your love language is **Physical Touch**, you show your love by touching others and you receive love primarily through touch.
- If your love language is **Gifts**, you show your love by giving gifts and you feel loved when you receive a gift.
- If your love language is **Quality Time**, you feel loved when someone makes an effort to spend quality time with you, and you show your love by giving your time to those you care about.
- If your love language is **Words of Affirmation**, you show love and you receive love through words, spoken or written.
- If your love language is **Acts of Service**, you show love and receive love through helpful acts, like doing the dishes or taking out the trash.

Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to show your love, not via your own love language, but through your loved one's love language. For example, my husband's primary love language is Quality Time and mine is Gifts. My natural inclination would be to show him my love by giving him gifts, but what he really wants is my time. My daughter's love language is Physical Touch, so if I give her a gift she thinks it's nice, but what she really wants and needs is hugs and cuddly lap time.

Love languages help siblings get along better, too. My younger daughter is annoyed when her big sister hangs all over her or sits all over her on the couch, but she puts up with it because she knows her sister's love language is Physical Touch and that she needs that touch.

This week, I encourage you to identify your family's love languages. You can do that through observation or by using the Love Language Profile at: www.5lovelanguages.com.

The 5 Love Languages can help your homeschooling, too. If a child responds to Quality Time, then be sure to give that child a lot of attention, perhaps with one-on-one tutoring. If a child needs Physical Touch, then reading time on your lap will probably work well. If a child responds to Words of Affirmation, then be sure to reinforce his or her learning with words of praise. If your child's love language is Acts of Service, then he or she will feel loved if you tidy his room or help him with his chores. Remember, your natural inclination will be to show your love using YOUR love language. If your goal is to fill their love bucket, you need to use THEIR love language.

The beautiful thing is that these love languages work both ways. When your family knows what your love language is, they will be able to show their love for you in the way that works best for you. **This week is going to be a love fest.**

Monday

What is your primary love language? How can you fill your love bucket today?
(Hint: I buy myself flowers as a gift to myself.)

What can you do today to show your love to your spouse or significant other in a way that matches his or her love language?

How can you show your love for your children today in a way that matches their love language?

Now think of a friend. Guess his or her love language. Do you need to change the way you've been showing your love?

What are you grateful for today and *why*?

Weekend Wrap-up for Week 9

Saturday & Sunday

In what ways were the five love languages helpful to you?

Did you feel more loved this week? In what ways?

Did you have any conflicts this week that you think were a result of mismatched love languages?

In what ways did the five love languages make your homeschooling more powerful this week?

Week 10

Taking Care of Yourself

There's no doubt about it: fatigue is a joy-killer. It's difficult to feel happy and joyful when you are tired or overwhelmed.

This week, you're going to explore different ways to recharge your battery. You have taken on an additional job that most other parents don't have: homeschooling. If you want to do all that you do, do it well, *and* do it with joy, then you must take time to keep yourself in good spirits.

This doesn't have to be a big deal. It doesn't have to be a weekend at a spa (although that does sound nice). It could be sipping a quiet cup of coffee before the kids wake up, or watching your favorite show at night. Maybe it's a girls' night out or a picnic date with your spouse. I used to recharge by reading aloud to the kids as they fell asleep. I enjoyed it as much as they did, and it helped me decompress from my busy day.

One of the biggest reasons people don't rest and recharge is because they "don't have the time." Once you are rested, you get more done and things flow more easily. Plus, what's the point of getting a lot done if you don't enjoy yourself in the process?

Another reason people don't take care of themselves is that they "don't have the money." There are ways around that, too. For example, you might join a cooking co-op where you trade off making dinners for each other. Consider a baby-sitting co-op where you trade babysitting time. Perhaps you share your homeschooling duties with another family and trade off days or subjects.

Sometimes, you just have one of those days where you feel overwhelmed by everything. There is just too much to do and you can't get your head around it. I have a simple solution for this. When I am in "overwhelm mode," I play a game. I ask myself, "What is the most important thing to do today?" or "If I only do one thing today, what should it be?" I find that this helps get me out of the spinning vortex of overwhelm and back to feeling good.

I also set a timer. If there is a job I don't want to do, I tell myself that I only have to do it for 30 minutes or for 1 hour. I set the timer and when it rings, I choose whether I want to continue. Usually, I end up doing more; I just needed a little help getting started.

If the house is a disaster, I will set the timer for 10 minutes and we all work together—just for those 10 minutes—to put things back in order. I explain to the family that 5 people times 10 minutes ends up getting 50 minutes' worth of work done.

This week, you are going to focus on you—not your spouse, not the kids, not your homeschool. Be creative. Grab a few moments throughout the day to catch your breath and find your smile. Recharge along the way and you will enjoy your life so much more.

It isn't selfish to take care of yourself. It's just common sense. You can serve others better when you are at your best.

Monday

How are you going to take care of yourself today?

What obstacles are standing in your way?

How can you work around those obstacles?

Now take a moment to visualize taking care of *you* and think about how good that's going to feel.

What are you grateful for today and *why*?

Weekend Wrap-up for Week 10

Saturday & Sunday

What did you discover about yourself this week?

What are some ways that you can take care of yourself?

How are you going to schedule time for you?

Did you find that planning to take care of yourself stabilized your moods and made your days better?

Final Thoughts: Create Art

I once believed that only a lucky few of us are artists and the rest of us are not. Now I'm not so sure.

I once approached my life as a manager or a businessperson, building to-do lists and crossing things off. That approach felt a bit robotic and didn't give me joy. Now I approach my life more like an artist.

When you're an artist, you have to trust. When you start on an art project, you have no guarantee how it's going to turn out. Yet, you create it anyway. This takes a leap of faith.

When you're creating art, you put your soul into a project—a project that others may criticize or may not like. This takes a lot of courage.

When you're an artist, you can turn simple daily tasks into art. You may arrange food on plates in an appealing way, or you may clean your house with an eye toward creating beauty.

When you're creating art, you don't think about playing it safe—you pour your whole heart into a project, with no thought as to possible failure and no worry about what others might think.

My advice to you is this:

Create art when you homeschool. Be bold and daring. Trust your children and trust yourself. Think less about the outcome and more about the process. Adjust as you go along, with an eye toward creating beauty and joy. That is the secret to successful homeschooling.

It begins with you. Go ahead and create art. You are an artist.

The Key to Successful Homeschooling is NOT Curriculum, It's MINDSET!

Your attitudes toward your day and toward your children's efforts profoundly affect the outcome of your homeschooling. When you focus on the joys in your life, your days flow better and you accomplish much, much more.

Joyful Homeschooling introduces you to ten “mindsets”—a different mindset each week—and it provides you with prompts for the week to help you put this new mindset into action and turn it into a habit. One of the best things you can do for yourself and for your homeschool is to take a couple of minutes each morning to “get your head on straight” before you start your day.

“Rebecca Kochenderfer has been a business associate, accountability buddy and personal friend of mine for many years. Her parents died when she was a young child and two of her sisters died tragically. Yet through all the heartache, she has maintained a joie de vivre that has enabled her to have a wonderful marriage, be a terrific mom to her three children, and be a successful entrepreneur. She created the life she wanted for herself and her family not just by saying positive affirmations but also by *living* them.

Diane Flynn Keith (Editor of *Homefires* and author of *Car Schooling*.)

For over 20 years—from preschool through high school—Rebecca Kochenderfer homeschooled her 3 children. She is the owner of Homeschool.com (the #1 homeschooling community on the Internet) and is the author of *Homeschooling and Loving It!* and *Homeschooling for Success*. She is also the author of *Joy Journal: Make Joy a Daily Experience*. Her son, following his joy, wrote his first novel at age 17, her oldest daughter danced with Ballet Austin at age 16, and her youngest daughter went to one of the top prep schools in the country for her senior year.