



Getting Back to Normal? Go Outside and Play!

By Jan Wilton, Homeschool Representative

If you are like most families, you long to “get back to normal.” Then you begin to wonder if we can go back to the way education was previously. Do we need to accept the concept of a new normal?

Many people thought homeschooling families had the best advantage when schools closed last March and all parents had their children participating in online school. Some people may have thought homeschool families did not have to worry about the pandemic affecting their children because they were already teaching and learning at home. Homeschool families heard then and are still hearing that they have not been impacted by the pandemic.

That is not true. All extracurricular activities, field trips, cultural events, and homeschool co-ops were closed. Homeschooling educators and their families continue to be impacted by the pandemic.

One Way Children Were Affected by the Pandemic

Recently, a veteran homeschool mom — preschool–high school — shared her concerns with me about her children. She was most concerned about the impact of the lack of socialization of her preschooler. Prior to COVID-19, her children attended many activities in their community. When everything closed, the children were isolated at home with activities available on Facebook Live or Zoom. As good as those resources are, they cannot take the place of face-to-face interaction.

It has come to her attention that her preschooler has developed fear of other people. His communication with others was so limited that he now does not talk to people he formerly saw on a

regular basis. I am one of those people. Recently, I met the mother and son at a local park, and he was very hesitant to come and talk to me. He fully participates by laughing, singing, and talking to me on Zoom each Friday morning with our church's Itty Bittys group, a time to share a story, song, puppet, and prayer. He was fearful of me in person. The mother and I discussed how to help her child relearn to make friends face-to-face.

Get Involved

Homeschool families, start participating in the many opportunities now open. Encourage your children to get involved in activities, including sports, gymnastics, library clubs, etc. My friend is planning for her children to enjoy again being with other children and families. Going to the park was only the beginning. She is looking forward to meeting with groups of friends, old and new, to work together and plan fun, fantastic ways to help children regain social life! The children will find a new normal.

Teacher, speaker, author Rueben Welch once said, "We really do need each other." What is your plan to reconnect? Find a new normal. How has the isolation of the past year impacted you? Is your family also missing getting together with other homeschoolers? Find a new normal. It only takes a call to your friends to say, "Let's get together. We miss spending time with our friends." Then, pack the snacks and go out and play!

Jan Wilton lives in Lancaster, Texas. She has taught in Christian school, public school, and homeschool settings. She is currently serving as an instructional reading tutor for grades 4-6 in a charter school. She encourages her daughter, who is a homeschool mom. You may contact Jan at revjan2008@gmail.com.