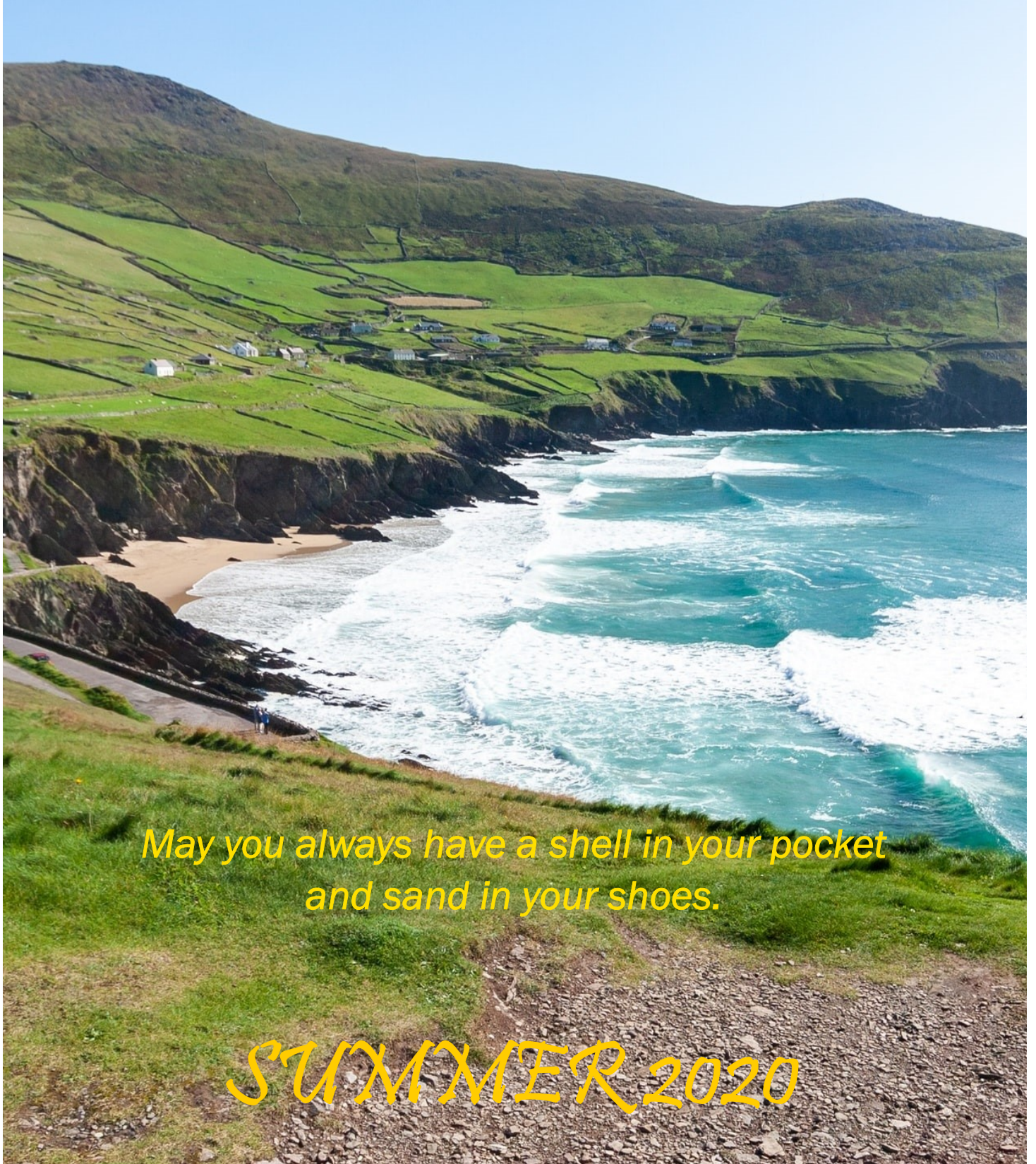




HEN NEWSLETTER



*May you always have a shell in your pocket
and sand in your shoes.*

SUMMER 2020



Editor's Note

Dear all,

I had hoped to write this maybe near our Gathering, but alas this year our AGM will have to be an online one.

I don't know about you but this 2020 seems to last a whole lot more than any previous years. Or is it me? There has been an influx of members (welcome everybody!) and I hope the newsletter provides them with at least a sense of what the community they now belong to is about. Unfortunately, local meet ups have been scarce and I know that, especially for new members, this is twice as hard. Please do make use of the local contacts and of the members' contact list, though and do reach out to others.

If there is something that this year surely has taught us is flexibility, so I am sure we can find ways to support each other in our journey. I think the past months have also been also an occasion to reach out to new people and form new bonds and we can be thankful for social medias which allow us to find like-minded people and to nurture our supportive network.

This issue has a guest blog post from Anna Collins - do check out her blog at www.homeeducation.ie, two interviews with members and a contribution by Diane Duffy for the Growing up Homeschooler serie. She was interviewed by Monica O'Connor as part of her series of interviews to people that were home educated - you can see them all on her YouTube Channel <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTAT-mG7igQxRawvQU9oBgw> and we thank them both for this.

Hope you enjoy your reading!

Marta Dorigo Salamon

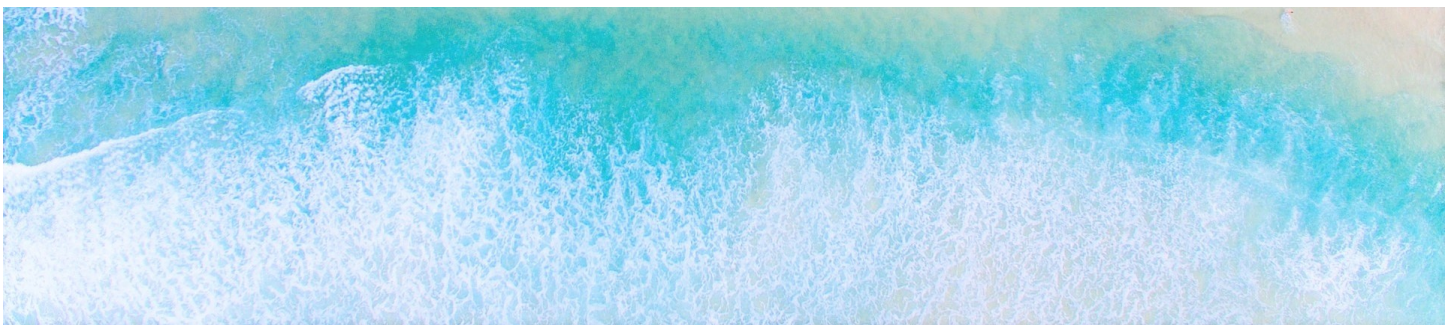
Original cover photo by Dimitry Anikin on Unsplash

ChickLit's Editor's Note

I just wanted to thank you everybody that contributes to our ChickLit, do keep sending your pictures, your stories and everything you would like to see included in it.

Please remember that there is now a dedicated email address, for the ChickLit: chicklit.hen@gmail.com so please send all contributions to future issues here.

Theo Monaghan, Chicklit editor





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Chairperson's Letter

Hi All,

I'm writing this on the day our annual Gathering was due to start. Along with the disappointment of not getting together with all our wonderful activities, meetings, chats and quiz, is the relief at not having had our families outdoors in tents during a storm. So yet again 2020 continues being the strangest of years.

I know we're all missing our meetups, playdates, conversations and especially support, but well done to the many who have managed to keep contact going online and by phone. Special thanks to all of you who have helped and encouraged those who are new to home education.

As our day to day activities have been altered by Covid, it has been the same with the NCB. Although we've had no actual meetings recently, we've tried to continue with virtual meetings and online activity as much as possible. Much of our work has been on background issues, of starting to restructure HEN for our new ways of living.

Thank you to all who responded to our recent

survey – this is a major guide to our next steps, and it will take us a while to understand and process all the new information. With this information and some changes to the structure of the NCB we hope to have a plan for a more focussed, more effective way of working that will be able to support Home Educating families in our new world of 2020, 2021 and beyond. We hope to invite many more to participate in sharing their knowledge, experience and wisdom with our nationwide community.

This year's AGM will have to be held online, and we very much welcome your participation in your network.

Meanwhile, back at home, we can all continue to be inspired by our wonderful children and do our very best to provide them with the best opportunities we can to be more fully themselves.

Lots of love,

Kevin





Art Appreciation

with Irish artist Harry Clarke

using a Charlotte Mason approach

My family uses a Charlotte Mason approach to home education. For art appreciation, you pick an artist to learn about, and then select 6 or so of their artworks. You study one artwork each week, thus really getting to know the artist. My family has enjoyed the free Picture Study Aids from A Humble Place (ahumbleplace.com/cm-psa-all/).

She describes the process well in her excellent, free resources.

However.... I live in Ireland and I wanted my children learn about pictures by great IRISH artists.

The first Irish Artist that we have studied using this method of art appreciation was Harry Clarke (1889 –1931) a stained-glass artist and book illustrator. This turned out to be a great choice for us.

I had seen his stained glass artwork The Eve of St Agnes at the Hugh Lane Gallery, Dublin. This is a very detailed image, basically a collage of many images. I recommend discovering it with the beautiful book 'Harry Clarke The Eve of St Agnes' by

Jessica O'Donnell, available for €8 from the Hugh Lane Gallery's amazing bookshop (I highly recommend a browse in it after a gallery visit!). Each page shows just one panel, with a relevant line from the poem of

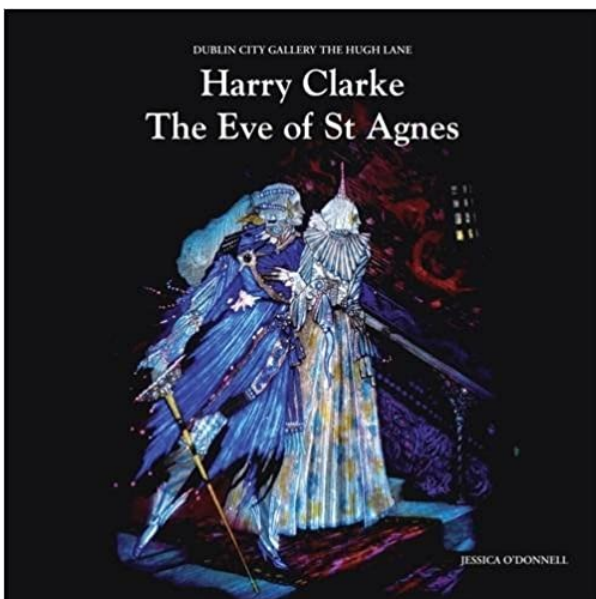
the same name upon which the artwork is based, and a brief description about the panel suitable for reading aloud.

There are also pages briefly discussing the artist, the creation of stained

glass and art ideas. We took our time reading this book, a page a day.

Hugh Lane Gallery has a page about Harry Clarke and this artwork (<http://hughlane.ie/eve-of-st-agnes-by-harry-clarke2>) and a link on that page to a downloadable pdf with an activity based on the artwork and a colouring page of sea creatures from the artwork.

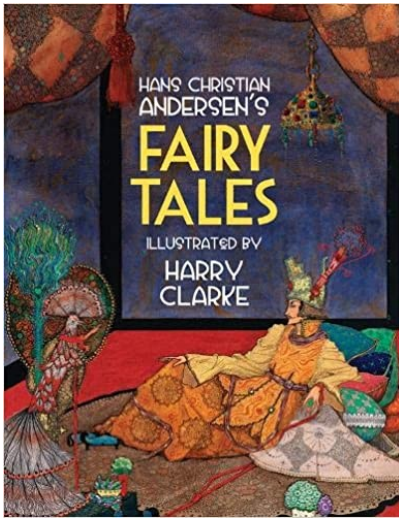
There was an interesting 36 minute Coffee Conversations talk about the Eve of St Agnes with images recorded during Covid on Youtube which I enjoyed listening to. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6wvySbGj46c>





Art Appreciation by Anna Collins

I also took the book Hans Christian Andersen's Fairy Tales illustrated by Harry Clarke out of the library.



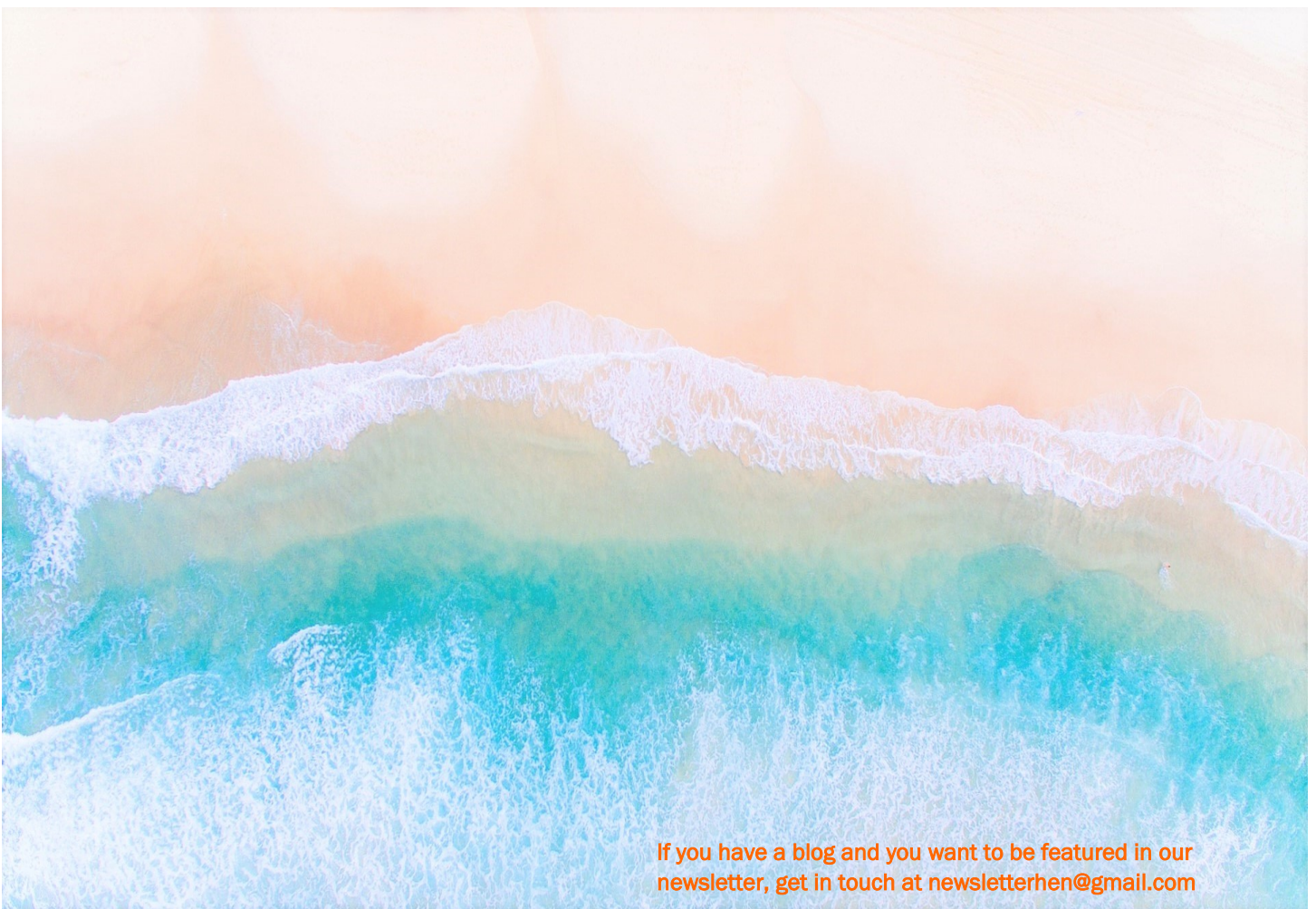
This includes prints of eleven colour paintings currently in the National Gallery of Ireland, as well as colour and black and white drawings scanned from the original 1916 book. The original text has been edited for a modern audience. The book's colour prints are 20cm x 14cm so is a good size for picture study. We read the whole book.

If you wanted to select five artworks from the book, I'd suggest to try The Elf Hill - The Snow Queen, The Wild Swans, The Nightingale and The Swineherd. These images can be viewed online. Nationalgalleryimages.ie often allows you to view the images larger than NationalGallery.ie

In addition to seeing his artworks in the Hugh Lane, Dublin, the National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin, and the Crawford Art Gallery, Cork, there are examples of his art all around Ireland. These are listed by county at harryclarke.net.

Anna Collins

Anna blogs at homeeducation.ie where she provides support for Irish families using the Classical and Charlotte Mason approach to Home Education.



If you have a blog and you want to be featured in our newsletter, get in touch at newsletterhen@gmail.com



Mind Emotions

Emotions are the spice of life, or so they say. This year, however, I am getting the idea that as per emotions we are in a whole league by itself. I don't like to label experiences as bad; I'd rather strive to see them as opportunities - but I can safely say 2020 has so far been quite a challenging year. If this is true for us, as adults, it is even truer for our children. They have been through so much in the past 6 months (yes, it's almost that long) and they normally have fewer tools to help themselves. I decided early on to take the current situation as an opportunity to delve a bit deeper into emotional intelligence; this plays such a huge role into our wellbeing - something that featured a lot in our decision to home educate - and we feel it is a very important part of our growing up with our daughter.

We have found several practices that have proven to be useful. I am not ashamed to say that I took inspiration from different sources and that I have, again, unashamedly, follow my intuition, picking and mixing whatever I felt resonated.

As a general approach, in our lives, we try to focus on the moment. Most of anxiety comes from thinking about the future or the past; so staying in the moment helps. As Eckhart Tolle wrote "the present moment is all you ever have. Make the Now the primary focus of your life". This does not mean avoidance; after all, you cannot change the past and the future is only a mere projection, the present is the only moment you can do anything about. You can also use the word mindfulness, if you'd like. Paying more attention to the present moment can help to reduce tension, improve our sleep and, yes, boost happiness. Research is beginning to show the benefits for children too - even though, to be honest, I feel most toddlers and younger children are masters in this area.

Try walking in Nature, for example. Toddlers and younger children will notice small details, the snail on a trunk, a ladybug on a leaf, the colour of each flower. For some reasons, growing up we sometimes tend to focus mostly on the road and distance (how far till we get to the destination), but not our surroundings. We find walking in Nature is great to



Photo by Sebastian Unrau on Unsplash

cultivate the ability to just be in the Now. Meditation helps too, of course, but my daughter is just too active to simply sit and focus on an image, for example, or a quality; roaming around aimlessly in Nature works best for us. While we walk, we try to help each other noticing small things; I have to admit that great scientific questions come up a lot, but after a while, Nature's breath takes us away - and inside - and we tend to focus on our breath and the rhythm of our steps.

Another version of mindful walking for an active child is taking a step for each breath: breathing in you move one foot, breathing out the other. We like pairing this with the warrior walking borrowed from Tai Chi, which makes for very fun walks on uneven terrain.



During or soon after a mindful walking, we have found that talking about what is going on in our lives is much easier. It is, certainly, a matter of connection as well; walking together is a way for us to connect to each other (and Nature - which we feel

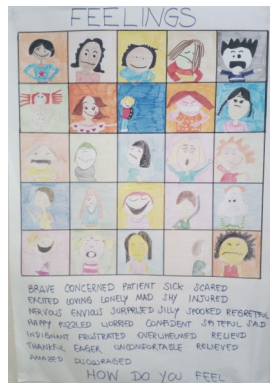
Photo by Evie S. on Unsplash



Mind Emotions by Marta Dorigo Salamon

as part of us), yet I think this grounding process gives us an occasion to look into ourselves as well. Walking while being fully present gives us the chance to see us sort of from an eagle's eye perspective.

We have found out, even for us grown-ups, that naming emotions is important - knowing the name of something gives us the idea that we can handle it better, because somehow we know it. With our daughter growing up, we have found that it is important to name even complex emotions, the ones with several layers "I felt excluded and jealous," for example.



For our daughter we have used visual aids, charts that I again unashamedly copied from different sources. Mind you, we don't use this charts during the outbursts; during the heat of the moment it would be pointless to ask a child to try to

engage the brain into recognising or pointing on a chart how they feel - but the charts have helped to build up the vocabulary that is needed plus they are a focus point on where to talk through something that happened earlier in the day (or week).

What we try to do in the heat of the moment is S.I.F.T. (thank you, Dr Dan Siegel!). We pay attention to:

- Sensations
- Images
- Feelings
- Thoughts

This means we talk about the sensations we are experiencing, the images that we might see in our minds (maybe a replay of what happened, or something in the past that came to mind and that

triggered a stronger response), our feelings, of course, and our thoughts. It might be that we don't check all the boxes, but we this is the main framework we use during big emotions. All of this after empathy, of course; empathy is always the first - and most important - help we, as grown-ups, can offer.

Focusing on our breath is a major help during big emotions too - for grown-ups and children alike. There are signals our body gives us to alert us about emotions; as we become more in tune with our breath, we start sensing those signals (a tight abdomen, for example, or a tight jaw, an accelerating heart rhythm) - this is why they come up in S.I.F.T. too. In those moments, we can focus on our breath and regulate its rhythm - this does not make the emotion go away, but it does calm us down and it does release some tension.

During tense periods (hello once again dear 2020) - but also in more "normal" life - there are several "meditations" that can be of help as well. Probably the one that we are all most familiar is the "focusing on our breath" one; the idea is to focus on our own breathing, hearing and feeling the air coming in and going out. When our daughter was younger, we used a child friendly version: we would ask her to lie down and place a favourite teddy bear on her belly; she would then see the teddy bear going up and down with each breath. You can start with a big belly breath, fill the lungs from the bottom up and then let the breath go out slowly; then just follow your own rhythm.

However, since our daughter finds staying put hard, we have used - quite extensively - what we call the "tree meditation"; more than a calming exercise is a grounding exercise. It has proven to be better, because the mind is occupied in providing the images and the visualisations require an imaginary movement, so it has been easier for our daughter to follow this through. We use this exercise when we see tension building up for whatever reasons. We stand with our feet a little apart, with our backs straight and our arms extended into the air. Keeping our breathing even and relaxed, we imagine our roots shooting from our toes going deep into the ground, and we imagine we feel Mother Earth nurturing us, sending us nutrients and love through the sole of our feet - this would rise up into our bodies and then come to our fingertips.



In all of these we would keep the image of a tree in our mind: our feet and toes the visible part of the roots, our legs and torso the trunk, our arms the branches, our fingertips the leaves. When my daughter was younger, I would ask her to do this exercise

while I would guide her with my voice and while massaging the relevant part of her body during



the visualisation. This exercise has a beautiful effect; it really does ground you. (I know Nelleke McGrath, a fellow HEN member, uses something similar and I thank her, by mentioning it she gave me the idea for this article).

I don't know about you, but I have always found children's big emotions difficult - it's hard for them, of course, but I don't actually think they are much easier for us grown-ups to witness. We might feel like we want to fix whatever it is that is disturbing them or we might feel overwhelmed and ready to flee. During the past 6 months I think most of us had to face our incapability to simply fix things for our children. Point is, it really does not help in the longer term anyway (phew, guilt do go away now, thank you very much). What we can do to help them is to learn to ride the waves of our (and their) emotions. Our children will face suffering, they will face injustice, they will face a whole lot of unpleasant things and - while we might be actively working in the Now trying to improve the world they will face - we would be better off admitting our children will face unpleasant emotions. When they (and we) learn that emotions are transitory, and that they don't need to act on them straight away, but simply take stock and let the wave pass, life becomes a surfing journey if you want, a ride among the hills with up and downs and plains scattered along.

Last but not least, we are trying to cultivate gratitude. At bedtime, we go through what has

Mind Emotions by Marta Dorigo Salamon

happened during the day and we highlight and give thanks for all the small beautiful things that have happened during the day. This is to balance maybe a bad mood that might have settle around bedtime but it is also a way to encourage looking for the small blessings in life - the ones that make our life easier day in day out, especially during hard times.

Emotions are, after all, a wonderful opportunity; they are a chance to understand ourselves better and to better connect to each other and the world in general. So, in the end, I raise my glass (full, thank you very much) to 2020: thank you for all you have been teaching me so far .

Marta Dorigo Salamon

Photo by Todd Quackenbush on Unsplash

Useful resources:

Anne Civardi, Joyce Dunbar, Kate Petty, Louisa Somerville - *Nightlights*

Baron Baptiste - *My Daddy is a Pretzel: Yoga for Parents and Kids*

Deepak Chopra - *The Way of the Wizard*

Dr Dan Siegel - *The Whole Brain Child*

Eline Snel, *Sitting Still Like a Frog*

Gabi Garcia, *Listening to My Body with My Heart*

Jennifer Durand, *The Yoga Garden Game* (this is a board game)

Lisa Spillane , *Six Healing Sounds with Lisa and Ted*

Michael Chissick, *Frog's Breathtaking Speech: How children and frogs can use yoga breathing to deal with anxiety, anger and tension*

Susan Verde, *I am Yoga*

Susan Verde, *I am Peace*

Teresa Anne Power, *The ABCs of Yoga for Kids Learning Cards Cards* (there are several versions, we picked the ones that appealed the most on a graphic level)

Thich Nhat Hanh, *A Handful of Quiet: Happiness in Four Pebbles*

If you have tried and found any other useful resource on the subject, please do let me know, write an email to newsletterhen@gmail.com; they shall be published in the next issue.



The beginning of a path

My name is Gráinne Zannis and I am a mum of 3 children, Saoirse age 6, Donnchadh age 3 and Oscar - 9 months.

I suppose that, truly, the first and most fundamental factor that made us decide to homeschool was my unwillingness to part with my eldest daughter!! I was appalled that after putting up such a fight to be a stay-at-home mother, that by the age of 3, people started asking me when she would be going to 'school' (by which they meant play-school). My husband, David, was equally appalled at sending Saoirse out of the home so soon and so we started to investigate other alternatives.

Even though I have a Masters in Youth and Community Work and a Tefl teaching qualification, I was quite unfamiliar with the option of home-schooling in Ireland. Research led us from one possibility to another and all of a sudden home-schooling was a viable option for us; so, in the end, none of our children has ever attended school or play-school/child care.

As I am the stay-at-home parent, most of the home-schooling/ day-to-day care of our children is my responsibility. However, my husband, who never 'dumbs down' his language or indeed, the concepts being discussed, when speaking to our children, is fundamental to their overall learning.

Technically, since Saoirse is only 6, our home-ed journey is just beginning. However, since she has never attended any formal educational institution, I feel that we actually embarked upon this journey six years ago! It's simply been a continuation of what we've always done.

Initially I was very interested in the Waldorf approach to education. I found its artistic focus, spiritual element and overall holistic approach to education suited us entirely and we readily encompassed many of its values in our everyday home-life, for example; the celebration of festivals,

the use of home-made wooden toys, instead of shop-bought plastic; a TV-free home environment with a strong emphasis on reading and a focus on slow-paced, nurturing care. However, in the last year or so we have opted for a more open, child-led approach. We both believe that to truly benefit from the freedom of not attending school, our children need to be allowed to pursue their own interests. We believe



that once our children can read, they will have the ability to pursue any line of enquiry that interests them and that is what is most important to us. As a family we want to live our lives with truth and sincerity as it's a major focus; as it is ultimately the only way to pursue individual happiness and find one's rightful place in the world.

In a more practical way we rely heavily on books. We have an extensive library (which includes picture books; classic novels; Irish poetry and literature; children's encyclopedias, language books, early readers, many books on horses; space and so much more. Most books we own come from charity shops, second-hand school book sales and the used-book section on Amazon. We also use the library. As yet, we do not spend much time using computer programmes, but of course refer to the internet almost daily to help us in our research of various topics.

I habitually notice that my children are able to do things, which other children and many adults are not and this reinforces my strongly held opinion

Photo taken from <https://ilmondodimamushka.tumblr.com/>

By Rugiada Migliorini



The beginning of a path—with Gráinne Zannis

that children can be trusted to educate themselves and should be allowed the time to explore their own interests. I run a shop from home, where I make wooden toys for children. (It is called: MindfulAndMaking and can be viewed on Etsy.com - Update: the shop has been closed). My children all have to be involved to a greater or lesser extent as all parts of the process from buying wood to posting

off the final package has them by my side.

The older two have been salvaging scraps of wood and sanding,



painting and polishing them since their ability allowed them to do so. They have made beautiful toys for themselves and their imagination knows no bounds! The possibilities for a chosen offcut of wood are endless! Recently Saoirse made her wishes known that she wants to help me with my shop. She designed a beautiful penguin set, which we cut and sanded together, she then painted it, polished it and photographed it – it is now listed in my shop and is for sale and looks every bit as good as the toys I have created! She is very proud and I am very, very proud!

My biggest challenge about home-schooling has been negative reactions from people who are surprised by our choice. I really believe that we have become so entrenched in the idea that education must take place in a school, by trained professionals, that anything outside of this appears 'unnatural'. To us it is unnatural that parents and children habitually spend so many hours of the day apart, when really, nurturing one's own offspring and witnessing their achievements first-hand is to us, the most natural thing of all. After all, there is no one as vested in our child's own interests as us!

We live in Dungarvan, Co. Waterford. Overall, I think

Ireland is a wonderful place to raise children, it's safe, it's friendly and it has beautiful vast open spaces to roam! However, I do think many Irish people hold very conservative views with regards to education. I do not feel people are supportive of our choice and I have received numerous negative comments. On the plus side, most people are too politically correct (or simply astounded) to offer severe or prolonged criticism! I try not to let it get me down, as I believe in what we are doing and in time the results will speak for themselves.

However, to be honest, my biggest surprise so far in this journey is that it's not more pursued as a way of life! It's truly an honour to get to spend so much time with children and to witness their ever-expanding knowledge base and interests. Their development happens so fast that they are a wonder to behold. To me they are endlessly fascinating. I honestly believe that if more people understood what a home-schooling day could be like, they would also consider home-schooling as a viable alternative to mainstream education.

I have first-hand experience of teaching and classroom dynamics. I lived and worked in Greece as an English Language Teacher for seven years. While I thoroughly enjoyed being in the company of children every day, I became increasingly frustrated by the confines of the curriculum and the focus on exams, often at the expense of real learning. Throughout my teaching day, it would become obvious to me that there were children in the class who had not grasped what we were working on and they were falling behind. However due to classroom size and the amount of course-work to be

What does inspire you during difficult times?

Reading books on home education; reading blogs of other families who are home educating and being in contact with our home-educating peers can prove to be inspirational and certainly gets me through difficult times. I also need to channel my creative energy. Working on my shop orders allows me that form of expression and it helps unfizz a frazzled mind!



The beginning of a path—with Gráinne Zannis

completed, it was impossible to always (or even usually) address these issues.

The recommended solution of giving them more practice exercises seemed unnecessarily burdensome to already overloaded young children. Furthermore, as much as I tried to make the lessons fun, the joy had clearly gone from learning and in its place was stress, caused by upcoming exams and parent's expectations. I felt we were doing the children a huge dis-service and that they were not in the best environment to promote their wellbeing.

However, the 'lightbulb' moment for me came when reading John Holt. The theories he held all rang true to me. I found his concepts to be irrefutably logical and once those ideas had settled with me, I could not honestly conceive of sending my children to school. Luckily for me I have an exceptionally open-minded husband, whose main concern is the happiness of our children and so homeschooling became a reality!

Our perfect home schooling day would include as much outdoor time as possible, a walk in the woods, a trek up the mountains or a stroll on the beach. All these places of natural beauty are a mine of information to inquisitive children and the treasures they find, regularly lead to very interesting follow-up conversations and further investigation. We also enjoy baking, plenty of arts and crafts and visiting other home-schooling friends and of course our family. Finally, we would find the time to read a vast array of books together.

Some days will feel more productive than others, some days the best laid plans will not come to fruition, some days there will be arguments and tears! Other days will be surprisingly successful, with very little planned or intended. It all forms part of the rich tapestry of life and needs to be

embraced as such. Life is short and we only get one. There are things that are important (our children's wellbeing) and things that, in the whole scheme of things, really don't matter (societal expectations).

So far, in our family, Donnchadh (almost 4) knows of school, but is little concerned with it. He follows in his sister's footsteps and is intensely busy from the beginning of the day to the very end. Saoirse at the tender age of 6, knows that she is embarking on a journey that is significantly different to most other children her age. She thinks home-schooling is the best thing to do. She thinks school would be boring and she would not like someone telling her what to do all day. In her words: "I love it! And I think you're the best mother ever for thinking school is awful"!! And Donnchadh joined in with "I think home is best". They are free-spirits and we feel honoured to allow them to live their lives as they wish. Maybe in the future they will wish to go to school, if they do we will not stand in their way, we intend to support their learning in whatever way we can.

I can honestly say I have no regrets (lol!!) – but it's very early days! There's plenty of time for mistakes yet! However, I really believe that most regrets are learning curves and our own personal development and growth would not advance without them. So my motto would be – try it

and if it fails, just learn from it!

I'd like to give a huge high-five to all the other home-educators in Ireland! I think that going against the grain in such a fundamental way shows persistence and bravery. I also believe that the flaws in the current educational system are becoming more transparent every year; in ten years' time, what we are doing now, will not seem so 'off the wall' at all!





Reviews



The Caterpillar magazine—Poems and Art for Kids, distributed in Ireland by EM News Distribution

In this age of instant information and immediate online access there is something comforting about having such an old fashioned thing as a magazine subscription which comes in the post.

Breakfast is so much better when there's reading to be done among the porridge and the toast crumbs. The Caterpillar Magazine is a quarterly publication produced in Co. Cavan. It's an arts magazine full of stories, poems and artworks for children of 6 to 11 years of age. Poems range from the funny ones to the thought provoking, as do the stories. The illustrations throughout are carefully chosen and the magazine itself is so beautifully laid out that it is A Pleasing Thing (Pleasing Things are to be sought out, cherished and valued). On arrival in our household The Caterpillar is read for pleasure and the middle section called My Pages is doodled upon (that is its intended purpose). Then, in later days, we look more carefully at the poems and stories, we talk about them, re-read the ones we like best, read them aloud to each other and sometimes I use them for more 'formal' homeschooling lessons looking at imagery or rhyme or plot or indeed tricky spellings as in 'Riding Whoas' by Kate Harris:

Sum thymes English can bee tricky.
It can bee hard two due well inn school.
When ewe right four yore teacher
she says too mined the riding rules.

Eye no aye spell the rite weigh –
I halve spell Czech on the computer.
Accept each lessen that eye due,
she in cysts aye knead a Tudor.

Claire Mulligan



Aquila Children's Magazine—New Leaf Publishing

Another magazine subscription that is eagerly anticipated is Aquila. This is a monthly publication with a strong focus on learning as a life-long pursuit, encouraging curiosity and creativity with a good dose of maths and scientific fact. It is aimed at children aged 8-13 years.

Aquila is a magazine which takes its illustrations and artwork seriously. Starting with the fantastic cover, each page is attractively presented with a mixture of photographs and artworks with art projects and recipes clearly laid out in photographed steps which makes following them easy.

Each issue focuses on an overall topic – for example MicroCosmos, Discover Dogs, Amazon, Magic Maths or Japan for instance, and within that topic all sorts of areas are covered – the natural world, environmental issues, maths puzzles, world history and historical figures, art and craft projects, recipes, stories, and science experiments.

The features are written in a humorous way and there is also an Over to You page featuring letters and photos from children who subscribe to the magazine. It's always nice to see home educated children writing in to the magazine, showing the projects they've made. In some issues there's a Let's Debate section where opposing arguments are laid out – for example the value of climate strikes or uncontacted peoples, which make good jumping off points for discussions. And in other issues there are features on topics such as puberty, mental health, mindfulness and anxiety which again can open the door to conversations with your children.

Claire Mulligan



Hugh Lane Gallery, Dublin

I think the Hugh Lane Gallery is a great gallery to take children to in Dublin. It is especially good for your first visit to a gallery with children. It is much smaller than the National Gallery of Ireland, which makes it easier and less overwhelming. There are artworks by many famous international artists, ones that you will come across if you are using the Ambleside Online Art Schedule for example Courbet, Degas, Manet, Monet and Renoir. There are also lots of interesting sculptures.

There are paintings by well-known Irish artists such as Harry Clarke, Paul Henry, Grace Henry, John Lavery, William J. Leech, Norah McGuinness, Roderic O'Connor, William Orpen, Walter Osborne and Jack B. Yeats.

I think when going to a gallery with children it is best to spend time with just a few artworks, perhaps 5 or 6.

The gallery has an excellent book for children 'Discover art – An introduction to art for young people' by Jessica O'Donnell which I would recommend picking up. It includes many of the artworks in the gallery and art activities based on those artworks. Having spent time looking at and discussing a few paintings from the book beforehand, it is lovely for the child to 'find' a painting he knows from a book – it feels like 'his' painting and increases their enjoyment. And yours.

Jessica O'Donnell's books are not available at Amazon. There are some copies in the library. To order your own copy you need to contact the Hugh Lane Gallery Bookshop.

Anna Collins

Have you found a resource you loved? Or a book you totally thought was great and it turned out to be a big mistake? Share your opinion with other home edders and help them along in their journey. Come on, you know how hard it is to choose an app, a new audio book or a curriculum! Send us an email!





Fruit Loaf

Ingredients:

- 1 cup cold tea
- 1lb dried fruit, a mixture of raisins, sultanas, currants
- 2 eggs, organic & free range if possible
- 1 cup soft light brown sugar
- 1 heaped teaspoon mixed spice
- 3 cups self raising flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder

Steps:

1. Pop the fruit into a large bowl and pour over the cup of cold tea. You are going to soak the fruit in the tea over night. This allows the fruit to become juicy and plump.
2. The next day preheat the oven to 150C and line 2 loaf tins with baking parchment.
3. Now get the bowl with the soaked fruit in it and give the fruit a little mix. Add the eggs, sugar and spice and give it all a good mix.
4. Sift in the flour and baking powder and gently fold this in making sure all the flour is well incorporated.
5. Using your spatula scrape the mixture out into the loaf tins and gently flatten the surface. Then into the oven for about an hour and a half or until a skewer inserted in the middle of the fruit loaf comes out clean.
6. Allow the loaf to cool a little in the tin before moving it to cool completely on a wire rack.



Cheesy biscuits

Makes about 30 biscuits depending on size of biscuit cutters used.

Ingredients:

- 200g strong Cheddar cheese, grated
- 50g butter, softened
- 100g plain flour
- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- Freshly ground black pepper – a good few grinds of the mill

Steps:

1. Preheat the oven to 180C fan.
2. Put all the ingredients into a food processor and whizz until the dough forms.
3. Take the dough out of the mixing bowl and wrap in greaseproof paper and put it into the fridge for about 15 minutes.
4. Sprinkle a little flour on your work surface and, using a floured rolling pin, roll out the dough to about 3mm thick.
5. Then cut out shapes using biscuit cutters and put them onto a lined baking sheet. Re-shape and roll the dough and again cut out more shapes until it is all used up.
6. Put on your oven gloves and slide the baking trays into the oven and cook for about 10 minutes until lightly golden brown. Let them cool a little on the baking tray and then use a spatula to transfer them to a wire rack to cool completely.

Claire Mulligan

Photo by Jeff Siepman on Unsplash

If you have a recipe you want to share, get in touch at newsletterhen@gmail.com



Growing up homeschooler: Diane Duffy

In this section you will find interviews to grown ups that have been home educated. They share how home education has prepared them for adulthood and their life; their like and dislike. They share their wisdom and their stories help to put our occasional fears at rest.

I was born in 1980, the second of 10 children, brought up on a small farm and educated at home. Being at the front end of the family, it was probably a bit experimental! My folks were finding their feet with the whole home education thing. When we were small children, we were taught in a classroom format, learning the same things that our school-going contemporaries were learning. At this early stage, I enjoyed Maths and English and my competitive nature was coming through already. I think I would have enjoyed school had I gone (I can only speculate!). I was independent, I liked being set tasks and I liked to compete and get answers quicker than the others. My mother says I was a bossy child; for example if we were playing some game, I would be organizing people into teams, telling people where to stand etc. I guess in later years, these were useful management skills, but at the time I probably drove everyone mad!

Although we didn't realise it at the time, playing cards was quite a big part of our education, teaching us math and strategy. Dad was an excellent card player who loved bridge, cribbage, 25s and numerous other games which he taught us to play. I dabbled in the poker world as an adult, enjoying learning strategy and reading a good bit about the game theory, but ultimately the lifestyle was too sedentary for me. I did learn to deal cards to casino standard, and I funded some of my college years dealing at big tournaments, which was very enjoyable and I learnt a lot about the game too. Mum was very academic and had been a brilliant student herself (she has a degree in archaeology and has worked on and off as we grew up on sites),

and she took care of much of our academic education.

Although I was literate and enjoyed the schoolwork, as my parents became less formal and the home education naturally morphed to unschooling, the smallholding where we lived became my education. We had a variety of animals, eventually incorporating a pony which I supposedly hounded my parents to get. As it turned out, I was quite serious about learning horsemanship, and it is a theme that has been there throughout my life.

We didn't have much money. My parents both worked very hard but opted to spend almost all



their time at home with their children, running a small farm and garden. At my insistence, they sent me to horse-riding lessons, and I taught my siblings what I had learned when we eventually got a pony of our own. When we were stuck for space and grazing, we kept our pony at a local riding school. I used to cycle over and muck out stables in exchange for part of the keep. I also snuck onto as many other horses as I could during this time to further my experience. When I was 13, I started working 6 mornings a week riding out racehorses for a local farmer and breeder of point-to-point horses (amateur 3 mile steeplechasers). I cycled

Photo by Doruk Yemenici on Unsplash



Growing up Homeschooler: Diane Duffy

the 2 and a half miles to work every morning, and on Saturday I would get a cheque for £20. My parents always encouraged us to save money, and I put £5 into my credit union account every week. In my time working there, the main horse I used to look after won 6 races in a row (very unusual), and I was now hooked on the buzz of jump racing. I wanted to ride in races myself, and at 14 I was jumping these horses over steeplechase fences and getting closer to my dream.

When I was 15, I progressed to working in another nearby yard. Liam, my boss there, specialised in problem horses. He also broke young horses and trained a few point-to-pointers. He was a brilliant horseman and I learned a massive amount from my 2 years working there. Also, I was now making £60 a week and saving £20, so I felt pretty rich! I kept saving, and by the time I convinced Dad to get a racehorse of our own, I was starting to buy my own racing equipment for when my big day riding in a race finally came.



While I was assisting Dad's cousin to break a couple of young horses, I liked one of the horses we were working with and I asked Dad to come and look at him. He liked him too, and he bought him. We finished breaking him and prepared him to go racing. He turned out to be a brilliant and consistent point-to-pointer, racing for years, teaching me and any of my siblings who were interested in race-riding loads, winning about 10 races and being runner-up countless times. During the first season I was riding

him (when I was 18), we won 4 races in a row and he was the key to me winning a series of ladies races (which I had helped to get off the ground with a few other female amateur jockeys). It probably all happened very quickly for me in the end. Most likely I didn't appreciate how difficult it is to achieve such success.

After race riding for a few seasons and continuing to learn my trade, I went to NYC when I was 22. I had never lived anywhere else except Ireland (although I lived away from home during my horse years), and I fancied a change of scene for the summer. I was working in a music bar in Greenwich village, and I ended up staying there and changing tack altogether. I was making very good money and my focus came away from horses for the first time, and onto a wider world I had been unaware of. I was very green, fresh off the boat and I even assumed that New Yorkers would know what point to pointing



was!! Anyway, I learned to make cocktails, take orders, deal with people, count cash etc and I had a great time and made great friends. I was living there illegally, so when my sister announced her wedding it was time to decide to either stay or go. I came home for the wedding.

The travel bug was still there, so I went to Australia and New Zealand for a year after the wedding on a work visa. I looked up a long-lost cousin in Australia who had a motel, restaurant and wedding catering

Photo by Jeff Griffith on Unsplash
Photo by Joey Csunyo on Unsplash



Growing up Homeschooler: Diane Duffy

business. I worked there for a month or so at a time, saved up a bit of money and then backpacked around. I worked in the kitchen there, prepping food, plating up starters and desserts, washing dishes, anything and everything. I also used to work in the garden there or paint buildings for my employers. Any odd job that needed doing, I would do it to fund my travel.

After returning home, I became curious about third level education. After researching courses, I ended up taking a part time BA in counselling and psychotherapy in DBS school of arts in Dublin.

Photo by Priscilla Du Preez on Unsplash



As I was now a mature student (25), enrolling in the course was straightforward. I worked full time caring for autistic adults in residential care on a local farm to fund my study. I learned a lot in this job and possibly could have continued into management. I loved the course. It was my first time in a classroom, and I enjoyed the work, the continuous assessments and even found the exams manageable. The lecturers were very good, and I made some good friends too. There was a lot of self-development included in the course, including stress management (which has served me very well over the years) and I also had to be in therapy myself for some of it, to observe the process I was studying and to help me get to know myself and my own biases more completely. When it came to work

experience, I knew I didn't want to be a counsellor - or not yet anyway. I felt I was too young to take on such a heavy career, and I thought that what I had learned about myself during the course made me think I would find it very hard not to take my work home with me. My lecturers leaned on me to continue, I had done very well academically, and they thought I would be good at the job.

I wanted to keep looking as regards which direction my career might take. At this point, the younger members of the family were heading in much more creative directions to the older ones. When we were younger, my parents were all about hard work on the farm. As they mellowed with age, so too did their kids! My younger siblings were very talented in music and other creative areas, and I was curious. My younger sister was doing the Permaculture course in Kinsale college at the time, and on a visit to her I saw the play being performed by the drama class. We were behind the scenes and it was brilliant fun. I decided to enrol just to do something completely different. Although I am no actor, I enjoyed the experience and I ended up in stage management (that bossiness was coming in handy again!). I worked throughout the 2 year course in restaurants in Kinsale. By the time the course finished, I was managing quite a large café.

I managed restaurants for a few years after the course finished. I also took up running and eventually triathlons. In this time, I met my partner Brian, a farmer from just outside Kinsale. He is also a marine engineer, and he was a boat mechanic on trawlers when we met. Shortly afterwards, he was offered a very good job in Aberdeen, Scotland. He moved over for a few years. I joined him there for a year, where I got a job as a café supervisor and completed a course in Personal Training.

We moved home together to Kinsale and built a house on his land. In a strange twist of fate, I am also training a couple of racehorses again. Having tried just about every career in the book, my life has come back to my first love, horses.



Growing up Homeschooler: Diane Duffy

Throughout my adult life, no matter where I have lived, I have never had trouble getting work or making ends meet. I have always worked hard, and I am lucky to have a lot of energy-just like both my parents.

Is it better to do one job and stay at it for life? I'll never know. Sometimes I wonder am I a jack of all trades and a master of none. I have had many varied experiences though, I have great friends, a great supportive family, a partner who I love, and I am now old enough that nobody ever asks me if I went to school or not! Plenty of people I know don't even know that I was educated at home.

Would I send my own kids to school if I had any? I don't know to be honest. I think one of the reasons it worked for Mum and Dad was that there were a lot of us. Also, Mum and Dad were home most of the time which I think was quite important too, although I know that isn't possible for everyone. I have huge respect for my parents for raising us as they did when practically nobody was doing it. From what I can see, all of their 10 adult children are good, functional, hard working people (and 4 of them excellent parents themselves) and that is all anyone can hope for.

The live interview is available on Monica O'Connor's You tube Channel <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTAT-mG7igQxRawvQU9oBgw>

Photo by Francesca Tirico on Unsplash





Homeschooling in Iceland

In Iceland home education is called "heimakennslu". The Eurydice Report (2018) describes home education in Iceland as "extremely rare;" the last time home education was measured in Iceland was 2011, there was only one home educated child in the entire country.

Legally, according to Article 46 of the Compulsory School Act 2008 / Lög um grunnskóla 2008, and on the basis of issued regulation (no 531/2009) on the requirements for home education, parents may apply for permission to their municipality for their children to receive instruction at home.



However, in order to apply to educate your child at home, one or both parents must have an official teaching license. If the permission is granted, the municipality has to make a contract with a compulsory school in the municipality concerning advice, supervision and various services.

Children who receive instruction at home must undergo the nationally coordinated examinations in grades 4, 7 and 9 and may be subject to regular evaluation and monitoring in the core subjects.

The overall lack of interest seems to be not a consequence of the recent legal restrictions requiring parents to have a teaching license. Rather, those restrictions were put in place because there is no constituency to oppose them.

Currently there seem to be two online petitions have been circulated requesting signatures of support to legalize home education for parents without a state-authorized teaching license.





A Chat with... Lorraine

My name is Lorraine, my husband and I homeschool our 7.5 year old daughter. Our daughter was adopted from Vietnam nearly 2 years ago. She had received some form of formal schooling attending a Kindergarten; though it may not have been a negative experience at the time it does seem to have left a negative impression of school.

During the adoption process we decided to seek approval for up to a 6 year old child, we agreed we didn't feel right sending to school a child that may have just moved continents with 2 strangers as soon as they arrived simply to meet legal requirements. The time it took to adopt gave me the time and space to really think and research the options available to us regarding an alternative education and find a place that we felt comfortable with. This is how we came to home education.

I am the primary caregiver, but I would say we both educate utilising our skills with my husband taking care of woodwork, mechanics, fishing, lego etc. I take on the more academic work, maths, reading, nature exploration, observation and research for curriculums, gardening, meetups etc. We have been very flexible with our home education approach, we have done a period of school workbooks, unschooling and have moved into working to a curriculum recently with Maths and Language Arts. Maths is Wild Maths and the Language Arts is by Julie Bogart, Brave Writer. We are enjoying having some structure using curriculums that we can tailor to our daughter and her interests. Brave Writer is kind-of a whole home education philosophy, and it just fits in well with our lifestyle. Some of the changes we made were easy and immediate, such as weekly poetry teatime, daily read aloud, the kitchen island has been taken over by arts and crafts materials, we designated a table to Lego in our sitting room, the playroom became pointless (which I had set up all lovely with desks and book cases, the art area gets used a lot more now it's in



the hub of the house!) The beauty of this brave writer lifestyle is we can ditch what isn't working, take on what is and change what we do as and when it is required. The main thing is we are flexible, she attends different therapies so we structure that into the week without any pressure.

So far we have complete school refusal from our daughter. We had our decision made in regards to wanting to homeschool but we wanted her to be aware school was an option that she could choose if she wanted to. Being from another culture I didn't just want to not inform her of the societal norm here in Ireland of attending school but she proudly tells everyone who asks about school that she does homeschool with mommy! And more recently defiantly shouting "I'm NOT going to school!" People generally don't ask again when they get that response.

We get asked, mostly around the end of the school year in June, again in August whether she will start school, however I think most family and friends now accept that this is what we are doing on a permanent basis. Last March/April 2019 (she was home 5 months) people asked a lot if she was in school, more than they do now! One person even commented in June 2019, that her English had come on so much since she started school

Photo by Xavi Cabrera on Unsplash



A Chat with... Lorraine

(they assumed she started school) and we were proudly able to tell them that we were still homeschooling, she learnt simply by interacting with her family and community! Shocker! People have come around to the idea quickly, in a way having an unorthodox situation definitely made our life easier with regards to the questions and why we homeschool.

We live in Rural County Leitrim. It is difficult from the point of attending meetups, there would usually be a longish drive involved but she is doing better in the car now, and we're hoping we'll get back to attending some meetups outdoors in September. Obviously Covid-19 has made life difficult for everyone this year. She had attended ballet, arts and crafts group, horseriding and forest school on a weekly basis pre-covid.

She has been able to return to horseriding which has been great and forest school will be restarting soon.

When days get tough, we ditch the plan and get outdoors and I remind myself that we are doing what is best for her, that it suits her needs perfectly and I am able to be there for her emotionally throughout the day when she needs me, as well as providing a space for her to grow and flourish in her own time! Being adopted at an older age leaves it's own specific set of needs and homeschool allows us to cater to our daughter's needs at all times.



Lorraine McHugh

Photo by Markus Spiske on Unsplash





Almost everybody knows that colouring is NOT only children's business. These pages are for YOU! But you can choose, of course, to turn them into a collaborative work of art.









Photo by Neven Krcmarek on Unsplash

Funny sentences you hear in this house...

“Mum, is somebody coming over today?” “No, why?” “You only hover when we are expecting someone.”

I was getting freaked out at the amount of things that needed to be done around the house and my daughter said:

“I am so sorry I am a not a grown up yet, mummy. If I were a grown up I could help you better and then we could play together”

Do I need to say that I dropped everything and just played with her?

Do you want to share a few sentences you find yourself saying out loud that seriously surprise you?
Or something your child said that cracked you up? Pop us an email newsletterhen@gmail.com



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We would love Regional Contact Officers also for Antrim, Armagh, Clare, Derry, Donegal, Down, Dublin North, Fermanagh, Kilkenny, Louth, Mayo and are currently recruiting! So if you have some time to spare and are happy to be the contact person locally, do get in touch. Positions are all on a volunteer basis, but there are perks: you get to know and help some amazing people! Plus, you get to choose when you are available and your preferred mean of contact. If you fancy being a part of the team, pop us an email: emails@henireland.org



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