The Closet Mastery Course



WORKBOOK

1st Edition Copyright © 2010 by Mary Ann Johnson

All rights reserved

Published by The Closet Coach

Developed in the United States of America

Individuals and spouse may each print a copy of each downloaded file for personal use.

Reproduction in any medium or format is forbidden without express written permission of the publisher.

TJEd, Thomas Jefferson Education, Leadership Education, and several other related terms are the intellectual

property of Oliver and Rachel DeMille. Used under license.

The Family Mission Statement and Master Inspire Plan audio recordings are property of

Leadership Education Family Builder and used by permission.

For inquiries, contact: Mary Ann Johnson 2614 South Green Street #3 Salt Lake City, UT 84106 801-739-2378 majcoach@yahoo.com



Welcome to The Closet Mastery Course!

I'm excited for the experience that is about to unfold for you. I'm so sure that the principles which you're about to learn work, that I'm going to make a bold guarantee to you. If you're willing to consistently follow *The 5 Rules of Engagement*, and faithfully do the work outlined in this course, I promise that you will create a magical learning space in your home where your children will love to learn. If you're not fully satisfied with your experience I'll give you a full money-back refund. So, get ready for some magic to happen!

How The Closet Mastery Course is Set Up

The Closet Mastery Course is divided into 11 lessons. Each lesson consists of an MP3 recording and workbook assignments. It is important that you complete the lessons in order because each builds upon the other. The content of each lesson has been organized according to the following categories:

Overview	What you will accomplish in this session.
Listen	Which session to listen to.
Read	Books, articles, and resources to read .
Think	Questions and thinking activities.
Do	Assignments and implementation activities.
Sum It Up	A check-off list of "to do's" before moving on to the next session.

You may take as long as you wish to complete this course, however it has been designed to be completed within a 3-6 month period.

Page 9-	Introductory Lesson: Get Started on the Right Foot
Page 17-	Lesson 1: Rule 1—Structure Time
Page 21-	Lesson 2: Rule 2—Be Present
Page 29-	Lesson 3: Rules 3-5—Keep it Special, Keep it Simple, Weekly Planning
Page 35-	Lesson 4: Elements of the Closet Part I—Where's the Closet?
Page 39-	Lesson 5: Elements of the Closet Part II—What's In the Closet?
Page 49-	Lesson 6: Finding Sparks & Great Ideas
Page 59-	Lesson 7: The Power of Mental Scripts
Page 69-	Lesson 8: Your Family Mission Statement
Page 81-	Lesson 9: Your Master Inspire Plan
Page 99-	Lesson 10: Supporting Change
Page 109-	Lesson 11: What's It Really Like to Use the Closet?

You will have a working closet by the end of Lesson 5. The remaining lessons will help you more effectively manage and maintain the success of your closet.

Exercising Your Brain!

It's likely that you're going to experience something that Mortimer Adler refers to as "the pain of learning¹." To succeed in using the Closet effectively you will have to engage in the hardest work a person can do-thinking. You may be tempted to short cut the work, or find excuses like you just can't find the time, or let this program sit in a drawer because it feels so challenging. Rest assured that these are simply temptations, and you can and must overcome them. Determine that you are not going to follow the path of least resistance. Decide that you are going to accept Mortimer's Invitation to the Pain of Learning. I promise that you will find magic at the end!

¹ Read Mortimer Adler's article, "Invitation to the Pain of Learning" at http://www.cambridgestudycenter.com/artilces/Adler1.htm

In session ten you will be introduced to one of the ways to support change, a circle of support. This circle could consist of one person or a group. You will find that you will magnify your success with this course if you will engage the help of others to

- 1. Keep you accountable to working through the course (and maintaining your Closet afterward),
- 2. Help inspire your creative juices,
- 3. Inspire you with hope, ideas, and the determination to continue.

With the purchase of this course you are entitled to participate in The Closet Mastery Yahoo group. If you would like to use the Yahoo group as part of your circle of support, please email your request to majcoach@yahoo.com and you will receive an invitation.

The Closet Journal

This workbook includes journal pages which are found at the end of lessons 5-11. There are 5 pages in each lesson. Copies can be made if additional pages are needed. The journal pages are designed for you to make daily or weekly entries, which ever you prefer.

Each journal page consists of brief questions designed to help you,

- Evaluate your closet implementation,
- Identify areas that need improvement,
- Record sparks of inspiration you're seeing from your children and/or great ideas you have for the Closet.

When you hit a bumpy patch going back over your past entries may give you a clue as to where the problem lies. Ask yourself, is it with the logistics of your Closet, its contents, mental talk that is counterproductive or are you struggling to live one of the Five Rules of Engagement?

Making This A TEAM Effort

I highly recommend that spouses work through the Closet Mastery course together. You'll find far more success in engaging with the Closet when both of you are on the same page. If it's impossible for your spouse to complete all of the materials with you, schedule a regular weekly time where you can teach your spouse the things you've learned and you can jointly decide how to proceed or overcome challenges.

Because this is a Mastery Course you will be introduced to some topics which are not related directly to the organization and use of the Closet but which impact your ability to utilize this tool successfully in your home. For a more in depth study of these crucial family skills I suggest the Leadership Education Family Builder Program offered at LeadershipEducationFamilyBuilder.com as well as any of their enrichment classes.

You may access two basic classes for FREE which will benefit any family:

- "The Leadership Education Continuum" which teaches you what is and is not in your control with regards to your children's education, and
- "Parent Job 1- Relationship".

You may also want to purchase the following additional class that will be referenced in this course:

• "Parent Job 2- Creating an Inspiring Environment and Parent Job 3- Respond Effectively,"

In addition, the following titles will increase your understanding of concepts mentioned in the Closet Mastery Course.

- 1. Leadership Education: The Phases by Oliver and Rachel DeMille
- 2. Core and Love of Learning: A Recipe for Success by Oliver and Rachel DeMille
- 3. A Thomas Jefferson Home Companion by Oliver DeMille, Rachel DeMille, and Diann Jeppson
- 4. The Anatomy of Peace: Resolving the Heart of Conflict by Arbinger Institute
- 5. First Things First by Stephen R. Covey
- 6. *Liberated Parents, Liberated Children: Your Guide to a Happier Family* by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish
- 7. Parenting A House United: Changing Children's Hearts and Behaviors by Teaching Self Government by Nicholeen Peck
- 8. The Five Love Languages by Gary Chapman
- 9. Raving Fans: A Revolutionary Approach to Customer Service by Ken Blanchard
- 10. As A Man Thinketh by James Allen
- 11. The Power of Believing by Sterling W. Sill

These materials can be obtained from <u>www.leadershipeducationfamilybuilder.com</u>, <u>www.tjedmarketplace.com</u>, <u>www.arbinger.com</u>, or from most major book retailers.



NOTES

NOTES



Overview

This session will highlight temptations that could hinder your success in this course. You will be introduced to the 1% Principle, you will design personalized learning objectives for this course and you will learn the necessity of working with a circle of support.

Listen

MP3: Get Started on the Right Foot;

FREE Core Session on Parent Job #1: Relationships and "The Leadership Education Continuum". These can be found at www.LeadershipEducationFamilyBuilder.com

Supplemental Reading

For further study of the 1% Principle, read the book *Raving Fans: A Revolutionary Approach To Customer Service* by Ken Blanchard and Sheldon Bowles. Consider how you might create a Raving Fans environment in your home by focusing on keeping your promises and improving 1% at a time.

Think

Let's begin our journey together by getting a little clearer about where we're starting from. The following questions are designed to give you an opportunity to ponder where you're starting from.

1. THINKING ABOUT YOUR PERSONAL EXPERIENCE WITH EDUCATION

What was your experience with education?

How have your experiences with education affected the way you view education in your home?

How do you view and feel about your role in providing educational materials for your children?

Do you currently feel capable of providing inspiring materials and helping your children to love	5
learning?	

2. THINKING ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS

Take a moment and write about your relationship with your parents as a child. What was your family's culture of relationships? What was your family's culture regarding education? How has this impacted your relationships with your own children and your feelings about education?

Take a moment and write down your experience as a parent so far. Be honest in your evaluation of how you feel about it. Is it fun to be with your children? Are you satisfied with how you feel and behave when you are with them?

How do you react when a child interrupts you to ask a question or share something that he is excited about?

What's your way of listening to and then responding to your children? How do you feel about that?

3. CREATING YOUR OWN LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Now that you have done some thinking about where you're starting from, you are ready to get clear about where you now want to go. In other words, you're going to come up with your own learning objectives, or changes that you'd like to achieve.

A. Start by asking these questions:

- 1) What's the one change I could make that would make the most impact in creating the kind of learning environment I envision for my home?
- 2) What's the second change I could make that would make the most impact in creating the kind of learning environment I envision for my home?
- 3) What's the third change I could make that would make the most impact in creating the kind of learning environment I envision for my home?

Consider your answers to the above questions. Are there any other changes that you think might be even more important than something you listed above?

B. Now identify the top three changes you'd like to see happen. Work these statements to make them as succinct as possible.

Here is an example of a first draft statement followed by a more succinctly written statement.

<u>First Draft</u>

I feel overwhelmed all the time. I know I should be consistent in helping my kids learn but I have so many things I need to do that I just can't seem to get to it. When I do have school I feel pressured to hurry so that I can get my other stuff done.

More Succinctly Written Point

I have a hard time giving attention to my children for any length of time without mentally drifting away with all the other things I have to do.

C. Now turn these three statements into learning objectives. A learning objective is a statement that describes something that you will know or be able to do. It is written in measurable terms, meaning that you should be able to determine whether you accomplished the objective or not. See the example below.

Statement:

I have a hard time giving attention to my children for any length of time without mentally drifting away with all the other things I have to do.

Learning Objective:

I will practice "being Present" daily until I am able to spend at least one hour truly focused on the activity at hand.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 1)

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 2)

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 3)

4. CIRCLE OF SUPPORT

For your last thinking exercise, consider your personal Circle of Support. Who do you know that has or is taking this course? Maybe you'd like to organize a group of parents to do the course together (note: due to copyright requirements each family should have their own copy of The Closet Mastery Course). Write down who will be part of your circle or what your plans are to create a circle of support.

1. Establish a support group with at least one other person. You will learn more about the importance of this group in Lesson 10 but you will experience more success if you establish your support now.

2. Work with your circle of support to refine your learning objectives.

You are ready to move to the next lesson if you:

- * Have created measurable learning objectives.
- * Have created a circle of support.



NOTES



Overview

In this lesson you will learn about the critical nature of having consistent structured time, what structured time looks like, and the pitfalls and temptations of not having structured time.

Listen

MP3: The Five Rules of Engagement; Rule 1—Structure Time

Supplemental Reading

Visit http://home-school-coach.com and click on the Course Readings category to read the following articles-

- Honor Your Family Learning Time
- Example of Structured Time For Homeshooling -What Does Structure Family Learning Time Look Like at the Palmers

A printable version of the above article(s) can be found in Appendix IV

Leadership Education: Phases of Learning by Rachel & Oliver DeMille- first chapter

1. DEFINING STRUCTURED TIME ELEMENTS

Write down the elements you'd like to include in your structured family learning time such as a devotional, family reading, a mom's school, individual mom/child time, music, the Closet, etc. Then determine the amount of time you'd like to dedicate to structured family learning time each day. Consider if you will have family learning time 5 days a week or less. Does your family schedule allow for the same amount of time each day or do different days require different amounts of time?

ELEMENT			
Example -Family #1-			
Recite Family Missio	n statement		
Prayer			
Poetry recitation			
Mom School			
Free study including	the Closet		
Example —Family #2			
Devotional			
Recite Family Mission	n Statement		
Music Time			
Family reading			
Free study including	the Closet		

2. CURRENT FAMILY SCHEDULE



1. Add structured family learning time to your schedule. Feel free to make adjustments until it feels right.

Sum It Up

You are ready to move to the next lesson if you:

* Have added structured family learning time to your family schedule.



NOTES

NOTES

The Closet Mastery Course LESSON 2: THE FIVE RULES OF ENGAGEMENT RULE 2: BE PRESENT

Overview

In this session you will learn about the art of being present, its value and ways to practice more "presence" in your daily activities.

Listen

MP3: The Five Rules of Engagement—Rule 2: Be Present

Supplemental Reading

Visit http://home-school-coach.com and click on the Course Readings category to read the following articles – • Practice Being Present

A printable version of the above article can be found in Appendix IV

The Anatomy of Peace: Resolving the Heart of Conflict by Arbinger Institute

23

1- IDENTIFYING OBSTACALS TO BEING PRESENT

Consider your experience with your structured family learning time thus far. What things, if any, have distracted you away from being present during this time?

Do you enjoy being with your children? Are you able to focus on them or is that difficult? If so, why?

How do you react when a child interrupts you to ask a question or share something that he is excited about?

What's your way of listening to and then responding to your children? How do you feel about that?

2- CREATE A PRESENCE VISION STATEMENT

Write out a Presence Vision Statement that describes how you want to respond to your children, how you want to feel being with them and how you want them to feel being with you. This statement should describe your vision of being "present" with your children. Write this statement in the present tense. Avoid using negative terms such as "don't" or "yell", instead create your statement using positive terms such as "do" or "speak gently". Share this statement with your circle of support for feedback in order to refine your statement.



- Practice "being present." Pick at least three family times outside of your structured learning time. Turn off the phone, TV and computer. Focus on the activity at hand. Don't allow yourself to think about other events, activities or projects that you may have coming up. See what being present feels like. Dialogue your experience with your support group.
- 2. Begin your day by reciting your Presence Vision Statement aloud. The objective is that when you find yourself becoming distracted you will remember your vision and return to practicing being present.

Sum It Up

You are ready to move to the next lesson if you:

- * Have created your Presence Vision statement and shared it with your circle of support.
- * Have shared your experience practicing "being present" with your circle of support.



NOTES

NOTES



Overview

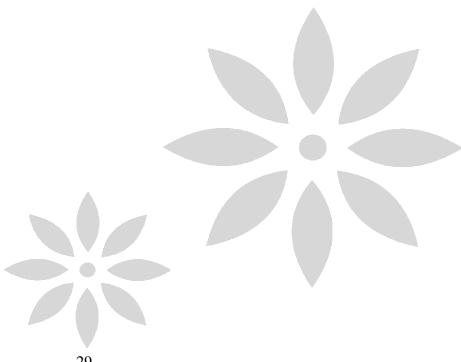
In this lesson you will learn how to keep the excitement about the Closet alive, how to keep it manageable, and how to maintain it's long-term effectiveness with regular planning.

Listen

MP3: The Five Rules of Engagement—Rules 3-5: Keep it Special, Keep it Simple, & Regular Planning

Supplemental Reading

First Things First, by Stephen Covey if you need to establish a more effective planning system.



1- THINKING HOW THE RULES WORK FOR YOU

Are there any of the Rules of Engagement that you feel a particular resistance to? Why?

Consider at least one of these elements of resistance and identify 1-3 strategies to help you overcome that resistance.



Do you have any reservations about using the Closet only during structured learning time? Share your reservations with your circle of support to identify possible solutions.

2- CREATE A NEW FAMILY SCHEDULE

Take a look at your schedule, the contents of your home and the activities your children are involved in. Determine how you feel about each activity. Do you need to make any adjustments to open up room for your family to be together and learn together more effectively? Are there important elements that are missing because there hasn't been room to fit them in? Determine what your family schedule should look like if it were better serving your family's educational and relationship needs.



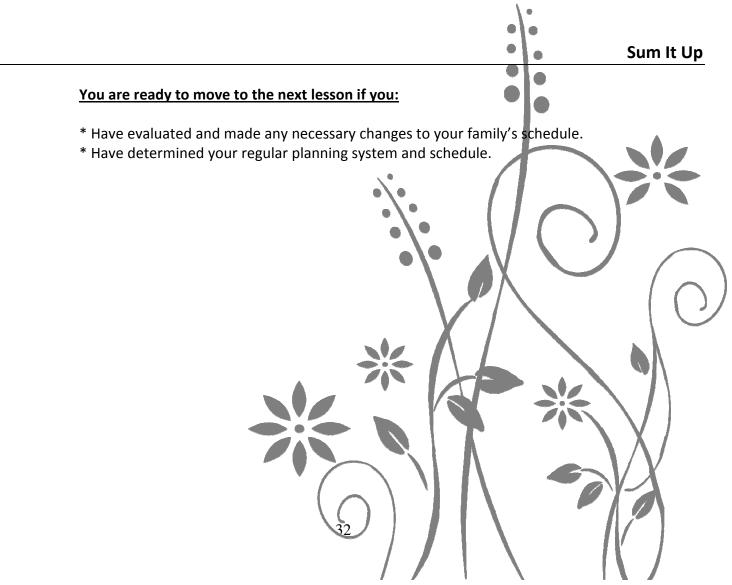
3- THINKING ABOUT YOUR PLANNING ROUTINE

What is your current system for managing your time and tasks? Does it work well? Are you resistant to a regular planning routine? Determine your system for regular planning, and when the best time to consistently meet with your spouse would be.

1. Have the courage to make any necessary changes in your family schedule. Experiment with this new schedule.

2. Set a firm time for planning with yourself or your spouse. Make it short and sweet but be consistent every week.

3. Read the Real Life Planning articles.



NOTES

NOTES



Overview

In this session the Closet will be explained. We will cover where the closet is located in your home and why it matters, what are your possible Closet options if you don't have an actual closet available and why a Closet Journal will help you in your efforts to get started.

Listen

MP3: Elements of the Closet Part I: Where's the Closet?

Supplemental Reading

Leadership Education: The Phases of Learning by Oliver and Rachel DeMille pages 31-56 The Phases



1- CLOSET OPTIONS

What possible Closet options might work for your situation? If it isn't in the room where you have your structured family learning time, is it easy to bring in and out of that room?

Is what you're considering large enough to hold what your family needs? How will you segregate items for younger vs. older children?

1. Get your physical "Closet" space ready to use. If you aren't using an actual closet obtain whatever you will be using as your Closet.

Sum It Up

You are ready to move to the next lesson if you:

* Have gotten your Closet ready to fill.



NOTES

The Closet Mastery Course LESSON 5: ELEMENTS OF THECLOSET PART II: WHAT'S IN THE CLOSET

Overview

In this session we will learn what goes in the Closet and where Closet materials come from. We will also talk about what to do in the event that you have not yet set up an educational fund for your family's educational needs.

Listen

MP3: Elements of the Closet Part II: What's in the Closet?

Supplemental Reading

This Supplemental Reading list is designed to get you thinking about Closet possibilities. Choose to read any that seem to fit your family's interests & needs.

Visit http://home-school-coach.com and click on the Course Readings category to read the following articles -

- Common Issues in Planning Ahead Weekly for Home Schooling: Regular Preparation Makes Me Cringe
- How to Overcome Issues in Planning Ahead for Home Schooling: Real Life Planning Part 1
- Home School Resources Online: How To Real Life Planning Part 2 Finding Inspirational Ideas
- How to Use the Library Effectively in Home Schooling: Real Life Planning Part 3 Using the Library
- Creative Lesson Plan Example for Lewis and Clark Expedition: Real Life Planning Part 4 Turning Your Plan Into Inspiration For Your Children
- Creative Homeschool Ideas for Making Learning Fun-Treasure Hunt Your House to Create a Magical Learning Space
- Treasure Hunt Your House Part 2
- Treasure Hunt Your House Part 3
- How to Homeschool at Low Prices-What to Do If You Don't Have Any Money
- Free Coloring Pages and Worksheets for Homeschooling- The Dover Sampler

For a list of possible Closet Content s see Appendix I A printable version of the above article(s) can be found in Appendix IV

Do

1. How do you view and feel about your role in providing educational materials for your children?

- Do you currently feel capable of providing inspiring materials and helping your children love learning?
- How do you feel about spending money on the educational needs of your children?

	Make a list of at least 20 things that you currently have in your home that would go well in your
Clo 1	oset. Gather those items together and put them in the Closet.
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	·
8	
9	
1	
1:	1
12	2
13	3
14	4
1	5
1	6
17	7
18	8
19	9
2	0

2. Go to the library and pick out 5 books that you think might interest your children. Add an item of interest for each book that you choose. (Swamps – plastic swamp animals, puppets – items to make a puppet and so forth) Put them in your Closet for this week.

3. Implement an education fund for your family even if it's only a few dollars each pay check.

4. Now make your closet available during your structured family learning time.

5. Begin utilizing the first two Daily Evaluation sections of your journal pages found at the end of this lesson. You will learn about using the other journal areas in Lessons 6 and 7.

You are ready to move to the next lesson if you:

- * Have read the Treasure Hunt your House articles.
- * Have completed your own treasure hunt and have put those materials in your closet.
- * Have chosen five books and have practiced creating interest with those books.

* Have implemented an "education fund" regardless of its current amount or the amount that you add on a regular basis.



NOTES

NOTES

RELATIONSHIPS:

Any that need some extra attention?

DAILY EVALUATION:

Describe Structured Family Learning Time Today.

TODAY'S SPARKS & GREAT IDEAS:

Evaluate how "Present" you were. If you struggled, why?

DAILY EVALUATION:

RELATIONSHIPS:

Any that need some extra attention?

TODAY'S SPARKS & GREAT IDEAS:

Evaluate how "Present" you were. If you struggled, why?

Describe Structured Family Learning Time Today.

DAILY EVALUATION:

RELATIONSHIPS:

Any that need some extra attention?

TODAY'S SPARKS & GREAT IDEAS:

Evaluate how "Present" you were. If you struggled, why?

Describe Structured Family Learning Time Today.

DAILY EVALUATION:

RELATIONSHIPS:

Any that need some extra attention?

TODAY'S SPARKS & GREAT IDEAS:

Evaluate how "Present" you were. If you struggled, why?

Describe Structured Family Learning Time Today.

RELATIONSHIPS:

Any that need some extra attention?

DAILY EVALUATION:

Describe Structured Family Learning Time Today.

TODAY'S SPARKS & GREAT IDEAS:

Evaluate how "Present" you were. If you struggled, why?



Overview

In this session you will learn what Sparks are, how to recognize them and how to respond to them. You will be given examples of how to use sparks to keep your Closet filled with inspiring content. We will also explore what to do if you aren't happy about a particular spark your child is presenting to you.

Listen

MP3: Sparks & Great Ideas

Supplemental Reading

Visit http://home-school-coach.com and click on the Course Readings category to read the following articles -

- Sparks Lead to Joy
- Example of Learning Style in Children-The Spencer "Sparks"
- Teaching Chemistry by Identifying Sparks from Kids- An Example of Recognizing and Responding to Sparks

A printable version of the above article(s) can be found in Appendix IV

Supplemental Resource

The Leadership Education Family Builder Program, Core Session:

Parent Job 2 - Creating an Inspiring Environment and Parent Job 3 - Respond Effectively

Found at www.LeadershipEducationFamilyBuilder.com

1- EVALUATE

Evaluate how you now respond when a child interrupts you to ask a question or share something that he is excited about? Do you see any changes from how you used to respond?

Evaluate your skills for observing Sparks. Determine this week that you are going to begin looking for Sparks.

What items can you put into the Closet just for yourself?

1. Listen for at least one Spark this week and find a way to respond to it. Share your experience with your circle of support.

- 2. Begin using your journal pages to capture both Sparks and your Great Ideas for the Closet.
- 3. Put some items in your Closet just for yourself.

Sum It Up

You are ready to move to the next lesson if you:

- * Have captured and responded to at least one Spark.
- * Are using your journal pages to keep track of your children's Sparks and your Great Ideas?



NOTES

NOTES

DAILY EVALUATION:

RELATIONSHIPS:

Any that need some extra attention?

TODAY'S SPARKS & GREAT IDEAS:

Evaluate how "Present" you were. If you struggled, why?

Describe Structured Family Learning Time Today.

RELATIONSHIPS:

Any that need some extra attention?

DAILY EVALUATION:

Describe Structured Family Learning Time Today.

TODAY'S SPARKS & GREAT IDEAS:

Evaluate how "Present" you were. If you struggled, why?

DAILY EVALUATION:

RELATIONSHIPS:

Any that need some extra attention?

TODAY'S SPARKS & GREAT IDEAS:

Evaluate how "Present" you were. If you struggled, why?

Describe Structured Family Learning Time Today.

DAILY EVALUATION:

RELATIONSHIPS:

Any that need some extra attention?

TODAY'S SPARKS & GREAT IDEAS:

Evaluate how "Present" you were. If you struggled, why?

Describe Structured Family Learning Time Today.

DAILY EVALUATION:

RELATIONSHIPS:

Any that need some extra attention?

TODAY'S SPARKS & GREAT IDEAS:

Evaluate how "Present" you were. If you struggled, why?

Describe Structured Family Learning Time Today.



Overview

In this session we are going to just touch on the importance and power of our "self talk" in connection with the learning environment of our home.

Listen

MP3: The Power of Mental Scripts

Reading

As A Man Thinketh by James Allen, can be read on line at <u>http://jamesallen.wwwhubs.com/think.htm</u>

Supplemental Reading

The Power of Positive Thinking by Norman Vincent Peale Mind Set by Carol Dweck Open Your Mind to Receive by Catherine Ponder, free book available at http://normanvincentpeale.wwwhubs.com/ The Strangest Secret by Earl Nightingale The Power of Thought by Henry Thomas Hamblin Mind Mastery by Ken J. Ward Thoughts Are Things by Prentice Mulford What We Believe by Ernest Holmes

Supplemental Resource

Watch **The Stickman** video. It can be downloaded free at <u>http://www.thoughtsalive.com/stickman-video/</u> (Although this video is made as an advertisement for another product we recommend watching it because it will help you understand the importance of your thoughts)

If you wish to study this subject further you can find many good books and articles by researching the following authors – Wayne Dyer, Claude M. Bristol, Napoleon Hill, Steven Covey, Mark victor Hansen

1- THINKING ABOUT YOUR "SCRIPTS"

Make a list of "scripts" that you currently have, that assist you in successful parenting. (ie. "I like being with my kids", "Reading as a family is so comfortable.")

Make a list of "scripts" that you currently have that are counterproductive to successful parenting. (ie. "My kids make me so mad!"; "I can't get anything done with the kids around."; "I have too many children to be able to meet their educational needs."; "children are exhausting.").

1. Using your personal spiritual canon, find at least ten (10) passages that confirm that your thoughts and/or talk have power. You will find a list from my spiritual canon, the Christian Bible, in Appendix II.

2. Isolate one script that you have about your children that is not productive and re-write it. Every time you hear the old script in your mind say to yourself "Thank you for sharing but" and then say the new script.

3. BE PATIENT. Changing how we think and feel takes time. Be kind and compassionate with yourself.

4. Begin using your journal pages to briefly evaluate your "Self Talk".

You are ready to move to the next lesson if you:

- * Have read As A Man Thinketh
- * Have re-scripted one belief.



NOTES

NOTES

RELATIONSHIPS:

Any that need some extra attention?

DAILY EVALUATION:

Describe Structured Family Learning Time Today.

TODAY'S SPARKS & GREAT IDEAS:

Evaluate how "Present" you were. If you struggled, why?

DAILY EVALUATION:

RELATIONSHIPS:

Any that need some extra attention?

TODAY'S SPARKS & GREAT IDEAS:

Evaluate how "Present" you were. If you struggled, why?

Describe Structured Family Learning Time Today.

DAILY EVALUATION:

RELATIONSHIPS:

Any that need some extra attention?

TODAY'S SPARKS & GREAT IDEAS:

Evaluate how "Present" you were. If you struggled, why?

Describe Structured Family Learning Time Today.

DAILY EVALUATION:

RELATIONSHIPS:

Any that need some extra attention?

TODAY'S SPARKS & GREAT IDEAS:

Evaluate how "Present" you were. If you struggled, why?

Describe Structured Family Learning Time Today.

RELATIONSHIPS:

Any that need some extra attention?

DAILY EVALUATION:

Describe Structured Family Learning Time Today.

TODAY'S SPARKS & GREAT IDEAS:

Evaluate how "Present" you were. If you struggled, why?



Overview

In this session we will cover the importance of a Family Mission Statement. I will give an example of using it in conjunction with your Master Inspire Plan and the Closet. A Family Mission Statement is one of the tools that will to help you create a healthy, value-filled family culture and which facilitates the effectiveness of any other systems and tools, such as the Closet, that you use in your family's education.

Listen

MP3: Your Family Mission Statement, by Jodie Palmer

Supplemental Reading

Visit <u>http://home-school-coach.com</u> and click on the Course Readings category to review a printed form of the Misstion Statement Audios–

- A Family Mission Statement: Part I
- A Family Mission Statement: Part II
- A Family Mission Statement: Part III
- A Family Mission Statement: Part IV

A printable version of the above article(s) can be found in Appendix IV

1. EVALUATE YOUR FAMILY'S CURRENT CULTURE

Consider the daily environment and feelings in your home. Talk to your spouse about it. Are your family environment, feelings, and culture such that they will inspire or give life to a great Core Phase? Now, try a brainstorming exercise by asking yourself: **What are the core things I want my child(ren) to do or know?** You can add to your list when things come to your mind.

2. ELIMINATING ROADBLOCKS

Consider what roadblocks, if any, have been keeping your family from creating your own Mission Statement. Are these roadblocks real or just excuses? If they are real, write them down. Now begin considering solutions to these roadblocks. Discuss your solutions with your Family Builder Group.

3. CREATIVE PLANNING

Make a plan for which activities you will use to prime your family's pump of creativity, which questions you will ask, and the form that you want your Mission Statement to take. Then determine your timeline. As you develop your plan, give special attention to making these activities fun and memorable. Include food, or outings, or whatever will make the events special for your family.

Make a plan of how you are going to engage with your Family Mission Statement in meaningful ways.

1. Create your Family Mission Statement with your family.

2. Create your Family Vision.

Sum It Up

You are ready to move to the next lesson if you:

- * Have created a Family Mission Statement.
- * Have begun to create a Family Vision.
- * Have developed a plan of how to engage with your Family Mission Statement in meaningful ways.



NOTES

NOTES

RELATIONSHIPS:

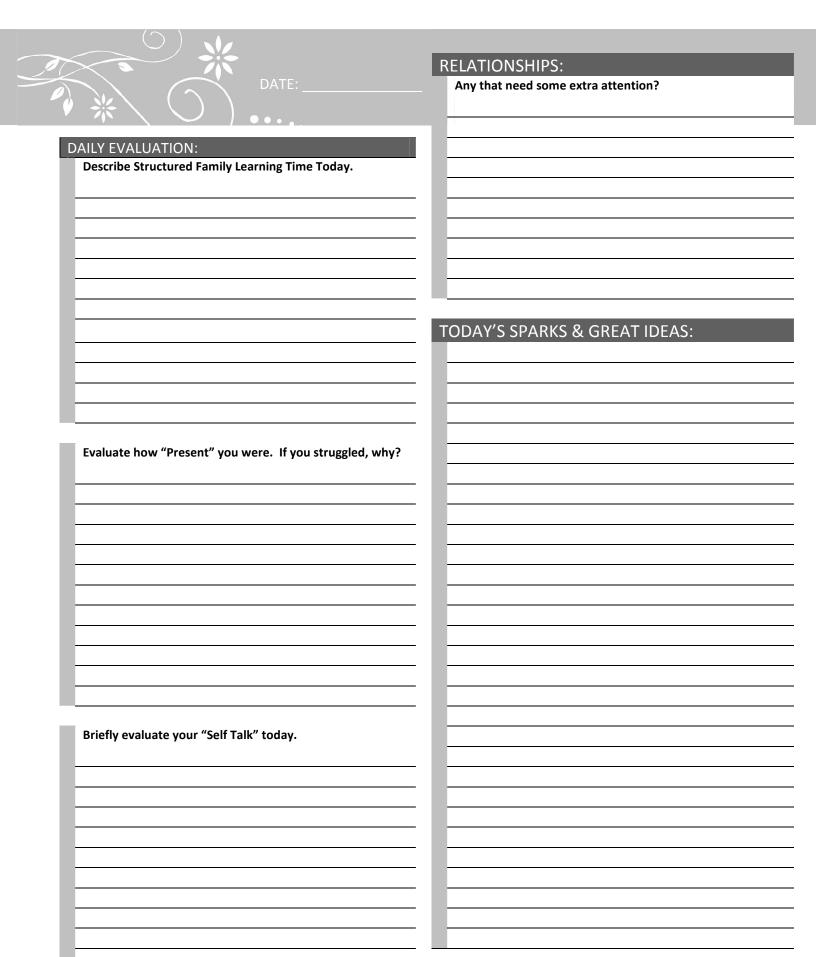
Any that need some extra attention?

DAILY EVALUATION:

Describe Structured Family Learning Time Today.

TODAY'S SPARKS & GREAT IDEAS:

Evaluate how "Present" you were. If you struggled, why?



DAILY EVALUATION:

RELATIONSHIPS:

Any that need some extra attention?

TODAY'S SPARKS & GREAT IDEAS:

Evaluate how "Present" you were. If you struggled, why?

Describe Structured Family Learning Time Today.





DAILY EVALUATION:

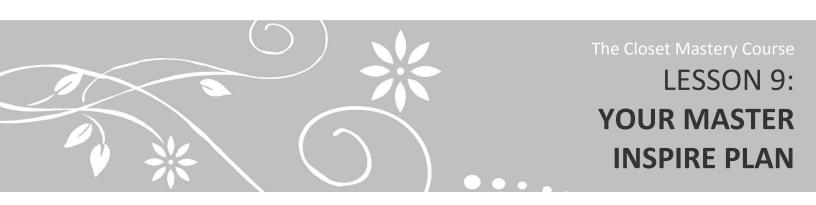
RELATIONSHIPS:

Any that need some extra attention?

TODAY'S SPARKS & GREAT IDEAS:

Evaluate how "Present" you were. If you struggled, why?

Describe Structured Family Learning Time Today.



Overview

In this session you will begin building your Master Inspire Plan. This is your unique blueprint for the education of your family. Your plan is to be used as a guide in selecting areas to work on as you create an environment of inspiration. It is a dynamic document and therefore subject to change as your family grows and the interests of your children develop and change. I will demonstrate using your Master Inspire Plan and your Family Mission Statement to catch and follow a Spark.

Listen

MP3: Creating Your Master Inspire Plan by Diann Jeppson MP3: Using The Master Inspire Plan with the Closet As you listen, refer to the Master Inspire Plan handout in Appendix III.

Supplemental Reading

Visit <u>http://home-school-coach.com</u> and click on the Master Inspire Plan category to find articles with ideas and examples on each section of a Master Inspire Plan.

81

1- BRAINSTORM MASTER INSPIRE PLAN

Brainstorm ideas for each element of a Master Inspire Plan. Because you are brainstorming you can just jot down as many ideas as you feel impressed to write.

CLASSICS

CULTURAL LITERACY, BREADTH AND DEPTH			

RESOURCES

ADULT SKILLS

EXPERIENCE

GOD			

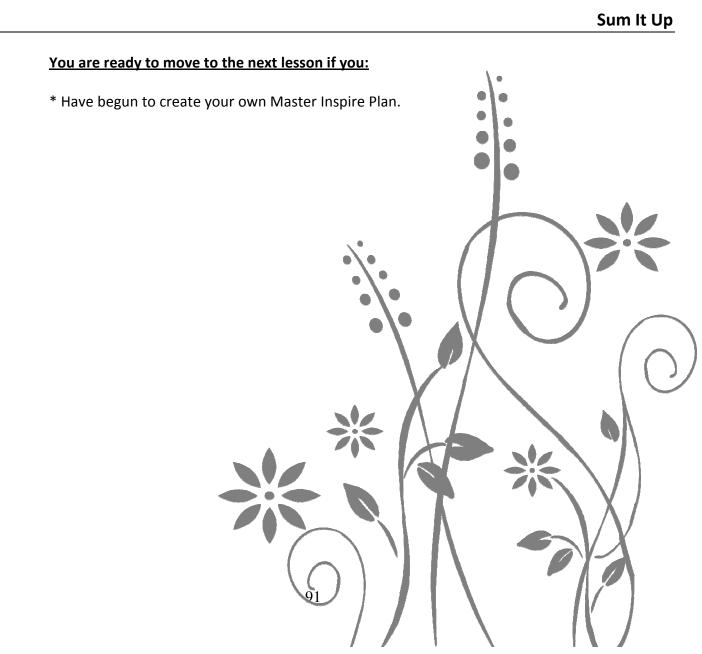
FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS	

PLAC	ES TO GO	
_		

1. Create a Master Inspire Plan document. Use a format that will be easy for you to look at and change regularly. This can be in a notebook or in a computer file, of any other format you choose.

2. Begin creating your own Master Inspire Plan using ideas from your brainstorming session under each of the headings. Remember the rule-do not put anything on your plan that you are not excited about. You do not need to finish creating your plan before moving on to the next session. It is a work in progress, and you will continue to add to it.

3. Use one thing from your Master Inspire Plan or your Family Mission Statement to expose your children to during your structured family learning time. You can use the Closet to do this or not.



NOTES

NOTES

DAILY EVALUATION:

RELATIONSHIPS:

Any that need some extra attention?

TODAY'S SPARKS & GREAT IDEAS:

Evaluate how "Present" you were. If you struggled, why?

Describe Structured Family Learning Time Today.



DAILY EVALUATION:

RELATIONSHIPS:

Any that need some extra attention?

TODAY'S SPARKS & GREAT IDEAS:

Evaluate how "Present" you were. If you struggled, why?

Describe Structured Family Learning Time Today.



DAILY EVALUATION:

RELATIONSHIPS:

Any that need some extra attention?

TODAY'S SPARKS & GREAT IDEAS:

Evaluate how "Present" you were. If you struggled, why?

Describe Structured Family Learning Time Today.



Overview

In this session you will discover ways to support the changes you would like to make. We will also briefly cover what you can do if you lack a vision for yourself or your family.

Listen

MP3: Supporting Change

Supplemental Reading

Visit <u>http://home-school-coach.com</u> and click on the Course Readings category to read a review of the audio in written form-

Making Changes After Training

A printable version of the above article(s) can be found in Appendix IV

99

1. THINKING ABOUT CHANGE

What seems to be your greatest challenge when deciding to make a change or implement something new into your family?

Consider what values you can link changing your thinking and behavior to.

Do

1. Determine what four steps you will incorporate so that your chances of making necessary changes in your family have a greater chance of success.

STEP 1

STEP 2	
STEP 3	
STEP4	

2. If you don't know why you are educating your children or if you don't have a clear vision for your family, take a vision walk at <u>www.leaderhipeducationfamilybuilder.com</u>

Sum It Up

You are ready to move to the next lesson if you:

* Have been practicing your four steps to support your use of structured time, being present, using the Closet and other changes you want to implement in your home.

* Have gotten a more clear vision of why you are educating your children at home and what you want your family culture to look like and feel like.

* You have begun making a written statement of your vision.



NOTES

NOTES

DAILY EVALUATION:

RELATIONSHIPS:

Any that need some extra attention?

TODAY'S SPARKS & GREAT IDEAS:

Evaluate how "Present" you were. If you struggled, why?

Describe Structured Family Learning Time Today.



DAILY EVALUATION:

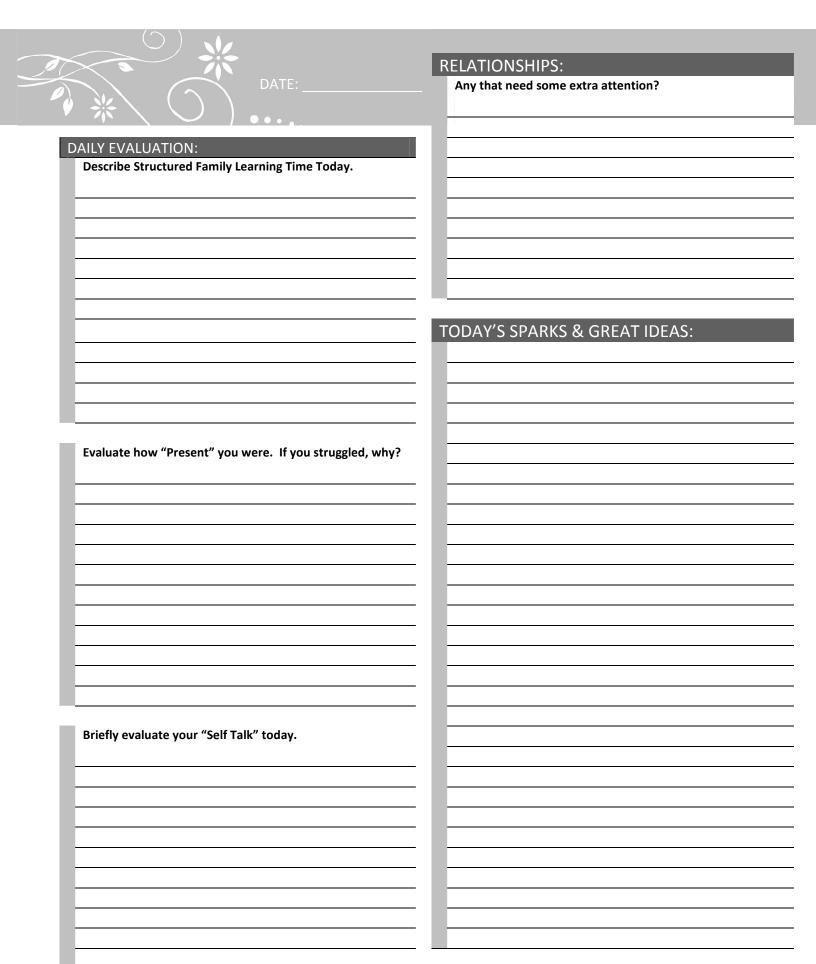
RELATIONSHIPS:

Any that need some extra attention?

TODAY'S SPARKS & GREAT IDEAS:

Evaluate how "Present" you were. If you struggled, why?

Describe Structured Family Learning Time Today.



DAILY EVALUATION:

RELATIONSHIPS:

Any that need some extra attention?

TODAY'S SPARKS & GREAT IDEAS:

Evaluate how "Present" you were. If you struggled, why?

Describe Structured Family Learning Time Today.



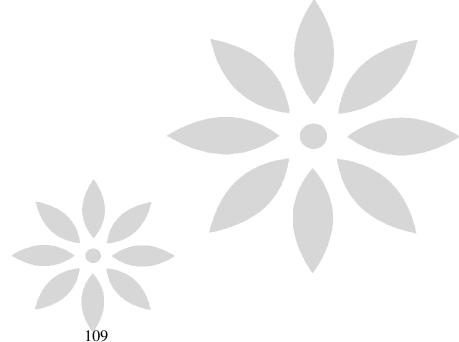
Congratulations, you have finished the course! So now what do you do?	
	Listen

MP3: What's it Really Like to Use the Closet—A Little Dose of Reality

Supplemental Reading

Overview

No supplemental reading for this lesson



1. THINKING ABOUT THE FUTURE

Think about how you will respond when your structured family time doesn't flow as planned.

Consider how you can continue to engage the use of your circle of support to maintain your progress.

1. Continue to keep your journal pages for at least another month.

2. If you have successfully instituted a structured family learning time and a Closet make a plan to continue to evaluate your progress over the next year.

3. If you have not begun using a structured family learning time or using the Closet consider why not. Work with your circle of support to come up with solutions to your roadblocks.

4. Determine what your "next step" should be as you continue to organize these two elements into your home.

5. Email Mary Ann Johnson at <u>majcoach@yahoo.com</u> and share your success and/or concerns.

Sum It Up

* Consistently evaluate your progress and determine what your next step should be. There will always be something to work on.

* If you are struggling, consider getting some personal coaching from me, The Closet Coach. You can find coaching options at <u>www.home-school-coach.com</u>.



NOTES

DATE:

DAILY EVALUATION:

RELATIONSHIPS:

Any that need some extra attention?

TODAY'S SPARKS & GREAT IDEAS:

Evaluate how "Present" you were. If you struggled, why?

Describe Structured Family Learning Time Today.

Briefly evaluate your "Self Talk" today.

DATE:

DAILY EVALUATION:

RELATIONSHIPS:

Any that need some extra attention?

TODAY'S SPARKS & GREAT IDEAS:

Evaluate how "Present" you were. If you struggled, why?

Describe Structured Family Learning Time Today.

Briefly evaluate your "Self Talk" today.





DATE:

DAILY EVALUATION:

RELATIONSHIPS:

Any that need some extra attention?

TODAY'S SPARKS & GREAT IDEAS:

Evaluate how "Present" you were. If you struggled, why?

Describe Structured Family Learning Time Today.

Briefly evaluate your "Self Talk" today.



What Can I Put in the Closet?

It is important to put age appropriate items in your closet. If all of your children are under 5 then an electronics kit wouldn't be a good choice. When you have a mixed group of ages then you need items to tempt and satisfy each age. You know your children best and you will know what is age appropriate for each one. Note also that many items will work at both the Core and Love of Learning stages.

Love of learning and Core Phase Possibilities (approx. 5-12 years old)		
• Packets of seed (those that germinate quickly in water or	• A three-sided Puppet Theater or the materials to make one	
soil are radish, bean, marigolds, and peas)	Maracas	
Kaleidoscope	Rain stick (a musical instrument)	
Binoculars	Thumb cymbals	
Bendable light sticks	Small drums	
Iron filings	Harmonica	
 Gyroscope (there are a number of kinds.) 	Recorder and music book	
Stethoscope	• Kazoos	
Bubble blowing supplies	Geometric shapes in magnets and wood	
 Magnifying glass 	Age appropriate puzzles	

Love of learning and Core Phase Possibilities (approx. 5-12 years old) -CONTINUED-		
Plastic gears or gear box	• Lego's	
Rainbow glasses	Tinker Toys	
Butterfly net or materials to make one	Lincoln Logs	
Poster paints	• Prisms	
• Spinning tops (this is a physics item!)	Calculator	
• Yo Yos (this is also a physics item!)	Stamps/stamp pads	
Frisbee	• Adding machine (an old relic, fabulous fun and uses math!)	
Flash cards of all types	Stickers	
Measuring cups and spoons	Felt markers	
Paper of all types	Crayons	
Stencils of letters and numbers in all sizes and fonts	Basic tools (hammer, nails, wood scraps, screws, screw	
Drawing supplies of all types	driver, pliers)	
Glitter	Colored pencils	
• Glue	CD player with all types of music	
Scissors	• Jacob's ladder	
• Tape	• A box containing old cameras, radios, clocks, etc (to take	
Magnetic darts and board	apart)	
Plaster of Paris	 Magnets of all shapes, sizes and power 	
Flower press or materials to make one	Glow stars	

Love of Learning Phase Possibilities (Approx 8-12 years old)		
Microscope/slides	Tuning forks and mallet	
Telescope	Platform scale	
 Crystals and directions for making them 	Balance scale	
Shells/coral	Barometer	
• Fossils	Rain gauge	
• Wheel	Materials for invisible ink	
• Globe	Boomerang	
Free standing solar light	• A box of old socks, scrap material, buttons, yarn etc.	
Colored sand	Books of art works	
• Skeleton	• A working camera (a cheaper digital is best unless you are	
 Plastic model of man/woman with internal parts 	committed to developing the film regularly)	
Pedometer	Melody harp	
• Bug kill jar	Dice, all sizes	
Outdoor Garden thermometer	Dominos	
Fish pump and plastic tubing	Rulers/yardstick/protractor	
Pulleys and weights	 Graph paper with large and small squares 	
Rock tumbler	Spirograph	
Electromagnet	A tape player that records/tapes	
Compass for telling north	Wire and weights	
Compass for drawing a circle	 Maps both marked and those you fill in 	
Holographic items	Sand paper	
Chinese Jump Rope	Child's Atlas	
• Dover edition educational coloring books (human anatomy,	• 3-D puzzles	
minerals and assorted rocks, birds, butterflies, dinosaurs,	Brain teaser puzzles	
costumes, etc.)	"Cat's Cradle"	
 Directions and materials for juggling balls (have a book 	Rocket and launcher	
handy on how to do it)		



The Power Of Our Thoughts And "Self Talk"

Genesis 26:24 ... fear not, for I am with thee.

Proverbs 12:5 The thoughts of the righteous are right.

Proverbs 16:3 ...thy thoughts shall be established.

Proverbs 19: 2 Also, that the soul be without knowledge, it is not good...

Matt. 7: 7 Ask and it shall be given you.

Matt 7:8 Everyone that asketh, receiveth.

Matt 8: 13 As thou hast believed, so be it done.

Matt 9:8 Believe ye that I am able to do this?

Matt 8;26 Why are ye fearful, oh ye of little faith?

Matt. 9:29 According to your faith be it unto you.

Matt 21:22 Ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

Mark 5:36 Be not afraid, only believe.

Mark 9:23 All things are possible to him that believes.

Mark 9:24 Lord help thou mine unbelief.

Mark 11:24 When ye pray, believe, that ye receive.

James 1: 5 If any of you lack wisdom let him ask of God who giveth to all men liberally.

James 1:6 ... Ask me in faith, nothing wavering.

James 1:8 A double minded man is unstable.

2 Tim 1:2 God hath not given us the spirit of fear.

Rev 3:16 If ye are lukewarm I will spew thee out of my mouth.

Patience

Proverbs 19:2 ...and he that hasteneth with his feet sinneth.

Proverbs 21:5 The thoughts of the diligent tend only to plenteousness; but of every one that is hasty only to want.

Isaiah 28:16 ... he that believeth shall not make haste.

Luke 21:19 In your patience posses ye your souls

Rom 8:25 We see not, then do we with patience wait.



The Closet Mastery Course APPENDIX III MASTER INSPIRE PLAN HANDOUT

Master Inspire Plan Handout*

Creating a Unique Plan for Inspiring Leadership Education in Your Family

Nine Key Elements of an Effective Master Inspire Plan

A Master Inspire Plan is meant as a guide to assist you in mastering the Arts of Inspiring and the Arts of Responding. As a planning tool, your Master Inspire Plan is not designed to ensure that all of your children must or will do and learn everything contained in it. Its purpose is to assist you in considering the areas you wish to focus on as you engage in the work of inspiring and responding to your children. Your Master Inspire Plan is a road map to travel with through the grand adventure of educating your family, but remember that some of the greatest adventures are the unplanned trips that happen along the way. These are the many occasions when your children want to learn things that don't appear anywhere on your plan. These occasions should almost always outrank the items on your plan.

1. Classics: Your List

This is a list of the classics you would like to read, whether aloud as a family, aloud to individual children, or for one or more family members to read to themselves.

2. Cultural Literacy, Breadth and Depth

• Create a list of the areas you would like to address as you provide the resources and mentoring necessary for cultural literacy, both from a survey standpoint and in your efforts to facilitate depth.

• Start with family culture. Describe in writing your best family culture, and how you will provide opportunities for your family to gain from the richness within your family heritage. Begin a list of the volumes of family history you will read with your family. Write your plan for collecting family genealogy and the stories of your ancestors. This is core to your family's cultural literacy. Include plans for journal keeping, thus preparing the means for passing your family culture on to the next generation.

• Next, make a list of the resources you would like to use to cover the fields of knowledge that constitute literacy.

• The last part of this element is a list of the fields of knowledge that may constitute parts of your mentored scholar's study program. It is vital that you look ahead, even if your oldest child is two years old.

This list will assist you in so many ways as you lay out your plans for how you will nurture and inspire the desire in your young scholar to engage in the study of these areas and in determining what resources you will assemble. Here is an example:

Scholar Study Program

- Architecture
- Art
- Poetry
- Technology
- Wars
- Presidents
- Constitution, Declaration of Independence and other founding documents
- Geography
- Science (major fields)
- Government forms and which forms are specific to which countries
- Philosophy
- People of influence throughout history
- Music periods
- Eras in history
- Foreign languages
- Current events
- Future trends
- Foreign affairs
- Law and major Supreme Court decisions

3. Resources

This is a list of specific resources you would like to use in teaching your children. As you write this section, you may wish to make a careful investigation of available resources by reading reviews in magazines, asking friends, looking through catalogs and websites, visiting retailers, and attending educational conventions and seminars.

4. Adult Skills

This is a list of the skill areas in which you would like your children to gain proficiency before they reach adulthood.

5. Organizational Programs

This is a list of the programs connected with specific organizations you would like your children to engage in. You may wish to include programs that address the following: leadership, service and community, skills development, the arts, sports, camping and outdoor recreation. Where applicable, consider any programs for youth offered by your church and programs offered by a local organization or academy serving the leadership education community. This is a list of the experiences you would like your children to gain before they reach adulthood. Here is a short sample list to get you started:

- Lead groups
- Public speaking
- Perform music—solo and group
- Lead and participate in colloquia
- Use parliamentary procedure
- Create and run a successful small business

7. God

This is a written plan of what the spiritual education in your home will look like and what specific resources you would like to use to accomplish this.

Building Blocks for an Effective Devotional: Take from this list those things that are right for your family to do, then add or change things according to the needs of your family:

- Prayer
- Pledge of Allegiance
- Recitation of Family Mission Statement
- Music
- Scripture Readings
- Scripture "Readers"
- Narrative highlights from your core canon
- Vignettes and short lessons on doctrine, principle, law and history of your faith
- Memorization of scriptures, poetry, key statements and sayings
- Charts and systems for memorization
- Articles in a magazine or newspaper written for children or youth
- Stories from family history
- History of your country

8. Family Relationships

This is a written plan of what you would like your family relationships to look like and what resources and structures you would like to use to create the environments that will nurture these vital relationships. You may wish to include a list of family traditions you wish to create or preserve.

9. Places to Go

This is a list of places you would like to take your children for the purpose of rounding out their education and experience. You may wish to include experiences such as climbing mountains, visiting historical sites, visiting other countries, or going on an adventure such as a survival trek or a river rafting trip. In considering your selections, include planning for what you would like to do to prepare your children to make the most of the experience, whether through study or through an orientation or training program. From Leadership Education Family Builder



Underlined words indicate links. To access live links visit <u>www.home-school-coach.com</u>.

Honor Your Family Learning Time

I just received an email from a mom who took my class, had a coaching call and is getting started. Right after she decided to get her closet in order and have a structured family learning time everyone came down with colds. So it was shelved for a week hoping all would soon be well and they could start again.

Now I have raised seven children and I know how it can be when everyone is feeling poorly. However, I want to remind you that the top keys in creating a truly magical and amazing family culture of learning is structured time and consistency. That is rule number one in the Five Rules of Engagement. So how can we keep to that structure when things aren't going well, as in the case of a family with a cold?

My suggestion is to hold true to the time. If you have structured family learning time at 9:00 am do it, but modify it. Gather your children around you, have a little devotional or beginning like you do any other time. Read for a few minutes and then give everyone a nice glass of juice or hot chocolate. Then call it good. The point is to be consistent, to honor the time. It allows your children to depend on it, to understand that learning is not only fun but important.

Illness isn't the only thing that will challenge you as you work to honor your family learning time. There will be days when you have made more commitments than you can manage. We all do it occasionally. When that happens gather your children together, begin as you always do, read and then call it good. The kids won't like ending early, I can tell you that. They come to love this family time and learning together. But something is better than nothing and they know it.

If you have set aside five days a week for family learning time or just one day, whatever it is, honor it. Consider it sacred time with your children to model what you want them to know, that education is fun and important, that you value the time with them most, that you can be counted on to follow through.

Example of Structured Time for Homeschooling-What Does Structured Family Learning Time Look Like at the Palmers

Today I went to "kid school". That is what my grandchildren call their structured family learning time. It usually starts around 9:30 but today it started at 10:30 because the mentor for today, me, was running late!

Jodie uses a piece of rolling luggage for her closet. There are two reasons that she does that. One, it doesn't take much to fill and two, it moves from the bedroom to the family room easily. Today she had added the book Ginger Bear to her Closet. It is Jack and Maggie's favorite book and is usually on the library shelf. Today it was in the Closet because the last time they read it Jodie told Jack that grandma knows how to make ginger bears. He promptly called me, with help from mom, and asked me if I would come and make ginger bears. So today I went.

I want to share how their "kid school" goes. First, everyone goes into the family room. They all choose a hat from the pegs on the wall. Then they sing the Hello song. Hello to Maggie, were so glad to see you.....

Then we all trooped into the kitchen to make ginger bears. We started by reading the book. Jack and Maggie would shout out all the parts they knew by heart, especially the "NO HORACE" parts. Even Mary, the nine months old got involved grabbing the pages and bending them just a tad!

We passed dough all around (yes I had made it ahead. I calculated my energy level you know!) Then we patted and rolled and cut out our ginger bears. Raisin eyes were added. They were painted with egg white paint for a shiny look and so the sprinkles would stay on. Then they were cooked two at a time while another batch of two was made. We had a wonderful time. It was really fun.

Our next "subject" was science. Jack and Maggie have a dear friend who just had a 90th birthday party. He gave them a HUGE bunch of helium filled balloons. We took the balloons to the front yard and cut them from their strings one at a time. As they flew into the air I had a "Familiar Conversation" with Jack, who is two, and Maggie, who is four. It went something like this. "Do you know why the balloon flies into the air? Well, it has gas inside called Helium. It makes the balloon go up." That's it, that's all there was to science today. Well, there was also lots of laughing and giggling going on.

We returned to the family room, gathered in a circle of sorts and sang the goodbye song. Goodbye, so long, farewell my friends...... And so ends another "kid school" day at the Palmers. It lasted about one hour and forty minutes. Most days it lasts about thirty minutes.

Practice Being Present

I want to tell you how my day went last Thursday. Actually let me begin the story on Wednesday evening. I took out a pad and wrote down my schedule for Thursday. It was full. I had a couple of doctor's appointments and a meeting with a friend, my regular work, an article to write and post and a few other sundry items. About fifteen minutes after I finished the list one of my daughters called. She had a presentation to do Thursday night and said, "Mom I hate to bother you but I really need some help. I just need a couple of hours to finish this presentation and I just can't get anything done with the kids." YIKES!!! I really wanted to help but I had a FULL day coming up. So I did what any good mother would, I rearranged my schedule!

Now don't inundate me with letters about how we need our own space and how we have to take care of ourselves and on and on. My daughter had asked for help which she really needed and which she doesn't ask for often. I wanted to help her. I know what it feels like to be over the top and not see how you can do all you have to do. So I rearranged my schedule. I cancelled one doctor's appointment, set the other for earlier in the day and changed my appointment with the friend. The article could wait till later that night.

Thursday morning I rushed off to work with the day's plan in my head. I called my daughter and told her I would be there by about 2:30 because my doctor appointment was earlier. I could hear the relief in her voice.

Work went fine. Then off to the doctor which is a forty five minute drive. They drew my blood and then I sat there...right up to the time of my previously scheduled appointment at 2:30. Double yikes. By the time I got to my daughters home it was four fifteen and I was feeling rushed and stressed. I grabbed the kids, plopped them in the stroller, gave Jack his "baby to push" and off we went. I could at least give her an hour and a half.

Because Jodie needed to take the baby with her to her presentation we just walked around their block over and over again so that she could find us when she needed to go! Shortly after that her husband would be home and I could get on with the day. My mind was so busy. I kept thinking about the article I needed to write and post knowing that it was going to take a few hours. I was thinking about the other assignments I had before I could end the day. I kept saying to Jack, "Come on Jack. Let's go". I wanted him to keep up with my busy mind even though I knew in the back of it that I wouldn't be getting to any of those other things until the hour and a half had passed. It was as though if we just moved a bit faster the time would go faster and I could get to all the "other stuff" I had to do.

Gee, hasn't that been the subject of many an article by me? I surely <u>wasn't present</u>. I wasn't hearing Jack or seeing Maggie or having any conversations of any kind. So I STOPPED! I pulled my mind back from its preoccupation and its business. I slowed down. I said to Jack, "Hey, you are the leader." Then we followed him. We went up driveways, went forward and then turned back, we explored the alley. Sometimes we would just stop and stand there waiting. Once I said, "Jack, what are we waiting for?" "Cars", was his reply.

He stopped by a beautiful flowering plant with magenta blooms. He bent down and sniffed it. I turned around to look at Mary and Maggie and then back to Jack. He was catching up to me carrying a blossom in his small fist. "For Maggie", he said. I was touched by the fact that at two he knew that his sister couldn't smell the flower without his help.

We had a wonderful, long, meandering walk. We saw bugs, ants, flowers, birds, grapes about to be ripe, and leaves, lots of leaves! It was restful, peaceful. Jack and Maggie heard the names of flowers from their grandma. Some of them they will remember. It was a glorious time.

It takes effort to "be present". It is work for adults who are so busy and preoccupied with the world and its worries, pressures and must dos. However, the rewards for both children and adults when we make the effort, is joy, peace, warmth and strengthened relationships.

Tomorrow pick a time or event in your family and practice being present. It's like riding a bike, the more we practice the better we get.

Common Issues in Planning Ahead Weekly for Home Schooling-Regular Preparation Makes Me Cringe

I have been teaching a webinar this month and the first class dealt with the Five Rules of Engagement. The assignment I gave was for each parent to determine which of the five rules they felt most resistant to. I just had to share this response from one of the parents. It is so hilarious that I and others think she should seriously write a book. It is also sobering as it rings a bell with me and will with many other parents.

"The rule of engagement that makes me cringe is "regular preparation." When I think about preparing for anything I feel anxiety. My experiences with different preparation activities are riddled with frustration and interruption. Having a large family multiplies the potential and real distractions to carrying anything to completion. Meal preparation generally includes a host of interruptions and ultimately failed recipes. Things burn. Things melt. Things don't get finished. When I find some quiet time for lesson preparation or quiet study and succeed in following a thought through to the end, I emerge to find the house destroyed and a number of children roaming around in various stages of undress and degree of soiling.

In the time I've invested in this brief paragraph I've fielded 5 interruptions. Only one was a screaming, urgent one, but each required me to stop to deflect, softly remind that I am in my "office" working, or interrupt a persistent child. Then I search through my short term memory: "What was I thinking about?"

Perhaps I, like Pavlov's dog, am programmed to respond to even thoughts of "preparation" with despair and trepidation. Perhaps if this triggered salivating I would get more accomplished, just in a wet and slobbering fashion!

So my solution seems to be eliminating the most unpleasant companion activities that occur when Mom is trying to prepare, or to learn to like the mayhem and disorder. If I am missing a third alternative, I would be delighted to discover it!

Here are my initial ideas:

- 1. get rid of the dog (she interrupts with barking, vomiting and digging things up)
- 2. keep the kids entertained while I am engaged in preparing
- 3. send them to their rooms
- 4. let them watch brain gelatinizing videos
- 5. send them to the back yard and lock the door
- 6. give them a list of chores to do
- 7. promise a reward if everything is intact and everyone is safe when I am finished
- 8. Do all preparation when children are asleep (this seems the most likely to succeed)
- 9. Get a housekeeper who would be responsible for the children when I am preparing!

And for learning to love the journey:

- 1. Watch "cheaper by the dozen" and "yours, mine, ours" weekly and tell myself that I might like a little more chaos and surprise in my life. It could be viewed as "excitement.'
- 2. Hire a hypnotist
- 3. Laugh and cheer when I find that the house has been dismantled during a primary meeting or a lesson preparation stint.
- 4. Tell the kids that though I like the way they've redecorated the house I'm going to go for a drive and come back as soon as they call me to tell me that everything is back in order.
- 5. Seek counseling

Some deeper thought might illuminate other avenues to resolving my phobia of preparation. I have run out of time for the present.

Sincerely, Janet Fackrel Remember that hysterical and poignant letter I shared on Friday about <u>Common issues in planning ahead</u> <u>weekly for home schooling</u> Well I talked with Janet about her situation and later she sent me this email.

"I appreciated you addressing my hang-up with preparation. I felt much relieved and empowered after our class last night. Thanks for helping me see through another set of eyes!"

I want to help the rest of you who feel like Janet to "see through another set of eyes".

The other day one of my students said, "It's easy for you. You can just sit here and rattle off tons of ideas. I can't do that." My answer was "It isn't a gift" and "Yes you can." So here is how I get all of my ideas for <u>the</u> <u>Closet contents</u> as well as oodles of activities to go with whatever I put into <u>the Closet</u>. Now listen, don't miss this – I think about it all the time.

Yes, that's how I do it. I think about inspiring children all the time. I think about it when I'm doing dishes, vacuuming, shopping, going to the bathroom and especially just after I go to bed. I think about what I saw today, what conversations I heard and participated in, what was on the news, what did I remember from the past and on and on. If any of those things was interesting and has the possibility of inspiring a child I latch onto it.

Then I think about it, all day, on and off. Soon ideas start coming. "Hey, I could put that in the closet". "Gee, that would be a fun activity". "You know, that could lead to a "familiar conversation". Whenever I have an idea, a thought or a moment of inspiration I write it down.

It is a principle, that whatever we focus on we get more of. So I focus quite a bit on inspiring children because that is what I want to do. Consequently I couldn't possibly use all the ideas and good content that comes to me. There is just too much.

No mom has time for much quiet contemplation. We are busy kissing owies, sweeping up broken glass, changing poopy diapers, yelling at the dog; well you know how it is. So I am not suggesting that you sit down and plan. I don't want you to take a fresh piece of paper and pour your heart and soul into figuring out what to do to inspire your kids while they run rampant in your just cleaned living room. That would be crazy!

I am asking you to think. That's all, just think. Look at your children everyday. See them for who they really are, if even for just a moment. Step back in your mind and see their hearts. Then think. What do they love? What excites them? What would they like to know about? Who is their favorite neighbor and what do they do or what do they know that can be shared? Open your mind to inspiration and inspiration will come. It has to. It's a principle. What you focus on you get more of!

It will be relieving to know that to keep your Closet going and inspiration flowing you only need one good thought each week!

So remember that I laughingly say that your planning session with your spouse is the first thirty minutes after you go to bed on Thursday night. And remember that I laughingly say that your personal planning is all day, every day, while you slop up spilled milk, wash apple sauce off a little chin and break up the fight of the century. That is "Real Life Planning." "I can't be on the computer all day looking up all this stuff!" "I can't see myself running to the library every other day!" "When do I find time to get all this stuff together?"

These are questions that were asked last week in a class I was teaching. I bet some of you ask the same questions. What I really hear parents asking is "how can I make this work for me with my real life?"

Remember that when I talked about "real life planning" it is merely thinking about what you want to have happen-inspiring your kids. The more you think about it the more ideas will come to you. What you focus on you get more of, including inspiring ideas. You then need a clear vision of how to use those ideas and how to stretch those ideas into related topics, so that it really only takes one good thought a week to keep your kids inspired and loving to learn; to keep your Closet exciting.

Let's start with "I can't be on the computer all day looking up all this stuff!"

I wanted to choose a topic I have not researched or talked about before. I decided to pick a more difficult subject than science and settled on history. I used the book The New First Dictionary of Cultural Literacy by E.D. Hirsch for inspiration. I flipped through the history section quickly and decided on the topic The Lewis and Clark Expedition.

I gave myself 30 minutes to gather information on line. I typed in the major topic "Lewis and Clark Expedition". I had opened a word document so that as I found ideas, key words or websites I could cut and paste them. You can also write what you find in a notebook but that does take more time.

Here is what I found in my 30 minutes.

1. I picked the first site that came up. I scanned this site quickly for ideas of topics related to the expedition. Here is the list. (Pacific Ocean, Sacagawea, Charbonneau who was a French trapper, Shoshone Indians, Hidatsa language, Louisiana Purchase, grizzly bears, bison, prairie dogs, bighorn sheep, pronghorn antelope, magpies, bitterroot, camas, Wapato (a root vegetable eaten like potato), Blackfeet, Teton Sioux, Teton Mountains, Missouri River, the Rocky Mountains, modern dams, Columbia River System, Snake River, Columbia River, Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, South Dakota, North Dakota, Montana, Idaho, Washington, Oregon, cartographer, President Thomas Jefferson, and keelboat, to name a few.

2. I then Googled "kids make keelboats" and found directions to make one from Popsicle sticks.

3. Next I Googled Indian crafts for Kids. I found an Indian canoe, teepee, totem pole and a Native American rattle.

4. Then I Googled Shoshone and saw that Sacajawea spoke Hidatsa. I Googled that word. I found a site for kids giving brief facts about the language and the tribe. I saved a picture of their earthen lodges.

At the above site I also found a link showing many different Native American homes. I saved pictures.

5. Then I Googled Native American Recipes. I found Blueberry Wojapi, and Bannock.

6. On Google I clicked "images". I saw a free downloadable coloring picture of Lewis and Clark at Clark Lake.

7. I saved a picture of a printable map showing the route. I saved pictures of the expedition, Sacajawea, teepee, an earthen lodge and a keel boat.

8. In scanning these sites swiftly I learned that this was a US Army expedition, was paid for by taxes, was called for by President Thomas Jefferson, was in part to see all the lands included in the Louisiana Purchase, a baby was born called Jean-Baptise, Sacajawea was an interpreter not a guide, she came from the Montana area, her name means Bird Woman, only one person died on the trek, the French sold us the land in the Louisiana Purchase and William Clark was a cartographer.

This was all a jumble of cut and paste. I didn't try to make a neat document. My purpose was to glean as much information in as little time as possible.

The next step would be to turn this into a plan that would provide Closet content and activities for from one to six weeks. I would take a full week or more to gather my thoughts (remember thinking about it is the key) and to gather materials.

How to Use the Library Effectively In Home Schooling – Real Life Planning Part 3 – Using the Library

"I can't see myself running to the library every other day!" There are a number of ways to make the library work for you.

Some families have their structured family learning time at the library once a week. During this time the children choose books they are interested in reading and mom and/or dad choose books that they would like to use to inspire their children. If you have small children under age 6 choose a day when the library has story time. That way it frees parents up to gather their own materials.

The notebook that I have suggested that you start, to write down <u>Sparks</u> and your own thoughts and ideas, will be very handy. When you think of some topic that you would like to introduce to your children write it on a page you have set aside for your library visit. Then when you go to the library you can find books on those topics.

I have a friend who checks out at least 30 books when she goes to the library. This is a very efficient way to use the library. Some of these books go into the Closet and others are placed on a table or in a basket to be looked over any time. One or two will go into your room so that you can think about them and design a plan by doing some research like I showed you in the previous post.

When you are contemplating how to turn a topic into inspiration for your children it helps to keep the book by your bed. Look through it just before going to sleep. Then think about it for a few minutes after turning out the light. This is also a good time to engage in a conversation with your spouse about the topic and get their ideas.

When a book goes into the Closet try to think of what you can put with the book to add interest. For example, if you have a book on American wild flowers add small books with blank pages and small colored pencils.

These can be used as nature journals. Plan a couple of trips outdoors to observe and record what you see in nature. Draw flowers, bugs and leaves. Label the pictures. If it is a book on mask making make sure you have the materials for at least one type of mask.

If the book is part of what you have already researched, as in our <u>Lewis and Clark expedition project</u>, put them in your room where they are not observable to your children but you can access them easily. These books will be added and removed from the Closet periodically over the next 1-6 weeks. You may need to renew some of them.

Let's look at the 30 minutes of research we did in the previous post, <u>Home school resources online-how to</u>, and make a list of possible books.

Sacagawea, Shoshone Indians, Any Native American Tribe they visited – Blackfeet, Sioux, etc., Trappers in America, any animal on our list – bison, antelope, prairie dogs, bighorn sheep, magpies, etc.

Any state they visited. There are great state books for children. Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, South Dakota, North Dakota, Montana, Idaho, Washington, and Oregon, a book on map making/cartography, President Thomas Jefferson, canoes and keel boats, Native Americans, Teton Mountains, Rocky Mountains, dams in the USA, a children's book on the Louisiana Purchase.

Creative Lesson Plan Example For Lewis and Clark Expedition-Real Life Planning Part 4 – Turning Your Plan Into Inspiration For Your Children

In the last two posts, we discussed collecting information from <u>online resources</u> and using <u>the library</u> to create lesson plans and inspirational ideas for the Closet. Now, let's look at the last issue, "When do I find time to get all this stuff together?" The answer is "one day at a time".

Using the cut and paste document you made when you did your research and the books which you have gotten from the library you are going to "inspire" your children one day at a time, possibly just one week at a time.

Day or week 1 – Put a book on the Lewis and Clark Expedition in the Closet with the <u>coloring page</u> you have downloaded. Let your children look at the pictures if it is a "coffee table type book". If it is a story written for children you can read it to them if they are small or they can read it to themselves depending on age and interest. However, survey books like this usually do really well as a group read.

Day or week 2 – Have copies of the <u>map</u> that you downloaded that shows the route they traveled. Supply the materials to make a replica of the <u>map from clay</u>.

Day or week 3 – Add the book on Native Americans. You could also put in the book about Sacagawea. Have the materials and directions for making a <u>rattle</u> or <u>totem pole</u>, etc.

Day or week 4 – Include information about the <u>Hidatsa people</u> and their language. Have materials for your children to write a letter in a language they create. They can choose a symbol for each letter of the alphabet. Send it to a friend or relative. You could also have materials to create a clay lodge.

Day or week 5 – Have a book on trappers and the directions for making a <u>parfletche</u>. (I would jettison the canvas and use brown paper bags) The parfleche was a staple of Native Americans in the seventeenth century. A beautifully decorated rawhide storage bag, it was used to store dried meats, clothes, sewing supplies, and other important items. It was adopted by trappers. This would also be a good day to add a book on beavers as that was the main staple for trappers. You might want to show them a beaver hat which was worn in Europe. This is where the majority of skins were shipped.

Day or week 6 – Begin with a book on canoes and other means of travel for trappers, the Clark expedition and Native Americans. Have information on the keel boats they used even if it is only the pictures you have printed off your computer. Have the materials in the Closet to <u>make a keel boat</u> or <u>canoe</u>. If it is the right season it would be fun to find a neighbor who has a canoe or rent a canoe and go for a ride on a quiet pond in your area. Carry the supplies with you for a picnic lunch. Talk about things you "discover" on your family adventure.

Day or week 7 – Add books about animals, birds and plants that Meriwether and Clark identified and wrote about. You could download coloring pictures of these <u>animals</u> and <u>plants</u>. Do any of these plants grow in your area?

Day or week 8 – Have some <u>traditional recipes</u> and the non-perishable ingredients in the Closet. Prepare items to be eaten as a school treat or for the family dinner. Any of the items you have made could be used as a centerpiece. Small canoe's or parfletche's would make nice place cards.

Day or week 9 – Learn about President Thomas Jefferson. There are downloadable <u>coloring pages</u> available. Read a survey book or look at a book of pictures.

Day or week 10 – Have a list of items to "discover" on your own expedition. They could include a white rock, purple flower, feather and any other item that might be found in a walk through the neighborhood, park or in your own backyard.

All the time that you are watching and assisting your children to do these activities you just visit with them about the people who made up the trek, the trials they had, what they saw, what they did, and what they discovered. Carry these conversations to the dinner table to share with dad, while riding in the car or as you tuck them into bed.

Just throw out a fact or ask a question and start a "<u>familiar conversation</u>". "Did you know that Sacagawea means Bird Woman?" They might ask you more about her and there you have your conversation going. You can keep the conversation going by asking questions such as, "Do you think it would be hard to have a baby on a trek like that?" "Do you think she was really helpful to the expedition?" Do this all the time you are inspiring your children with a topic.

This is the perfect scenario. Not every day or week will go like this. Sometimes there are intervening circumstances. You still have a Closet filled with interesting things; as often as you can, add something new. What if you only added something new twice a month or even just once a month? It is better to do a little than nothing at all because we are paralyzed, feeling that we can't do enough.

Can you see how just a little bit would really energize your family learning time and bring joy and excitement to your children? Can you see how they would begin to love learning? It's not an issue of buying fancy stuff for the Closet. It is an issue of thinking, receiving inspiration and then following through.

Let's continue to look at what you already have in your home that can get your Closet started. When I am coaching a parent who is reluctant to start until they have the perfect closet or the perfect stuff to go in it I give them an assignment. I tell them to go into every room of their home (except their children's bedrooms) and look around. I tell them to have a pad and paper with them or a box. I ask them to make a list of everything in each room that could be inspirational and fun for a child. Then I tell them to get a Closet and put those things in it.

So I am going to take you on a tour of my home in the next few blogs and let's see what we can find. I am going to start in the kitchen because of all the rooms in the home, it usually has the most to offer.

- 1. A box of corn starch. Corn starch models the behavior of quicksand and it is so much fun to play with. We take 5-10 boxes to our family reunion every year and the corn starch table is always a BIG hit with both kids and adults. When you mix the cornstarch with water you want it to have the consistency of honey. One box of cornstarch takes approximately 1 to 2 cups of water. You will have to work a bit to get the consistency just right. Children love to play with cornstarch. They will often play with it until practically nothing is left. This is fun for an 18 month old and an 18 year old.
- 2. Vinegar and soda, they cause an eruption when mixed together.
- 3. Rice. This is great fun for small children. Pour rice in a tub and supply a few spoons and cups. Rice can be colored to add to the fun. Put a sheet underneath for easier clean up because it doesn't all stay in the tub.
- 4. Assorted macaroni, peas, dried beans and lentils. These are great for making pictures either right on a table top and then scooped back into a jar or bag...or glued onto stiff paper.
- 5. Instant pudding. Do your kids like to finger paint? Well this is a non-staining and yummy way to do that, right on the counter or tabletop.
- 6. Styrofoam or paper cups and plates
- 7. Pop corn. Add a book about Squanto or the Pilgrims. A good idea to add in November.
- 8. Here is what I found to add to my junk box: straws, plastic lids in assorted sizes, metal canning rings, wire, rubber bands, old keys, plastic forks, spoon, cork, and twist ties.
- 9. Save some empty boxes and cans until you have enough for a store. Add some play money, maybe a till and voila, math for a few weeks play.
- 10. Recipes Every now and then put a recipe in the closet with a main ingredient like a can of pumpkin or a bag of chocolate chips. Someone may want to cook. A fun project is to purchase some small recipe boxes and cards; possibly a colorful pencil. Put them in a tub with pages and cards of your family's special recipes, especially those your kids love. Let them make their own recipe box if they want to. Then periodically let one choose a card and be in charge of dinner.

Treasure Hunt Your House Part Two

Remember that I talked about going through your home room by room to find what you already have in your house that can excite and inspire your children? Let's continue the tour of my home with the living room.

1. I have a frog made of wood from some foreign country. When you rub its back with a little stick it croaks. Add it to the closet with a book on frogs.

2. I also have a rain stick, a musical instrument made from a piece of cactus. When you tip it over the tiny seeds inside sound like falling rain. Add a book on the instruments found in the percussion section of a band or orchestra. Provide materials for making a few instruments. Have a family band concert for dad. Go to a concert. Get a CD of percussion instrument music.

3. I have two wonderful kaleidoscopes. When I add these to the closet being present is a must to keep them and the children safe. One is shaped like an egg. <u>They are easy to make</u>.

4. I have a shelf of minerals and crystals that my daughter has collected from around the world and given to me. These would be great in a box with a book about rocks and minerals. Then the children could find and name them. They could be mounted on a board, labeled and hung up. You can purchase minerals at rock shops and in souvenir shops or go rock collecting.

5. I collect eggs. I have some beautiful mounted eggs in frames. I could add them to the closet and then when my grandchildren show interest carefully share them. I can talk about why I collect them, how magnificent I think they are. I could have a book of eggs and we could find and name them. If you have a collection, find a safe way to share it with your children. Help them start a collection.

6. I have a harpsichord. It sits in the corner and no one notices it. If I put it in the closet and added a beginner book who knows what might happen?

7. I have a basket of assorted pine cones. Some are still shedding seeds. I would add a book on pine trees and their cones. In our yard is a pine tree that drops tiny cones. If these were put in the closet they would make a great picture collage.

8. Of course I have a whole wall of book cases in the living room. They are available all the time. However, if I pull a few out and add them to the closet they all of a sudden become interesting and get read.

Do you see how you can come up with the most amazing things? All these items are in my home all the time but my grandchildren never notice them. However, when they are put away in the closet and only available at special times, when a parent is emotionally and mentally present they take on a whole new aura, they become fascinating. Then these simple items can be a jumping off point to go on to some other related topic of interest.

Treasure Hunt Your House Part Three

Now let's move to the office.

1. Of course in this room I will find many things to add to my junk box and my arts box. There are paper reinforcement circles, a paper punch, stapler remover, stapler and lots of staples, sticky notes of all types, sticky page markers, highlighters, pencils and pens of all types, plain paper, tag board, construction paper, lined paper, note books, folders, index cards, scissors, tape, glue, calculator, assorted stationery, note cards and envelopes, name badge labels and tags, to name a few items.

2. There is a jar of pennies. Pennies and loose buttons are great for creating pictures and scenes right on the floor or table. My children loved sorting the buttons into colors. They also liked putting the pennies into chronological order.

3. There is a box of family pictures to sort, mount and label in books

- 4. A check book from a closed account
- 5. An outdated planner
- 6. An unused address book

Let's check out the **bedroom** (mine, not the kids. Never put anything in the closet that belongs to a child without their permission):

1. My sewing box – many items in here can go into a box for children. Large needles, stray buttons, thread, material scraps, etc. Children as young as six can learn to baste, cross stitch and sew on buttons.

2. Old socks – these could be added to my sewing box along with a book on puppet making,

3. Ace bandages, old stethoscope and Band-Aids, a thermometer.

4. My old scrapbooks and year books from school.

5. A collection of glass, rock and wooden eggs from all over the world. I would add a globe or map so we could locate where they came from.

6. A broach and a bolo tie made with Alaskan Scrimshaw. A book would go with this about scrimshaw and also information on the Inuit and Alaska.

7. An antique watch from an ancestor. This would make a good story time item.

8. A dish of large salt crystals. I would add the supplies to make crystals both salt and sugar. A book on crystals would be fun. These large salt crystals were made for the bath. You could help children make perfumed salts for their baths.

Simple Scented Bath Salt Recipe

- 16 ounces all-natural bath salt
- 15-30 drops of essential oil

In a mixing bowl, add drops of the essential oil to the bath salt and mix well. Store bath salts in a jar. Add 1/3 to 1/2 cup of the scented salts to a bath for a soothing, luxurious experience!

9. A guitar is in the corner. I would find someone who plays and invite them to school on the day I added it to the closet or the study/family room. I would add a CD of guitar music from the library.

10. Old shoes that someday I was sending to the thrift store. Great for imaginative play.

11. Old jewelry that I don't wear anymore. Also good for imaginative play.

12. Two beautiful, sequined boxes which I thought I would use but haven't. Who knows what a child might find to do with these.

Finally let's check out the **bathroom**. Even here I found some items to add to my junk box:

1. cotton balls, Q-Tip swabs, small paper cups

2. small round mirrors

3. A medicine syringe. I would add my turkey baster and a plastic tub of water for some real water fun.

4. A beautiful barnacle and assorted shells. I would add a book on the ocean, shells and sea animals and fish. If you have small children let them touch the shells while you talk about them. Show them the pictures of sea creatures. Have some plastic fish etc. that you can add to their bath or for play during family learning time.

Take the time to go through your home room by room and find wonderful items that you can use to inspire your children. Take the time to create a magical learning space for your children. It doesn't take money; it takes thought and a little time.

How to Homeschool at Low Prices Using the Closet – What to Do if You Don't Have Any Money

"Last Saturday I found \$1 insect items at Target. We are having a blast—and it hasn't all showed up in the closet yet. I almost passed up the big plastic insects as "toys" but realized, no, they are inspiration (for my little boys) and models for insect body parts. What was I thinking?" Cathy Duncan

The first thing to realize is that if you are choosing to home school, you are choosing to budget for it. It doesn't have to be a large budget but this is an effort which will take and deserves some of your funds.

In fact, this doesn't just apply to those who home school but to any one who has children. When you had children you made a choice that would require you to budget for their growth and development. We budget for their physical needs but it is just as important to budget for their mental and educational needs.

That said, what do you do when you learn about this magical and inspirational tool and your budget is very small to non existent? Well, take heart because we all have the means right in our homes, right now, to begin!

- 1. Use what you already have in your home craft supplies, games, toys, books, flash cards, and curriculum. Remember that what is in the closet doesn't matter as much to children as time together learning and the consistency.
- 2. Utilize the dollar store, sales at Wal-Mart and Kmart and other budget stores.
- 3. Gather odds and ends in a box empty toilet paper rolls, corks, old keys, broken beads, paper clips, rubber bands, bottle caps, old cards, scrap paper, feathers, popsicle sticks, plastic spoons, etc. Keep this box filled for tons of creation fun. As I tell parents, go through your junk drawers. Do you recall the movie "Apollo 13"? There is a scene that I just love. The space ship was out of commission and NASA hadn't been able to figure out how to repair it. So they gathered a bunch of engineers in a room and

dumped a box of junk in the middle of the table. Then they said, "Figure it out". That is what your children will do, they will figure something out.

- 4. Utilize your local second hand store. You can purchase an old toaster, old watch, an alarm clock and other items for "taking apart". Supply plenty of assorted screwdrivers, some pliers and a wrench or two.
- 5. You can also fill a box with superb dress up clothes and costumes. You can buy used books and toys.
- 6. The lumber yard At many lumber yards you can buy small scraps of two x fours for little or nothing. Let your older children sand and paint blocks for their younger siblings.
- 7. Print Shops You will be amazed at the scrap paper you can purchase inexpensively at many print shops. You can get all types of odds and ends of scrap paper.
- 8. The Internet There are many sites where you can download games and pictures to color, as well as work sheets, free of charge.
- 9. You can also find many sites on the Internet where you can access science experiments that use what you have at home.
- 10. Use the Library! Kids love finding new books in the Closet.

Free Coloring Pages and Worksheets for Homeschooling-The Dover Sampler

I am going to share with you a secret for one way that I come up with amazing and free worksheets, coloring pages and other free stuff for my Closet. I use **the Dover Sampler**– I went

to<u>http://www.doverpublications.com</u> and signed up to receive a sample of the books they are offering each month. (Right at the top of the page in the center is a box which says FREE SAMPLES click here to register)

When they send the sampler you can click on different book options and then page options to see what might work in your Closet. Once I have a coloring page open, for example, I right click on it and then save it to my DOVER file in my documents. In my DOVER file I have many folders: animals, history, stories and fables, paper dolls, puzzles and mazes, science, math, etc.

Here are some examples of what I have saved in my Dover File. There are coloring worksheets and descriptions of Stonehenge and the fist crossing to the North Pole. I have a description and coloring worksheets of the explorer Desoto, the Vikings, the Pilgrims, Sutter's Mill, the building of the White House, photos from the Civil War and how hurricanes are formed.

I have some wonderful pages to color of master paintings by Van Gough, Renoir, Cézanne, Chagall, Goya, <u>Grandma Moses</u> and Mary Cassatt to name a few. I have also collected color pictures of these works, as well as information on many of the painters.

I have coloring pages of various occupations.

There are coloring pages of more animals and descriptions of many of them than you can shake a stick at. For example, I have a series of coloring worksheets with descriptions of animals from the Galapagos Islands.

I have math puzzles, brain teasers, mazes, information on authors, poetry from around the world, and dinosaurs. There are stories and fables from many different countries, historical photos, coloring pages and

dialogue of Shakespeare's plays, paper folding instructions, drawing instructions and paper dolls of historical figures, medieval times, famous people, and even figures from classic books like Alice in Wonderland.

Let me give you two examples of how I might utilize this information.

We just finished the Thanksgiving holiday season. This is a perfect time to check books out of the library about the Pilgrims, Native Americans, the Dutch, the 13 colonies and the Mayflower Compact, depending on the ages of your children.

In my Dover file I found coloring worksheets of the Pilgrims, <u>Cherokee Indians history</u>, a map of Massachusetts (one of the 13 colonies), a Tom Turkey paper doll and outfit, Ojibwa Songs, and four Native American Why Stories and other fables.

The book on Pilgrims will be free at the library. The color pages, pictures, paper dolls stories etc. were free and sent right to me. I have material for making aprons and squares of fabric for role playing the landing at Plymouth. None of that would cost a cent. What it does take is thought, planning and enthusiasm on your part.

We are in the Christmas season right now. In my Dover file I have coloring pages of different elements of the Christmas season. I have coloring pages of the Nativity and Nativity paper dolls. There are quite a number of puzzles, mazes and games that center on Christmas. One picture puzzle even comes with a simple cookie recipe.

One of the great things about my Dover file is that it can help inspire me! I just take a look at the contents and then I in turn can inspire my grandchildren.

To sign up for the website go to<u>http://www.doverpublications.com</u>.

Here is a letter from one of the families in the pilot program that has taken this idea to heart.

I just finished listening to Lesson 5, and wanted to thank you for the Dover Samples resource idea!! I signed on, and got my first samples – they are great! I now have a new document folder where I will put all those wonderful pages. My son is going to love the Ultimate Maze page!

Thank you! Lynda

Sparks Lead to Joy

On Wednesday evening I gave Part three of a four part <u>webinar</u> on <u>the Close</u>t. I had given out assignments the week before and had asked one couple to share their experience with the assignment. The mothers report turned out to be the highlight of the evening, in my opinion.

"Last week's comment about "changing your attitude about kids" really hit me. Mary said to look at them in a different light; like they aren't just "work" or a "huge responsibility", rather they are fun and have so much to

offer. In addition to really trying to work on being "present" this week, it seems that the "sparks" are coming to me with more ease and are more obvious. Instead of my boys sitting in Sunday interviews with us, saying "I don't know" to every question we ask, they are starting to open up more. But the real miracles happen when I/we as parents just "change our attitudes" about our kids. I realize as I tried desperately to begin to change my attitude, that their ideas and play really are "sparks" and not just another big mess I have to clean up!

I should have seen this particular spark coming for a while with my oldest son Miles (age 8). He loves rocks. He loves gemstones. He loves crystals...you name it. Rather than being a nag all the time and telling him to pick up his rock collection, I realized this is what Mary is talking about – it is a spark! And geez – I can't believe I didn't realize it before – but these sparks really can turn into big burning flames and that is what I want for my kids, right?

After I realized I had a spark to go on, I wasn't sure what to do next? It started when Miles and I decided to come up with an organizing system for his rock collection. We sorted and I 'ooohhed' and 'awed' at much of his collection while <u>practicing being present</u>. We went to the Clark Planetarium and really spent some time looking at rocks; particularly those on the moon's surface and then meteorites. As luck would have it, this past Friday while we were at the Drive In, a shooting star (meteor) came burning into the sky and appeared to be as close as across the parking lot. That's all we talked about all the way home. We didn't talk about the movie at all! We began planning an adventure to see if we could catch a meteorite at the next <u>meteor shower on Aug 12th</u>! It was so fun to see the excitement – not only in Miles but also in his little brothers and his friend who was with us – and now ME! I was catching on fire too – so to speak.

We then watched a <u>Bill Nye (science guy)</u> video all about the earth, which sparked so many more thoughts. We went on a nature hike to collect and view as many cool rocks as possible (which lead to patterns, and shapes and even statistics). But the greatest thing for me is that we were able to bring all of these things we were learning together and direct them back to God (and for my school I want as much God application as possible). I can't ignore the fact that because our hearts had good intent, we went into this with prayer – asking for guidance, that these avenues are opening and our eyes are seeing more clearly

We have an appointment Thursday afternoon with our neighbor who is the LDS church's geologist! We get to come and ask questions, have him show us his rock collection and continue with more sparks!

Miles isn't a very animated kid, so sometimes it is hard to know if we are even on the right track with him. But all of this was reaffirmed last night at dinner. We each go around the table and say one thing we are grateful for. His cousins (who live with us right now) said little things like being grateful for the earth and for nature (so it seemed that they may have been picking up on some sparks too). The big clincher was when Miles said he was grateful to have a neighbor who is a geologist who he can learn from! Yea hoo! We are on the right path – and it was all because of sparks!"

I have to tell you that that letter really warms my heart. I have written a couple of articles on the subject of <u>"seeing with new eyes"</u>. When we are raising children life can be so hectic. We can get so caught up in maintaining and keeping order that we forget to see our children. We miss their <u>"sparks"</u>.

If the term <u>"sparks</u>" is new for you then follow the link and read all about them. Basically, they are a comment or action made by a child that helps you know what they are interested in. It is a term that was coined by Diann Jepson in her fabulous program for families called the <u>Leadership Education Family Builder</u>. What changed for this mother? Her son had not changed. His rocks were still all over the place. What changed was the attitude of the mother. She looked at her son as a person and asked a simple question – "You really love your rocks don't you?" His answer was no surprise. He did love his rocks, and gems and crystals and all things that belong to the earth. At eight years old he has found something that he wants to know more about. Once she could see past the rocks and the mess, to the son, she was able to respond to his <u>"spark"</u>. What happened then was pure magic!

What was the magic? It was joy. They began to experience joy together and as a family. Sometimes I think that we believe that joy happens when life is calm and good, when money is plentiful, when we are having fun. But true joy happens in the everydayness of relationships that matter. The relationship between this mother and son has taken on some magic and is tinged with joy.

There is more magic here too. It is magic when we hear, really hear what children say. They are amazing little people with thoughts, feelings, questions and desires that are different than those of adults. What a child says can be so enlightening, so entertaining and so thought provoking. It makes me think of my two year old grandson. <u>One day he was marching around the living room saying "Stop that! Now I have to take that away."</u> Good grief! It gave his sweet mother a big reality check. Then a few nights later as he was going off to sleep he was repeating what he had heard his mother say over and over again, "Daddy loves you, daddy loves you."

In order for my daughter to hear, really hear, she had to see Jack as a person. She had to see past the huge mess that he was marching around in the living room. She had to see past the fact that it is bedtime and he needs to be quiet. Leah had to see past Mile's rocks and their mess to hear her son, to hear that he is in love with the earth.

It is fun to watch a child "get" something new. I was watching my 5 month old granddaughter recently. I was really watching her. <u>I was present with her</u>. I was interested in what this little person was thinking about. She began to observe her hand. She was completely focused on it as if she had never seen it before and wanted to know all about it. She was fascinated with her fingers, their movement. Because I was "listening" to her I too began to think about the majesty of my own body, my own hands that can do so much for good. If I had only focused on her dirty diaper or her drooling mouth or her need for food I might have missed out on that remarkable "conversation". Leah and her family experienced that "fun" as they watched Miles learn about meteorites right there in the Drive Inn parking lot.

Miles's parents, <u>his mentors</u>, are uniquely able to direct, guide and help Miles to get the information that he wants. He is only a small boy. The resources at his disposal are far more limited than those of his parents. His neighbor hadn't just moved in. Leah and her husband knew what his job was, what his knowledge entailed. They knew. But Miles wasn't as able to approach the neighbor to have his needs met as they were able to approach him.

Miles needed a ride to the Planetarium. Maybe he didn't even know what a planetarium was. His parents know more about meteorites than he does. They were able to engage their son in a <u>"familiar</u> <u>conversation"</u> about meteorites. As George Turnbull said "By familiar conversation, children's curiosity may be roused much more effectually, and by it they may be taught a great deal more in a little time, than can possibly be done in the austere magisterial way of calling them to a lecture." In short, a spontaneous conversation between parent and child teaches more than the best lecture. Miles has learned more about meteorites and rocks from a family outing and a conversation with his parents than he would ever learn, really learn, from a textbook or reams of worksheets.

Here is your assignment for the week. Just look at your children. See them not the spilled milk, the messy face, the unwashed hands, the cluttered bedroom. See them. Hear them. What are they saying? What are they <u>"sparking"</u> to you? <u>Be a mentor</u> and help them experience joy. Allow joy to enter your busy life as a parent and your relationships with your children. It will lighten your burden and help you carry the load.

Example of Learning Style in Children-The Spencer "Sparks"

WOW!!! I am going to share a fabulous and fun letter that I received. I haven't changed a word. You can tell that the writer was excited as she wrote and couldn't get the words on paper fast enough. You are gonna LOVE this!

I have been meaning to email you about some spark type fun we have been having since JUNE! I had been beginning to use <u>the Closet</u> this summer, getting familiar with the concepts of sparks, taking your webinars, learning about engaging with the kids, and of course learning to 'let go' when the kids began making a mess and not using things in the "right way'. We had such a perfect example of this and every week I have just been in awe at how much this spark affected all of us so much!

It began with simply digging around the boulders in my front yard – I was getting the area ready to plant dahlias in June. We went on vacation and I didn't have time to plant – so I left the area dug up for a few weeks. Well – when you have a house full of boys, leaving dirt unaccompanied is like a blinking neon sign to them. These boys quickly discovered the joy of this little area as they lovingly named it the "water game".

They used hoses to create waterfalls and floods at first – learning concepts of water pressure, erosion and such. It seemed harmless (other than a little bit of mud on their bums). This quickly transformed into a 4 hour + a day adventure. They would beg to go to the water game each afternoon. Every day was a new creation. Every time we learned something new during structured learning time, it would quickly transform and be reenacted somehow in the "water game".

Army men began to make camp there, asteroids were making impact craters, there was infrastructure being built (including a monetary system, lashing of boats and TP's, houses built (and of course demolished by whatever natural disaster we had read about that week), there were temples built, there were wars between 'God's army and Satan's army', finding and playing with all manner of wildlife, gladiator type arenas built for huge male wolf spider fights!, the hole transformed into wet season and dry season, it became the Kennecott copper mine at one point (where excavation was imitated just like at the mine). They brought out paint and did volcanoes and hieroglyphics, they tried to dig to the inner core of the earth....there were so many amazingly fun learning opportunities that I can't even begin to remember them (let alone list them all).

The biggest thing was ME. I let go of my preconceived notions of having to keep the yard looking nice, I let the boys just have at it. It is (and continues to be) some of the most valuable lessons and time we had all summer. Neighbors would comment with delight after watching these boys "go to work" every day (and not playing video games all day) – even though my neighbors could have complained at the sheer disaster my yard turned into. The boys were a real inspiration to a lot of people and other kids.

I am so grateful for the shift in my thought process (mostly through your tutoring Mary Ann) – or I would have missed out on an incredibly magical learning summer (and fall). Now I have a hole so deep that they can stand in to their chests (apparently against Osha regulations). The crater in my yard will only last a few months, whereas the memories and the sheer exploration that came from that will last forever. Many of the sparks are still going strong that started from a simple muddy area and a hose. This is love of learning at its best!

Love, Leah Spencer

Teaching Chemistry by Identifying Sparks from Kids-An Example of Recognizing and Responding to Sparks

Recognizing a <u>Spark</u> and then <u>responding</u> are skills that any parent can learn. These skills are vital to using <u>the</u> <u>Close</u>t to help your children love learning. These skills facilitate a parent's ability to inspire their children and help them feel excitement about learning new things.

My grandchildren came from Colorado for a few days. I had two girls, Ashley, aged eight and Elizabeth aged six. Here is the story of a wonderful Spark, the "<u>familiar conversations</u>" we had, how I followed the Spark and how I used the Closet and <u>Closet letters</u> to extend and magnify the Spark. Over the next few days you will go with me and my granddaughters and experience what it's like to recognize a Spark and inspire a child.

My project for them while they were here was to help me put all the family mementoes and knick knacks into two hutches. It was really fun. I was able to tell them the stories behind each item. They ooed and awed over all the pretty things I have. Some of the last items they put into the hutches were crystals. There were a couple of desert roses, some exquisite quarts crystals, and part of an amethyst filled geode that my daughter had gotten for me in Southern Utah.

Ashley asked me what they were and I told her that they were crystals from the desert. She then asked how they were made. I replied that I didn't know exactly how they were made but that they grew in rocks and in the ground. I told her that we could find out more about crystals if we went to the library and we could also grow some crystals ourselves.

The three of us went to the computer right then and googled "how crystals grow".

One of the first sites was an <u>instructional video</u> on how to grow sugar crystals. The girls watched it three times. Then they gave me blow by blow directions on what we needed to do. We mixed one cup of sugar and three cups of water in a pan and brought it to a boil. We added a few drops of food coloring. Then we poured it into two jars.

We wrapped chenille stems (pipe cleaners) onto butter knives and lowered them into the liquid and put the jars in the window sill in the kitchen. Ashley wanted to know why we were using chenille stems instead of string. Wouldn't our candy be fuzzy? I said that I thought that the chenille gave the crystals a lot of small spaces to grow on so they would grow faster.

While we were waiting for the sugar and water to boil I realized that this is how you make suckers. So we added some corn syrup to the left over mixture (no recipe, just poured a little in) and set it to boil again. Then I

taught my granddaughters about making candy and what soft ball, hard ball, and hard crack were. We tested the candy quite often so they could see and taste all the stages. When it was to hard crack we poured in into a buttered pie pan and let it cool. I told the girls this was called Glass Candy.

When it was cool we turned it out of the pan and broke it into pieces with a hammer. Lizzy said that it looked like glass. I asked her what made it look like glass. Both she and Ashley mentioned that it had sharp edges (some pieces did), you could see through it, and it broke like glass. I asked them if they knew what it was called when you could see through something like glass. They didn't know. Then we talked about the words transparent, translucent and opaque. This part of responding to the Spark had taken about 30-40 minutes.

A Family Mission Statement Part I

Sometimes, as a parent, we're handed opportunities for self-evaluation on a sliver platter. I was handed such a dish the other day when I caught my two-year old son marching around the living room chanting, "Stop that! Now I have to take that away." Good grief!

I'm happy to contrast that little ditty with something he was muttering in my ear a few nights ago as I was putting him to sleep. "Daddy loves you, daddy loves you, daddy loves you."

It's a bit overwhelming to think about how innocent my son is in his learning, how he soaks up everything that happens around him, and how real the Core Phase of learning is.

In those two little exchanges my son confirmed to me how important it is that I not take lightly the obligation I have as a parent to lay a right and solid foundation for him to build the rest of his life on. In other words, "A good Core Phase naturally provides the foundation for a good life, a great Core Phase for a great life . . . " (DeMille, *Leadership Education: The Phases of Learning*, 2008, 40).

As we think about the Foundational Phases of learning (Core and Love of Learning) it's important to "remember that during these phases, children learn more by what we are and the environment and feelings that surround them than through the explicit teachings or activities we provide" (DeMille, *Leadership Education: The Phases of Learning*, 2008, 41).

If this is true, ask yourself, "how do we, as a family, consciously develop who we are and the environment and feelings that make up our home? What are we doing to consciously *articulate* the 'curriculum' of the Core development of our family?"

A Family Mission Statement is this articulation of your family's Core Curriculum.

A Family Mission Statement becomes part of our family canon and the inspiration of our family *culture*. In other words, it is what helps us consciously design the environment and feelings in our home that directly influence both the Core development of our children and the effectiveness of their later academic learning.

A Family Mission Statement breathes life into, or inspires our family culture.

There is another important element that a Family Mission Statement brings to the table.

I've interviewed a number of families who said, "I'm not sure how much we really need a Mission Statement. It seems that the culture of our family is pretty good. We don't have a formal, articulated Mission Statement, but we talk about the things that might be in a statement a lot."

This is a model that works for many families. However, consider the specific model you are using to train your children in developing, managing, and leading their own families.

For these parents I interviewed, they were clear on the things they were teaching regularly to their children, which were influencing their family culture. But, were they also teaching their children how to do that in their own homes? Are their children even aware that there is a model to follow? Are they aware of the idea of culture, its purposeful creation, and the impact it has on the family?

A Family Mission Statement is not only an articulation of your family's Core Curriculum; it's also a specific *model of training* for good family development, management and leadership.

Through the course of the next few blog posts, I'll be taking you through a number of exercises to help your family create your own inspiring Family Mission Statement.

Assignment #1: Begin by evaluating your family's current culture. Consider the daily environment and feelings in your home. Talk to your spouse about it. Is your family environment, feelings, and culture such that they will inspire, or give life to a great Core Phase? Now, try a brainstorming exercise by asking yourself: what are the core things I want my child to do or know? Put your list somewhere so that you can add to it when things come to your mind.

Family Mission Statement Part II

For many of you, developing a Family Mission Statement may have been on your "to do" list for a long time, but you've just never gotten around to it. Or, maybe the idea is new and a bit daunting.

Here are some sabotaging beliefs and myths that real people have said about Mission Statement development.

1. "My children are too young to get involved yet." Or, as one mom put it, "I don't want my 4 year old influencing our Mission Statement."

Even though children might not be able to articulate it, it matters quite a lot how their family "feels" to them. The family is a child's world, and they can, even at very young ages, make valuable contributions to the discussion of what matters to the family. Even if children are to young to participate, it's never too early to begin consciously creating the culture of your home through the development of a Family Mission Statement. Their contribution might simply be participating in the daily reciting of the Mission Statement.

In our home we have a disabled, non-verbal four-year old, a very busy two-year old, and a five-month old. Our children were too young to have participated in the actual development of our Family Mission Statement. But they very actively participate in the daily reciting of our statement. Our two-year old loves to say the first line,

"The Joyful Palmers are a team! Yeah!" Our disabled daughter engages with a huge smile and the five-month old soaks in the feeling of it all.

With children that are a little older, they can contribute by drawing their ideas of what matters to the family, and how they would like the family to feel.

2. My children are too old. I don't think my children would accept it.

Older children may very well reject something that might challenge the current family status quo, or come down from the "powers that be." Working with older children requires that we pay special attention to "doing the dance" of inspiring.

Primarily, a Family Mission Statement should never come down as an edict from parents. No matter how fabulous your statement might sound, it must be created by joint effort to have any real investment by everybody. Consider engaging your older youth and young adults in a way that gives an air of anticipation and excitement to the development of this statement. In fact, be prepared to give some investment to this process. For example, consider taking a special family retreat, or maybe your children would respond with some private preparatory one-on-one talking. Never create it yourself and then announce it to the family as the new thing. Make it fun; involve food and activities that your family enjoys.

3. I'm not creative enough.

Mission Statements don't require creativity they require truth.

4. A Mission Statement has to be short, we can't fit all that's important to us in short statement.

Here's an example of a Family Mission Statement that is definitely not short.

Habits of Our Home

We obey the Lord Jesus Christ. We love, honor and pray for each other. We tell the truth. We consider one another's interest ahead of our own We do not hurt each other with unkind words or deeds We speak quietly and respectfully to one another. When someone is sorry, we forgive him. When someone is happy, we rejoice with him. When someone is sad, we comfort him. When someone needs correction, we correct him in love. When we have something nice to share, we share it. We take good care of everything God has given us We do not create unnecessary work for others. When we have work to do, we do it without complaining. When we open something, we close it. When we turn something on, we turn it off. When we don't know what to do, we ask. When we take something out, we put it away. When we make a mess, we clean it up.

We arrive on time. We do what we say. We finish what we start. We say please and thank you. When we go out, we act as if we are in this house. When necessary, we accept discipline and instruction.

5. A mission statement has to be long.

Here is an example of a short and sweet Family Mission Statement.

Our Family Mission: To encourage others to become like Christ through loving relationships, healthy lifestyles, and stimulating experiences.

6. I'm not sure we really need a Family Mission Statement. We seem to be doing just fine without one.

That's a fair evaluation if "just fine" is your standard. Remember, "A good Core Phase naturally provides the foundation for a good life, a great Core Phase for a great life . . . " (DeMille, *Leadership Education: The Phases of Learning*, 2008, 40).

Assignment #2: What roadblocks, if any, have been keeping your family from creating your own mission statement? Are these roadblocks real or excuses? If they are real write them down. Now begin considering solutions to these roadblocks. If you need help reach out to your spouse or a friend to help you begin seeing opportunities and solutions.

Family Mission Statement Part III

In preparation for writing your Family Mission Statement you've been considering what's been holding you back and either let the excuses go or come up with strategies to overcome any real roadblocks. You've also been doing some creative work on your own through your "what do I want my family to do or know" list.

Now it's time for everyone else to get involved.

The next steps will likely be more effective if you take the time to do them over the course of a few days or weeks. Don't try to do it all at once. The idea is to keep the "fun" flowing.

I. Getting Creative Together

Start your Family Mission Statement experience by getting the creative juices flowing. Before you jump into the writing portion, spend some time getting your family engaged with the idea of what a Family Mission Statement is and what it contains. Use activities that allow each individual to privately consider what they think should be part of the family culture, and how they want it to feel in their family. Here are some ideas to get ideas flowing and help everyone feel involved.

A. The Core Values Box

Core values are simply people, activities, beliefs, skills or things that matter most to us. Core values range from concepts like love and acceptance, to material things like a home. Other examples are things like caring for animals, honesty, entrepreneurialism, freedom, wise money management, or education, etc.

As a family, decorate a Core Values box and put it in a prominent location in your home, like your dining table. You could decorate it like a collage with pictures that identify things your family values, or everyone can take a side to decorate however they wish. The idea is to get everyone engaged with the Core Values box.

During your activity and throughout the week everyone will put core value ideas in the box as the ideas come to them. Then during your mission statement development activity you will open this box and use the ideas inside to create your first draft.

B. Core Values Collages

Gather magazines and other materials that can be used to create collages. Everyone will make their own collage depicting words and images that highlight how they want the family to feel and the core values that should become part of the family's culture. Hang these pictures up in a prominent area of your home so that they can be pondered on throughout the week.

During your mission statement development activity give everyone some time to describe the meaning of the items on their collage. Have someone be writing down all of the ideas that each person shares, which will help you create your first draft.

C. Core Values Artwork

If you have younger children it might be more effective to create drawings or paintings that help your children describe their feelings about their family. Again, put these pictures in an area that will allow them to be seen, and ask your children often to describe the things they have drawn.

II. Getting Deeper Together

After you've taken the time to get some creativity flowing, and family members have begun to engage with the idea of how they want their family to feel and the elements of it's culture that are important to them, it's time to start asking the right questions to help deepen the articulation of the things that your family values.

Gather your family together for a question and answer activity. You can have each member write down their answers or have an open discussion with someone assigned as scribe to capture each person's ideas.

Below is a list of various questions. Choose the questions that best fit your family, or make up your own. If you have very young children make sure your questions are age appropriate.

Questions to consider when developing a Family Mission Statement

1. What makes you happy? What are those things in life that put a smile on your face and get you through your difficult days?

2. What makes us fulfilled? What are those things in life that bring us the most satisfaction and leave us with the feeling of completeness?

3. What do we want for ourselves and for our family? What are our hopes, dreams, aspirations not only for our family, but for ourselves has well?

- 4. What is most important to you about your family?
- 5. What are your collective goals?
- 6. When do you feel most connected to one another?
- 7. How would you like to relate to one another?
- 8. Describe your family's strengths.
- 9. Describe your family in 5 years...10 years...15 years.
- 10. What do you value? (For example, relationships, faith, independence, wealth, hard work, generosity)

Questions from the FRANKLIN COVEY Family Mission Statement Creator

http://www.franklincovey.com/msb/missions/family/

1. We are at our best when . . .

- 2. We are at our worst when . . .
- 3. What do we really love to do together?
- 4. As a family, what can we better do to help each other?
- 5. As a family, what can we contribute to others, or how can we help others outside our family?

6. Are there things we should be doing or changing as a family, even thought we've dismissed such thoughts many time? What are these things?

7. Imagine a party celebrating our family 20 years from now. What do we want people to honestly say about our family? People view our family as:

8. If our home could be filled with one emotion, what would it be?

9. What are the principles we want our family to operate on? (Such as trust, honesty, kindness, service, etc.) 10. Let's think of balance as a state of fulfillment and renewal in each of the four dimensions: physical, spiritual, mental, and social/emotional. What are the most important things we can do in each of these areas that will have the greatest positive impact in our family and help us achieve a sense of balance?

Physical: Spiritual: Mental:

Social/Emotional:

11. Imagine its ten years in the future. Envision where we want each member of our family to be. What have we accomplished, how do we see ourselves?

NAME

Who will you be in 10 years?

III. Getting it Down Together

Finally, it's time to start organizing your ideas into a concrete. Don't allow this family activity to breakdown over "word-smithing" details. Later you will assign someone, usually mom or dad, the job of designing the final draft to bring back to the family for approval.

The easiest way to begin getting your Family Mission Statement down is to choose a design formula that feels right for your family. Mom and dad should choose the formula before this activity begins.

Although there are many different forms that mission statements can take, here are three basic forms you could choose from.

FORUMLA #1

Gather together all of the core values you've identified as a family. Decrease these by two, and then decrease by two again until you have one final core value. Keep track of your final 4-6 subsequent core values and then insert them into the formula below.

To (insert Central Core Value here) by [or through] (insert three to five Subsequent Core Values here).

EXAMPLE

Our Family Mission

To encourage others to become like Christ **through** loving relationships, healthy lifestyles, and stimulating experiences.

FORMULA #2

To.... (Do something)In such a way that..... (Quality of action)So that.... (We gain these results or benefits)

EXAMPLE

Our Family Mission

To realize our dreams, goals, and aspirations as a family and as individuals **in a way** that stretches our intellect, enriches our Christian faith, strengthens our character, and enriches our family life. **So that** we are fulfilled, happy, confident, and always close.

FORMULA #3

Just create a big list of the things that matter to you. Use words such as "are" and "is" rather than terms that suggest "will be."

EXAMPLE

The Olsen Family Mission Statement

- $\cdot\,$ We love and obey God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.
- · We celebrate our family's faith, heritage, and traditions.
- \cdot We show our love for one another in word and deed; we pray for each other; we are courteous, caring, positive, supportive, and considerate.
- We live a healthy lifestyle, and maintain order and cleanliness in the home.
- \cdot We raise up children in the way they should go; making learning together an integral part of daily life with books and enriching experiences.
- \cdot We optimize the competing forces in our lives for good: health, wealth, aesthetics, rest, exercise, recreation, work, skills, and knowledge.

 \cdot We enjoy life today and live it fully; we accept the wonderful gifts from God: forgiveness of sins and eternal life through the sacrifice of His Son.

 \cdot We are wise in the way we use our time, talents, and money; we establish good habits, help others, and teach them the truth of God's salvation.

• We contribute something of worth to the community; maintain the environment, mankind's institutions, and religious, political, cultural, social, and individual freedoms, all to glorify God.

Our family felt most connected to the Big List. Here's our family mission statement.

The Palmer Family Mission Statement

The Joyful Palmers are a Team! Yeah! We love, create, and protect family time, both one-one and everyone together. We talk about our needs, thoughts and feelings, and we carefully listen to each other. We treat each other with respect, patience, and kindness. We speak and act in a way that allows the spirit to be with us. We nurture, support, and celebrate each other's ambitions, dreams and missions. We are always honest and do the right thing even when no one is looking. We courageously commit to public virtue. We know that God loves us and we are wonderful and amazing! We build our knowledge, skills, and attitudes of self-reliance and freedom. We make everything around us better and more beautiful. We build others up through service, sharing and love. We protect our home and the Spirit dwells here. We learn, live, and share the gospel of Jesus Christ. Love is our compass and our anchor.

IV. The Final Draft

Don't try to make the final draft as a family. It has the potential of creating too much contention. Once you've got the core ideas down, give someone the task of editing and making it sound good. Then it can be brought back to the family for the final unveiling.

Assignment #3: Make a plan for which activities you will use to prime your family's pump of creativity, which questions you will ask, and the form that you want your mission statement to take. Then determine your timeline. As you develop your plan, give special attention to making these activities fun and memorable. Include food, or outings, or whatever will make the events special for your family.

Turn your Family Mission Statement into a beautiful work of art. Visit *Signs for Your Times* <u>http://signsforyourtimes.com/missionmain.htm</u> to see the options for your Family's Mission Statement..

Family Mission Statement Part IV

Congratulations on creating your Family Mission Statement! However, in order for it to translate into family culture you must now use it. Here are some ideas for how you can engage with your family mission statement in meaningful ways.

1. Recite it daily. Determine a time when your family is generally together at the same time. Our family says our mission statement just before bed because that's when daddy is almost always there with us. When your mission statement is memorized and reviewed daily it will begin to come to mind when you need it most such

as during a teaching or a disciplining moment. Lines of our Family Mission Statement often come to me when I feel tempted to speak or act in ways that are contrary to the specific culture that we're trying to nurture in our home.

2. Use it to help make big decisions. Is your decision inline with the objectives of your mission statement?

3. Use it to help regain focus and realignment with the things that matter most to your family.

4. Use it to guide your family educational plan. The specific values that your mission statement mentions such as money management, entrepreneurialism, freedom, honesty, or service can all inform your educational opportunities, ideas and materials.

5. Have fun with it. Have your children create artwork or collages that reflect your final mission statement. Display this art in a prominent place in your home. Develop a family cheer, motto, flag, or t-shirt inspired by your mission statement.

6. Develop a family VISION. A Family Vision is essentially the **why** of your family mission in **story form**. Your Family Vision is what motivates each family member to care about doing the things that the Family Mission Statement describes. Nicholeen Peck<u>http://teachingselfgovernment.com/</u> beautifully describes the power of a Family Vision and how to use it most effectively in her fabulous book *A House United: Changing Children's Hearts and Behaviors by Teaching Self-Government*. <u>http://teachingselfgovernment.com/new-book-order/</u>

To create your Family Vision, start with the backdrop of a deep family tradition, like Christmas, or Thanksgiving, or something that holds a powerful sense of connection and meaning for your family. Close your eyes and in your mind see your family engaging in that tradition 20 years from now. What will it smell like, sound like, what will the tastes be? Who will be there and what will they be doing? How will it feel to be together, and how will people be treating each other? Develop a story with as many details as possible, just as if you were creating a bedtime story for a child. Develop this story so that it describes why the accomplishment of the Family Mission Statement is so important; it will be what allows this story to come to pass 20 years from now.

Share this story with your family and allow them to add more details that are meaningful to them. Then allow this story to become part of your family story. Tell it often; driving in the car, at bedtime, when someone is sad or struggling, etc. The more you tell the story the more they will care about the mission statement, and the more the words of the mission statement will be written on the hearts of your children.

Using your mission statement, and telling its story is what turns words on paper into the culture of your home. This is your family's Core Curriculum and will help you lay the foundation for a great life.

Making Changes After Training

I really enjoy reading articles written by Kerry Patterson. I wanted to share one tidbit that came from his newsletter, *Kerrying On*. It specifically relates to the challenge parents may experience in implementing change in their homes after they've been inspired by some workshop or training.

Here's the specific question that Kerry was responding to in his newsletter.

"Everyone liked the ideas and wanted to do something new, but we haven't been very good at transferring what we learned in training to how we behave at work. Some of us have tried a few of the skills; others haven't done much at all. What can we do to kick-start our interest and actually change how we behave at work?"

It's happened to me and I bet it's happened to you—feeling inspired and motivated by a fabulous class, only to get home and have life kick in again. There are dishes and meals and bills. The baby gets sick and the garden needs weeding. So many parents realize that they will have to implement what they learned next week, or as soon as they get the closet cleaned out or the toys sorted or the wedding over.....

Recently I received an email from a mom I have worked with who's experiencing the same challenge as Kerry's questioner. She loves the idea of the closet but isn't having the success she hoped for. She just can't seem to put what she learned in my class into practice. She has found herself falling back into the old way of doing things and so isn't having success. It is discouraging for her.

You may be experiencing the same malady. You like the idea of having a warm and close family culture. You love the idea that you can create an environment that will stimulate educational engagement and actually help your kids LOVE learning. However, the days turn into weeks and then into months and as in the case of one of the families I worked with, years.

"We attended the first *Core and Love of Learning seminar* when the *TJEd Ingredients* were first given. That is when we learned the concept of the closet. We left the seminar excited and ready to implement a dozen new things in our home school. Unfortunately everything didn't go as planned.

Our biggest stumbling block was trying to decide what went in the closet . . . I also didn't have an actual closet that could be closed or locked and at the time my children were all under the age of 6. We made a couple of tries (which amounted to about 2 days each) and let the idea kind of fall by the wayside with the hope that we would come back to it later. 4-5 years later, here we are and are ready to try again."

As the time passes good intentions turn into apathy, apathy reverts to old habits, and old habits become guilt.

Let's put down the guilt right now and pick up progress! I'm here to help, and you can do this!

I want to pass on six techniques that Kerry shared with his own readers to help support the changes you want to make.

By the way, the following six tools come from the book *Influencer: How to Change Anything*, which is a book worth putting on your reading list. I really enjoyed it and learned a great deal.

1. Value links – When someone takes my class they may want to make changes because they want their children to love to learn. They want to stop pushing and getting into power struggles over when and what a child will learn. Many want to create a more peaceful, warm and inviting learning environment. Instead of just focusing on what you learn in a book or a training, think about the underlying values. As you link the behavior changes you want to the values you care about chances are better that you will make those changes. In other words, ask yourself the question, "Why am I choosing to engage in Leadership Education? What are the final outcomes that matter most to me?"

- 2. Advanced learning Most training gets you started on a new path but then you need to extend and broaden your understanding. Talk with other parents about what you heard. Then read. It is very valuable to read the classics on leadership education. You can find these classic works at <u>http://www.tjedmarketplace.com/store/books</u>
- 3. Meet with your spouse or yourself At the end of a training or book lay out a plan to implement what you learned. Decide what you can do and then begin. "Your class was wonderful! I loved it. In fact I used a "closet' today for the first time in our home school. I have always been waiting for that perfect day in a perfect world, when I had the perfect closet...which day was not coming anytime soon! After going to your class, I threw together some fun things in some clear Tupperware containers, and Voila! Our temporary closet. How liberating! It was wonderful! We had a great school day together. Thank you so much! Elizabeth L."
- 4. **Maintenance group** Find one or two people who have read the book or been through the training. Meet together monthly and talk about what is working and what might need help. Discuss common problems and work together to improve your ability to live new principles. You can really improve your skills by getting honest feedback in a safe environment.
- 5. **Rewards** Reward yourself and your family for living in a new way, behaving in a new way and doing something better. Go to the movie, take everyone out for ice cream or go camping, something that you and everyone will enjoy and look forward to.
- 6. **Reminders** When you meet with your spouse or yourself talk about what is working, what isn't, and any corrections you are making. Review the values that matter to you and the principles you are working to implement. When you care about something you talk about it and you think about it. It will be helpful for you to read the section on Family Executive Counsels in *Leadership Education: The Phases of Learning* by Oliver and Rachel DeMille. You will find it on pages 62-66.

If you use some of these suggestions in any combination, the chances that you will continue to practice and get better will increase. If you use four or more, then you will increase your ability to transfer the principles and skills that you learn to your home.

You can read Kerry's original article at http://www.crucialskills.com/author/kpattersonvitalsmartscom/

