



The Homeschool Journey Newsletter

Christopherus Homeschool Resources
Waldorf-inspired Parenting and Education

If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:

If you can dream—and not make dreams your master;
If you can think—and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: 'Hold on!'

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with Kings—nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!



Just to modernize things a bit, let's change the last line of this poem by Rudyard Kipling to 'And—which is more—you'll be a true 'I', my child!' Loses a bit of his pizzazz but I do think that Kipling (who is rather dubious in other ways as well though such a great writer!) needs a tad revisiting.

My sons used to love this poem when I frequently read it to them as boys. They felt the uplifting current of freedom and individuality which runs through this poem, the need every human being has to courageously be true to his/her Self, purpose and task on this earth—including, I would say, in the face of outrageous government infringement on people's autonomy and freedom and ability to think things through.

Anthroposophy is about human freedom—about the development of moral individuality (see Steiner's *The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity* which used to be entitled *The Philosophy of Freedom*).

But—and this is vital—interwoven through individual freedom is respect for others. Waldorf education treads this path, wedding the universality of the human experience and human development (most readily seen in the story curriculum—refer to our free audio download called [From Myth to History](#)) with the need of the individual. But to be able to meet the other, to respond with empathy and compassion to another person, we each need to be a strong 'I'.

One of the reasons I am so appalled by N American Waldorf schools putting classes online during this unprecedented time is that computer technology is completely and utterly opposed to the developmental needs of children. It's actually quite simple: until one is completely incarnated as an 'I', one simply is too open to the negative aspects of screen use, whether it be online classes or cell phone use. Addictive tendencies, precocious self-consciousness and the inability to rest in the spiritual substance created by the class teacher (or homeschooling parent) are simply unhealthy—destructive—to children. Only by the mid-teens is a growing human being able to start to self-regulate and to create the boundaries necessary to use computers. The 'I' necessary for such acts of freedom only starts—*starts*—to develop in the late teens.

One might object and say that the Waldorf classes are not thrusting the children onto the internet—of course not. But that spiritual substance—the in-person human relationships that children need more and more in modern society—are not there online. For some children this won't be a disaster. But for too many it will add to the toxic burden of a world which is utterly unfriendly to healthy child development. The screen cannot mediate the healing relationship children need, as a matter of course, from their teachers—thus those who struggle are left empty, no matter how loving the teacher on screen is. This spiritual substance—this healing relationship—simply cannot exist via a screen. And thus the development of the 'I' is hampered.

Further, once children are exposed to screen use, it becomes more and more tempting and easy to look outward, instead of inward, to find something to do, to stave off boredom, to think about life...and so on. Sadly, Waldorf schools have missed a great opportunity to work with parents (possibly via screens for, hopefully, a limited time) to help them take hold of their children's educations and be creative. As we homeschoolers know—it doesn't have to look like a classroom to be Waldorf education!

And what happens when things go back to 'normal' (and let's not even start to try to imagine what that might look like in a world where government lockdown is more and more accepted by people). The Waldorf teachers won't be able to simply throw the switch back to Before. The children will have had those experiences online—their addictive tendencies (which lie in all of us to a greater or lesser extent) will have been inflamed and social relationships mediated by a screen will have been normalized. It will affect the children. Even now, after only 3 weeks of screens, I know parents and grandparents who are already seeing the ill effect of Waldorf (sic) zoom classes on their children.

Of course this didn't come out of nowhere—the first step taken was approval by AWSNA and use by way too many Waldorf schools of a 'cyber civics' class, <https://www.cybercivics.com/> —from fifth grade!!! Surely the most important step a school can take is to help educate *parents* about the problems inherent in screen use?

So...tying Kipling's *If* and the above together, the thread is the absolute necessity of strengthening the human 'I' for freedom. This is the call which resonates through Kipling's poem—and it is what is being undermined by Waldorf schools by using—and thus normalizing—screen use by children. The human 'I' needs time and care to develop to its full potential (see our [Joyful Movement](#) and [Curriculum Overview](#) and each year's curriculum for much more on this). Screen use, by sidestepping and undermining the right development of the twelve senses (again—more on this in the above publications) makes it much more difficult for the 'I' to be strong and to carry the burden of incarnation at this present time.

Our highest endeavor must be to develop free human beings who are able of themselves to impart purpose and direction to their lives.

Here we have a quote by Marie Steiner (wife of Rudolf) which encapsulates the spirit of Waldorf education. Perhaps at this time of great turmoil, uncertainty and change, we can each ask ourselves how we, as adults, as parents, as teachers and educators, can stand boldly in freedom in what we do and how we are in the world—and thus lay a firm foundation for our children to develop their own eventual self-directed freedom.



Screen use by children is one problem—screen use by adults is another. At the moment I am dismayed by the seeming willingness of so many people to substitute online conferences and group calls for in-person experiences. Self-development as a parent is a vital part of being a homeschooler—and although there are of course many wonderful offerings on youtube and so forth (including my own!!), I would caution that right now, perhaps more than ever, a media fast might be an important step to contemplate.

One of the issues for me is that this constant allurements of the internet and of screens goes against an important aspect of meaningful spiritual work—instead of trying to be at peace and to look inward, the internet promises experiences and help and advice and learning...when really, what is most important is that one tune out all that excess and simply look within. The still small voice cannot be heard over the roar of zoom conferences and seminars.

Here are a couple of blog posts I wrote some years ago which could be helpful with this—and our [Waldorf Curriculum Overview](#) has quite a bit on self development as a parent.

- [Five Things Every Waldorf Homeschooler Should Stop and Consider...](#)
- [Unending Personal Development](#)

And so I have banned folks on my FB group from posting videos and seminars and links to this, that and the other thing. I am trying to encourage people to use facebook minimally—to perhaps check in and share what they are doing with their children but to try to find peace in this time of lockdown.

Speaking of which, FB by the way has its own ideas about what people should think or shouldn't think. A member of my FB group posted (before I banned video posting) a youtube video of an anthroposophical doctor talking about corona virus and 5G. This very careful and thoughtful video basically puts forth that viruses are responses to attacks on the immune system and that 5G is a potent toxin, a very dangerous form of technology indeed (and the hypothesis that viruses are a response is a widely accepted view by many virologists outside of anthroposophical circles). Well, Facebook (which has all sorts of financial connections to 5G technology) does not want people to make up their own minds about this and has blocked such videos. I bring this to your attention as an example of yet another attack on the sovereignty of human freedom—the ability for people to think and make up their own minds about an issue.

Censored

Search

OK—so there you all are, stuck at home with your children because in many parts of this country (and others) the authorities have banned people from taking walks and playing in parks, beaches and so on. I feel another rant coming on... suffice to say that at this time I should think that being in nature—being outside full stop—would be especially healing for people... Anyway—[here is a link to an oldie but goodie blog post](#) I wrote about what to do when you can't go outside (meaning due to the weather and not the government but it holds true for now as well).

Lastly, Christopherus is still shipping out orders. As many of you know, we have a very minimal office (thus just about no customer care unfortunately) and so we are able to stay open (in fact, we are actually an 'essential business' as in Wisconsin those small businesses helping people work and educate at home are deemed 'essential'!). I think we can assume that the post office will continue its wonderful work so we're good there...but where we are vulnerable is our printer. Our local printer is a very small business and at the moment at least is hanging on. We are stocking up on inventory just in case—it would be a tragedy for our small rural town if they went bust but that of course is happening everywhere in our shellshocked and gutted world economy. For many years we hummed and hawed about going to PDFs—we know it would help many of you—especially those abroad who face such appallingly high shipping costs—but the effect on us would be catastrophic. Already our materials are pirated—this would give a free hand (and yes, we are aware of all sorts of ways to protect pdfs but all can be got round by clever techie people).

Maybe we could survive that (because sales would be higher) but because of the huge surge of society normalization of 'everything on a screen' we have decided no pdfs for us! So that decision has been made. We also know that there are many of you who would prefer books.

So if our printers do go bust...well, we will have to be creative. And that is no bad thing! I'm sure we would get a warning should this happen and we will of course let you all know!

Oh—and before I forget—though the US postal service continues its sterling work, postal services have definitely slowed down. We ask for your patience when you make an order as things do seem to take longer to be delivered (we, however, are as efficient as ever!)

May you all find clarity and strength and boundless reserves of patience as you figure out how to navigate the next days and weeks.

til May,
Blessings on your homeschool journey
Donna