

June 2022



The Homeschool Journey Newsletter

Christopherus Homeschool Resources
Waldorf-inspired Parenting and Education



Dear friends,

One of the nice things about where I live is that my neighbors are, by and large, folks who value the role free imaginative play has in the life of children. And by *play*, I mean free play—whole body activity that involves the imagination without an adult's agenda. So, for instance, although sports involve the whole body, it is in no way of benefit to the imaginative faculties of the child. Sport is not play. It is sport. Freely riding a bike, noodling around in the driveway or around the

neighborhood *without the company of adults*, could seem more like sport than play, but can be a wonderful imaginative opportunity for a child, whether in a group, with one friend or alone. The bike riders can be soldiers, voyageurs, knights, a herd of wild horses, martians—whatever—and how they ride and move is dependent on the imagination of the child or children involved. The freedom of the body is aligned with the freedom of the imagination: this is a critical pairing for the spiritual, physical and emotional health of every child.

The word 'play' should be banned from any connection with a screen. 'Entertainment' or 'computer-based engagement'—something like that is more accurate. 'Play' it is not. The build up of adrenaline with no physical outlet, the narrowness of the scope of imagination because it is dictated by the creator of the game (and yes, I know that there are so-called interactive games where the gamer makes his own narrative), the damage to the twelve senses....I don't need to elaborate: you all know this.

It may be that it is appropriate for an older child to occasionally engage with a screen. But never for a child before the 9 year change. Around age 9 children develop the ability to step back somewhat from experiences and not get swallowed up by them (a natural consequence of the rightful need of young children to be at one with their environment). And if you can wait til later—much later—so much the better. The argument that children need to learn computers while young so they can be skillful once they are in high school or beyond is totally bogus—children and teens learn to use computers incredibly quickly; the damage done to children by use of computers is well known by Silicon Valley folks, many of whom send their children to Waldorf schools and other schools where there are no computers (or weren't until recently—many so-called Waldorf schools have forgotten the therapeutic basis of Waldorf education and have caved on computer use); and finally, by the time your 6 year old is in high school, the technology she will need to use will be completely different than what it is now.

What children need is to use their bodies and to be comfortable in them. The twelve senses need nourishing and protecting. By keeping children off computers and letting them play freely, whether indoors or outside (both of course is optimal), by letting them **be children**, less children will be so uncomfortable in their bodies that they feel that they are in the wrong place. Factor in parenting which does not seek to avoid all pain, which allows the growing child to experience and even embrace the discomforts of life....and we will have more children who are able to navigate the trials and discomfort of incarnating into a physical body. As Steiner often pointed out, the actual process of incarnation, especially as the astral body comes into play in the third (age 14–21) stage of childhood, is literally painful. Pain brings consciousness—this is why many self-harmers will say they only feel alive when they hurt themselves. If our children are so pampered and bubble-wrapped so that they cannot tolerate any discomfort and are 'triggered' and thus cannot engage with others or even themselves, we are guilty of creating a whole generation of young people who can't cope with being in this world. Respecting the needs of the developing child, *treating children as children* and never ever as mini adults capable of making life-changing decisions, allowing them to play freely and to be princesses and dogs and farmers and heroes, will help them as they come slowly into this incarnation.



And remember—children need to go through phases. Somehow too many parents—and certainly too many doctors, therapists, social workers and teachers—have forgotten that part of being a child is to imaginatively be one thing and then something else. A friend told me how she wanted to be her brother when she was young. This is an absolutely normal thing for a little sister to go through, especially when the beloved and idolized sibling is much older. It does not mean she wanted to be a boy and if she ever articulated that she did indeed want to be a boy, further reflection by helpful adults without an agenda would have discerned that what she actually wanted was to be her brother. It means that she loved her brother and *imitated* him. Eventually she grew out of this—as children do!

Not enough people understand the powerful role that imitation plays in the life of every child until about the age of 9—after that it remains but is increasingly under the child's conscious control. In the first 6 or 7 years of a child's life it is almost entirely unconscious, not subject to the child's consciousness—which is how it should be and those adults who bring self awareness to young children are destroying a vital stage in the life of every child.



An example of imitation which is perhaps more relevant today than I had ever imagined it would be: I worked as an intern at the play area at Bellvue Hospital in NYC during college. Parents having outpatient treatments would drop off their children to play. The task of the play center was to provide healthy play and to lightly screen the

children for any problems. The woman who ran it understood the vital role of play in every child's life, understanding that one could take for granted back in the 80s. A little boy of about 5 came for several weeks running. Every time he arrived he made a beeline for the dressing up. He'd slip on high heels, drape himself in an evening gown, put on jewelry and a big hat. After several weeks, we had a staff meeting about him. Was there a problem here? One junior staff member was very worried—was this boy a (whisper) 'homosexual'? The woman who ran the center smiled and then told us that we were missing some vital information: this child lived in a household of only women, his grandmother, mother and big sister. Dressing up to go out played a huge role in the life of this family and this child, at age 5, was quite rightly imitating what he saw was important to his family. If they had been cowboys, he would have taken a cowboy hat and chaps and a lasso out of the dressing up. Whether he grew up to be gay is immaterial and has utterly and completely nothing to do with what a child—any child that has not been precociously awakened from his unaware imitative stage of growth—does during play.

Older children also need to be allowed to play freely and to imagine freely. When I was 11, I wanted to be a horse. I ate standing up putting my head into the plate and loved nothing better than to canter around Central Park. Again, wise adults ignored what I did and when the phase fulfilled whatever urge I had, it passed.

My best friend in school was obsessed with Fred Astaire when she was about 14. She would wear a tuxedo and tap shoes to school. The class was treated during snack time and lunch time to N singing and dancing her way around the classroom. Ginger Rogers did not cut it—Fred was far more exciting. Wisely, the teachers and her parents ignored this phase. If she had been asked back then if she wanted to transition to being Fred Astaire, she would have said yes, in a minute! Fortunately, back in the 70s, people knew what a child was. She grew out of it in about a year. I still can hear her voice singing all of Fred Astaire's 'hits' and see her sashaying around our classroom.

Here is a [link to our free audio downloads and videos](#) as well as to our recordings sold in our bookstore. Many deal with the subjects touched upon here and can be of help in preserving your child's imaginative consciousness:



For many parents, especially those concerned with what is happening in their local public and Waldorf schools, homeschooling is the answer! We hope we can assist those of you wishing to work in a deep and meaningful way with Waldorf education—Christopherus is founded upon the spiritual depths of Waldorf and we have created materials to be adaptable to the wonderfully diverse families who choose what we have to offer. [Please click here](#) if you are new to Waldorf and/or homeschooling and/or Christopherus.

Having said all of this, in the present political climate, it would be naive to think that homeschooling will not be attacked. Those of you who are American may or may not have fully taken on that the present political ideology in the States says that parents are not the final arbiters of their children's lives: correct ideology is. And while—of course!!!—there are and always will be abusive parents, starting from the premise that the State and not parents is the bedrock of a child's best interests, is more than dangerous.

Here is an [article](#) about how this shift from 'parents know best' to 'the State knows best' is evolving. Ironically, Harvard University, back in the old 80s, used to head-hunt homeschooled students for enrollment, recognizing that, no matter how they were homeschooled, such students were more articulate, self organized and able to learn than their institutionally-schooled peers. Oh, how things have changed....and since free thinking individuality is not the flavor of choice in the vast majority of institutions of higher learning in this country anymore, such a turn-around is hardly surprising.

Here's [very important information](#) from our friends at Children's Health Defense regarding the FDA's push to inoculate ever-younger children for COVID. There is a petition some folks might wish to sign included. **STOP PRESS**—while this link will lead to the online petition, it seems that as of writing the FDA has ok'ed the covid vaxx for babies. I still urge parents to read up on this as they navigate their decisions about their children's health needs.

By the way, if you are unfamiliar with these folks, they do excellent work alerting parents to the dangers of environmental toxins as well as vaccinations. In the community where I live we have a school for children and young adults with special needs: many are vaccine-damaged.

Having tried pretty hard to get our social media group on locals up and running and vibrant, I am throwing in the towel. It just hasn't worked in the way I had hoped. There have been a few good threads but for the most part, people post and no one responds which is terribly disheartening for people. I have been active on it as well—but I also get disheartened when I put a great deal of thought into a response—and the person disappears or the thread just dies right there! And the talks we filmed just do not seem to be of interest to many people. Considering that it is free to watch them, well, you can see how I feel this is not working.

The Christopherus locals group will close on 1 July.



If you would like to deepen your relationship to Christopherus and the mysteries of Waldorf homeschooling; if you need tuition and ideas for artistic and craft work; if you'd like to take a gentle journey of self development, do consider purchasing our [Self Study Course](#).

The last issue of the Homeschool Journey on truth got quite a lot of positive response—I am sorry I cannot respond individually to your emails. Please know I read all of them and appreciate all of them—including, of course, the negative ones. One can only learn by engaging with the wide range of people's thinking on various issues. So I do appreciate feedback! If you missed that issue, please visit our newsletter archive to read it and issues from the last couple of years.

The subject of the July Homeschool Journey newsletter will be on the sexualization of children—any sexualization, in any direction. I invite people to submit questions which I can touch upon or experiences they would like to share with other readers.

Til July,
Blessings on your homeschool journey,
Donna