

## **our unschooling ABCs**

**By Krista Johnston**

A – autonomy - the freedom to choose when, where, how and what we learn and to direct the rest of our life with the same freedom (when to take trips, when to wake up each day, what to wear, when to eat, what to spend our time on, who to spend time with, etc...).

B – being together – we have so much time to get to know and enjoy each other!

C – creative & critical thinking – we don't spend precious time memorizing "right" answers in order to score well on tests, our learning has a more lasting purpose. We have the freedom to question everything, and explore to the extent that our curiosity is satisfied before moving on to something else.

D – daydreaming – we have plenty of opportunity to take the time needed to quietly process what we learn, whenever we need to.

E – equality – we live and learn together in an environment that is free of hierarchy, and operates on a basis of consensuality and equality. We make sure that the learning and living strategies we choose work for and support everyone.

F – family – probably one of the single most significant reasons behind our choice to learn at home. The time we spend together, the quality of our relationships, and creating a life-long family bond are needs we have that are nurtured through this way of life.

G – growing together – because I'm growing as much as my children are on this journey. We're doing it together.

H – holding on to childhood – my children get to grow up and fully experience each emotional and intellectual stage slowly, without being hurried along at someone else's pace. They can savor being kids, pressure free!

I – individuality – need I say more? There is simply no one else to measure up to or try to be like. We honor our individuality and enjoy our freedom to express it without fear.

J – joy – natural learning leads to feelings of joy for life!

K – knowledge – I really appreciate the rich abundance of opportunities and resources we have around us to help us build knowledge about the things that interest us.

L – learning together – because we all have something to learn from each other and something to contribute to each other's growth. This is a shared journey.

M - meaning – being able to experience a sense of meaningfulness and purpose to what we are learning is so important. Whatever we are learning about needs to be applicable to our lives and our world. The most likely way we can achieve this is when we have choice and freedom (see A) around our learning.

N – natural – learning is meant to be a natural, fluid life-long process, not linear, not imposed, not forced, and not meant to be a means to rewards or done out of fear of failure.

O – opportunities – unschooling means we view life as an endless abundance of opportunities to learn and grow, and that we value having the time and freedom to explore them.

P – passion – being able to follow our passions is what helps and inspires us to learn who we are, what we enjoy, and what we value.

Q – questions – how, who, why, what, where, when, how long, what if, why not, these questions plus a million more are welcome and celebrated at all times of the day, all through the year. There are no specified hours in our day, days in the week, or months of the year that are set aside for learning and asking questions. Learning happens for all of us, all the time.

R – real world – from the moment life begins, our children spend their lives living, learning and exploring the real world, not “preparing” to live in it some day.

S – self-empowered – when children are trusted to direct their own learning, they develop a sense of ownership over their own learning journey. My 6-year-old already displays a sense of confidence and independence that comes from being knowing that he is free to approach different skills and concepts when he is ready, and will not be pressured to do so before then.

T – trust – unschooling is synonymous with trust. Trusting life, trusting the learning process, trusting that we have everything we need, to learn what we need to, to live fulfilling and meaningful lives.

U – universal – learning is a universal human need! We all begin at birth and never stop needing and yearning to learn. We are born with a natural curiosity. I believe that all children instinctively want to learn about the real world around them; and that the best way to do that is lots of time spent interacting with it.

V – values – independence, autonomy, support, openness, flexibility, spontaneity, choice, realness, equality, enjoyment, fun, respect, play, community, meaning, purpose, personal expression and physical and emotional nurturing are a few of many values we have that are met through the decision to unschool.

W – win-win – our choice of lifestyle supports our need for creating win-win situations no matter what we're working through, because we believe that everyone's needs can be met. Learning is not a competition, for us there are no "failures" or "losers", everyone wins!

X – oh heavens I am open to contributions on this one!

Y – yes! – saying yes! as often as possible helps my children to see life as a series of possibilities and open doors, instead of a series of rules and forbidden zones and thou-shalt-nots. Yes we can go there, yes you can experiment with that, yes we will find a way to do that together, yes I will support your interests, yes I would love to help you.

Z – zest for life – I don't think I need to elaborate on this one!