

# Freely Ebook

December 2022



Your monthly homeschool support

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# REFLECTION

This December Ebook edition is filled with inspiration and tips to help and inspire you through the month of December.

## AT A GLANCE

*on page*

HARD QUESTIONS

4

STOP FOR A MINUTE

7

JOURNALING

9

HELPFUL RESOURCES

16

ENCOURAGEMENT

19

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# Hello

Welcome to the very first issue of the Freely ebook! This December issue is based on the theme of "Reflection". I originally wanted to call this issue "Peace", I deliberated painfully over it!



**TIFFANY BOYD**  
CO FOUNDER OF FREELY

Ultimately I rested easily on "Reflection" because I think Peace comes from that. I'm proud of this month's issue. It doesn't mess around, it goes deep into our thoughts and fears, and the things that trigger home educators at the end of the year.

We dig into the reasons that you might be feeling like you aren't doing enough in your homeschool and offer some helpful suggestions that perhaps can help you in navigating this festive month.

My hope for this Ebook, as you read, is that you feel seen and heard, validated and supported, and then inspired and capable.

With much love, Tiff x

# "I FEEL LIKE WE DID NOTHING THIS YEAR!"

That's the statement I have heard from multiple home educators this year, and last year, and the year before that.

It seems to be a pattern I have noticed within the homeschool community. We get to December and we freak out because it's the "end of the year" and we feel like we've run a marathon but we are craving that "run past that finish line" feeling. It feels like something's missing.

We usually have family and friends visiting and often get asked those questions...

"Have they got friends?" "What are they learning?" "What do

you do all day?" It can feel triggering and intrusive and I think, depending on how we perceive the year went, it reflects how upset we can get by these questions.

One way or another we are met with questions that perhaps mainstream school families aren't subjected to.

So how do we stop the panic within ourselves? How do we create some healthy boundaries and stop, or at least, ease the awkward interrogations? My son had an interesting experience recently that I wanted to share with you.



# "WHY DO YOU ASK?"

I recently took our kids to the local school dentist for their annual check-up. They were treated differently this year, they are a bit older and a bit more responsible with their teeth brushing and it definitely felt different.

Our son is almost high school age and so the conversation the dentist had with my son was about career paths. He is only 11 and I felt this conversation was a little premature. The poor kid had a mouth full of hands and she expected him to answer her about his studies and life ambitions!

She grew quiet and then asked "Do you have lots of friends? Do you socialize enough?" Now if I was ready to intervene at the career talk I most certainly was ready to put this lady in her place after that question, but before I could, he promptly responded, "Why do you ask?"

She was very much taken aback by this and for the first time making eye contact with me as though she was asking for help. I smiled at her and waited for her to answer him. She said she was just checking in. "It's good to make sure homeschooled kids are getting the same experience as schooled kids, and they aren't missing out."

By this time I 100% felt like my son had complete control of the conversation and I could see he was bursting to respond. He replied “I used to go to this school, and the way I see it is that the kids here are the ones missing out! But everyone is allowed to have their own opinion and we don’t have to agree.”

That was the end. He could have told her to mind her own business (I would have cheered him on) but he chose to acknowledge her view and firmly end the conversation by saying he didn’t agree in the most respectful way.

I observed two things from this moment:

1. The dentist changed the subject and we all moved on
2. My son sees adults as equals

Asking “Why do you ask?” gives you perspective on the reason the question is being asked. Often hearing their point of view we can share ours and it becomes less of an interrogation and more of a discussion.

This is something my kids and I learned in therapy, and we’ve since worked together with lots of role-playing. It’s just as helpful to them as it is for me. I encourage you to try it if you find yourself at a loss for words when being asked about your family's lifestyle choices!

# SERIOUSLY, STOP FOR A MINUTE.

I really want to remind you that amongst all the holiday cheer going on, it is completely okay to feel: exhausted from a busy year of homeschooling, and tired of pushing yourself to the next thing/task.

You could be overwhelmed with grief from the loss of a loved one or financially overwhelmed with the rise in the cost of living. Whatever it is you're dealing with right now. It's okay to feel it.

I think as home educators we get really used to putting our own needs aside, but I think that we have an opportunity here to dig into what we think we "should be" feeling and address that head-on, and I'm not just talking about this time of year.

This is something that needs to be talked about year-round!

Why is it that we expect more from ourselves than we do others?

What message are we sending our children as they grow older and one day, perhaps become parents themselves?

From what I'm hearing, many of us (home educators) are feeling tired.

I know that you can put on a brave face for the sake of your family, but what if you didn't?

What if you delegated more?

What if you rested?

What if you took a moment to reflect on the year with your family instead of rushing to the next thing?

Seriously, stop for a minute.

# SERIOUSLY, STOP FOR A MINUTE.

Some of the changes I am making this year are:

- Accepting that not everything needs to be perfect in this season I am in.
- Re-evaluate my own expectations and practice what I preach by showing my family that self-care is, in fact, far more important than a perfectly decorated dinner table.
- I have picked a handful of things I won't compromise on (we all have those!) but I'm letting the rest slide.
- If something is so important to someone else, let them take it on!

I hope that this will inspire you to also re-evaluate your obligations and find a way to honor the season you are in.



# REFLECTION

I think the practice of reflection is something that's been hyped up as reserved for the end of the year, but I truly believe it's something that should be practiced regularly.

I definitely started understanding the benefits of reflection when I created our end-of-year reflection time. I'm so grateful that I started that process with my kids, I wouldn't have connected with their hopes and dreams, and our homeschool would probably be very different today if I hadn't.

Throughout 2022 I challenged myself to level up on our reflection time and incorporate it more regularly (most weeks) and I can't even tell you (but I'll try!) how BIG of a difference this has made to our family.

Simply by reflecting more at the end of a week. I've picked up on the cues that something isn't right or someone needs more one-on-one time. It's allowed me to redirect the path, check in more with that thought/realization and weave it into my plans to pay more attention.

# REFLECTION

"Ultimately, I see things coming before it all completely falls apart!"

There are so many benefits I've noticed this year from the new habit I've created but I wanted to share two main benefits and also a bit of the background info on how I went about achieving this.

## **1. I AM MORE PRESENT & LESS REACTIVE.**

I started a reflection journal in Freely Homeschool Planner and it was a game changer for our homeschool (and my parenting).

By processing the week's events and getting them out of my head and into Freely, I'm starting the next week fresher and calmer (letting go of resentment and my own feelings I didn't know I had)

I began making notes about our homeschool week most Fridays as a way to track some things that have been going on emotionally in our home.

I thought reflecting each Friday would allow me to really see what has been working and not working within our routine. Initially, I intended this as a means for gathering information.

As someone who doesn't easily stop and tends to rush on to the next thing, I found this new intention to be incredibly grounding. It helped so much with untangling my thoughts and slowing down a little, and it really allowed me to have a better perspective on certain situations.

By getting the week's worries and events out of my head, I was able to see through certain behaviors, and instead of reacting I was able to take the calm approach that I have so often struggled to execute well, or consistently for that matter!

It's beautiful to see the difference in my children when I am truly calm and capable of handling whatever feelings pop up for them without that knee-jerk reaction of my own feelings getting in the way.

**"The best thing I did for myself as a home educator, was to start a reflection journal of our weeks"**

Using Freely Homeschool Planner to journal was a simple decision for me. I'm already there. Using it to access our curriculum and lessons, it's with me on my phone, whenever I need it and it made a lot of sense because I wanted a way to search for specific words and events, and Freely is set up for that.

It also seemed the most convenient to access at therapist and doctor appointments to easily share details of things I felt were relevant.

I created a new category called "Journal" and just selected the child the entry was relevant for and away I went! I'm a very visual person so I even snapped a few photos and added them in!

## 2. CLARITY IN OUR HOMESCHOOL

The benefit I wasn't expecting was the clarity that seemed to be growing as I was able to really double down on what mattered within our family and homeschool.

All of a sudden I was peeling the layers of worry and anxiety away as I noted the weeks' conversations, my thoughts and feelings about what we did and didn't get done, and why.

Slowly but surely, I was creating a beautiful memoir of our year together, and honestly, I don't think that I could have had any better reminder of the true heart and purpose of our homeschool.

Over time, I started realizing that some of the challenges within our homeschool weren't, in fact, things my children needed to work on but, rather, things I myself needed to address. And so the growth continues as a home educator and a Mother of special needs, I am forever learning and growing.

I think that without reflecting regularly, on my kid's interests and even abilities, each year somewhere down the road, I have lost sight of why we are even doing this.

Have you ever felt like that? Where it feels like it's not fun anymore and the kids are bored and uninterested and it's all just so forced. \*sigh\*

This used to be the point that I'd start to look at other curriculums, and other homeschooling families (comparison!!). I would change course for something new and fresh, but it just became a cycle!

For my family and many others, without an overarching reminder of our "why", quick-fix approaches can make us feel really detached from our days.

I believe this is the reason why I struggled so much with consistency in our homeschool - I didn't feel like I had anything to measure. I would get stuck in the details and, let's face it, it's human instinct to want to know we are measuring up!

That is why keeping a reflection journal in Freely has been a game changer for me. As a home educator I'm gently reminded of my "why" each time I journal and reflect on our days together.

Most of us need something to compare with and that's why if we don't check in with our "why" and our true reasons for homeschooling, we start to wander aimlessly and it just never feels enough.

We want to feel good about being together every day working towards something. We want to feel confident in the reasons we choose certain curricula. Without that clarity, we will start looking for validation from the wrong sources (social media is a perfect example of this).

I know this is why, in the past, I have struggled with fixing our curriculum with another curriculum, why I have fixated on what we didn't get done rather than what we did accomplish, and also why I have jumped to defensiveness at first sign of criticism when asked about our homeschool year and what we have done.

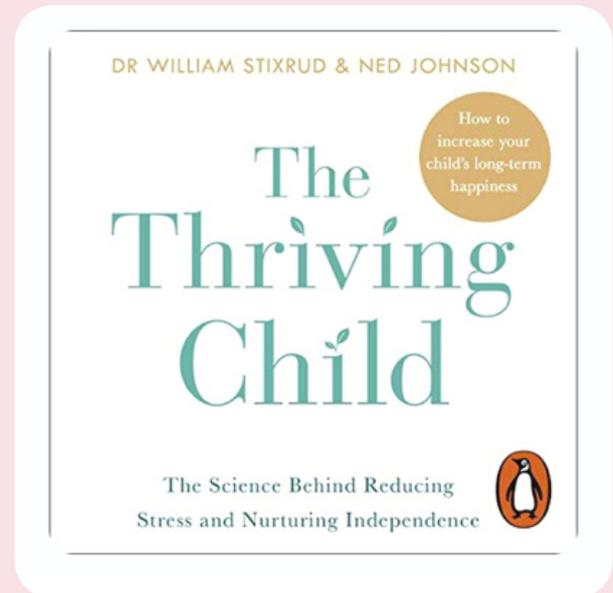
Reflection has not only played a big part in that feeling of "we did well this year" but it's also helped me grow and learn from the year and I feel a sense of excitement about the possibilities of a new fresh year!

# Resources you'll love!

I am always on the hunt for the best and most helpful homeschooling and organisation resources and here are my top picks for this month!

## BOOK OF THE MONTH

Thriving child is not written exclusively for home educators but it truly validates many of the homeschooling approaches. It's a wonderful mix of reassurance, eye opening revelations that may shock you, and an absolute must read for parents that fear they aren't "doing enough" The audible version was my personal favourite!



## OVER ON YOUTUBE

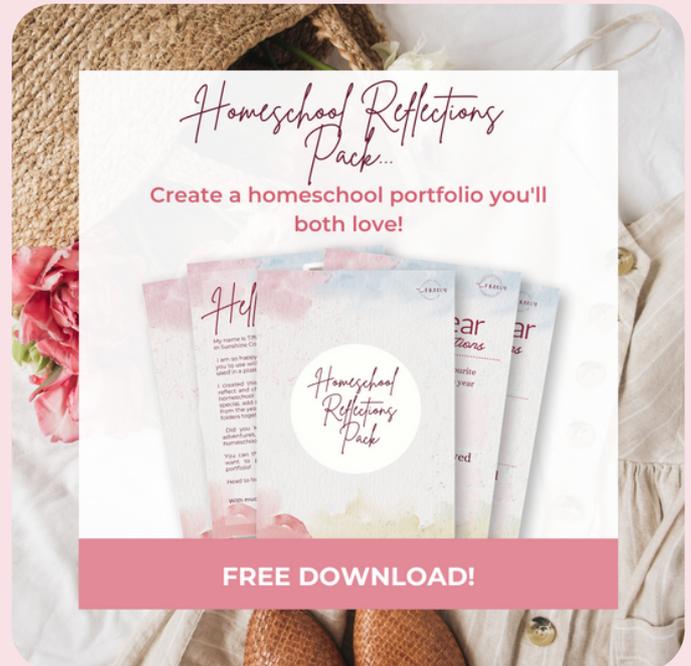
Did you know I have a [youtube channel](#)? After a short break, I will be back creating more videos focusing on motherhood, homeschooling and organisation!

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## FREE PRINTABLE!

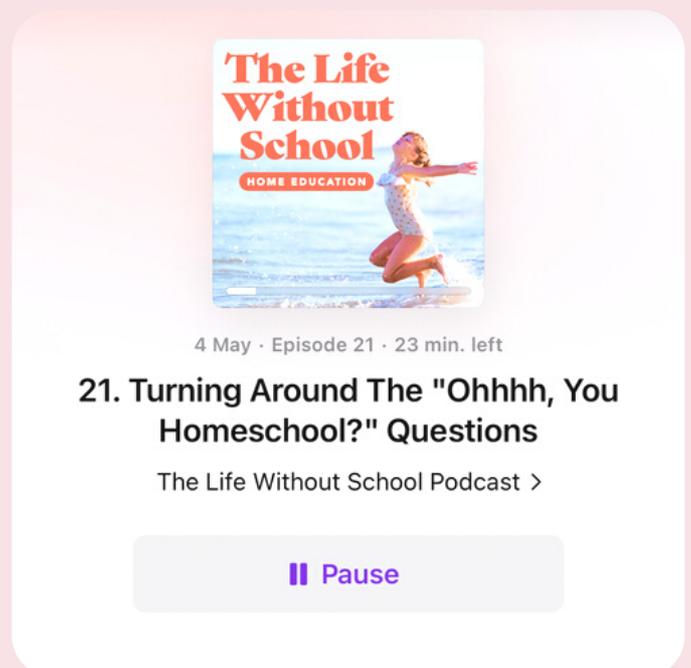
I have updated last years reflection pack, It was a standout favorite and the most downloaded printable I've created so far. I really appreciate it when you message me with how these printables make a difference for you. I hope you enjoy this new [Reflection pack!](#)



## THE LIFE WITHOUT SCHOOL PODCAST EPISODE 21.

This is a stand-out must-listen episode. Issy Stark from @stark.raving.dad has a unique way of getting to the facts and gives perspective on this often misunderstood homeschooling life.

In [episode 21](#), Issy breaks down the usual questions we get as home educators.







**“True belonging  
doesn’t require us to  
change who we are; it  
requires us to be who  
we are.”**

— Brené Brown, Atlas of the  
Heart: Mapping Meaningful  
Connection and the Language  
of Human Experience

**L E A R N F R E E L Y . A P P**



# HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

From my family to yours!

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