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A Well-Oiled Machine

Tags: encouragement School year beginnings

I'm sure you've heard this phrase before. I thought of it this last week as I vamped up our school day routine to almost full speed. I like to start slowly with just a couple subjects and add two or three subjects each week until we are full speed. We're not quite there yet but close.

The first two weeks, when we were just focusing on History and math, I wasn't sure how I'd ever add another thing to the day. It was taking all day to do two subjects with four kids. I was spent by the time we got through three separate math levels and all of our reading. We were definitely not running as a well-oiled machine. We were puttering along quite like an old jalopy, weighted down with our summer non-routine and our sunshine-fogged minds.

Now three and a half weeks into school I'm trying to find other things to add to the day to keep the kids busy. We still have a couple more subjects to add for the older kids next week, but they are often done before lunch and asking me if they can go play with friends. What happened between the start and now? How did we go from a two subject day to a five subject day with time on our hands?

Slowly but surely we have given the old jalopy a tune up. The bolts of routine have been tightened. The wheels of thinking have been greased. Maybe by October this old jalopy will even receive an extra-curricular paint job and look like a shiny new model right off the lot!

Sure, there are always kinks to be worked out. There is always a new squeak or rattle that needs attention. But as we go, year after year on this home-schooling endeavor, it seems we run smoother and better each year.

Part of that is my attitude. I know when I started home-schooling with two five year olds I thought we had to do it all. My poor little kindergarteners were inundated with every subject from math to reading to history. We spent all day at it and there was no shortage of tears. Now my kindergartener is lucky if he has an hour of school and most of it is fun and easy. He leaves feeling like he's accomplished something and still has time to play. I've realized our 'machine' runs much better when I relax and enjoy my time with my kids, instead of worrying about my checklist.

Another part of it is sleep. Did you know that our ancestors, on average, slept nine hours a night? Before electricity people went to sleep when it got dark and awoke with the sun. Now we get an average of 7 hours of sleep. I know when I get nine hours I feel like I can accomplish anything, and I have a much better mood about what needs to get done. Sleep is crucial to learning, a good attitude and even digestion of our food!

Of course, the number one thing to keep your 'machine' well-oiled is God's Word. There is nothing more important that we can teach our children than what the Bible says. Math, reading, writing, history; it all takes a back seat to God's infallible and life-giving Word.

Psalm 119:105 *Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.* (NIV) We could say God's Word is the oil for the gears and the gas to make our machine go. Even if you only spend a few minutes every morning reading a portion of Scripture and saying a prayer for a good day, you will notice a difference in how smoothly your day goes. God wants to be a part of our home-schooling journey – a big part.

As we hit the gas pedal for another year of home-schooling let's oil our machines well each day with a good attitude, enough sleep and God's Word. I know we'll look back on this year with fond memories if we take good care of this 'machine' God has entrusted to us!

Happy Home-schooling!

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