

welcome to empowering
homeschool conversations
your authority in
navigating the world of
homeschooling diverse
learners featuring peggy
ployer from sped homeschool
annie yorty from annie
yorty.com leilani melendez
from living with eve
stephanie buckwalter from
e-larp learning and don
jackson from don jackson
educational consulting and tutoring
With over 75 years of
combined homeschooling expertise,
experiences, and perspectives,
this group is eager to
share their wealth of
wisdom to empower your
homeschooling journey.
So grab your favorite mug, settle in,
and get ready for insightful discussions,
valuable insights, and practical tips.
Give your homeschool the
power boost it needs to
successfully educate the
unique learners in your home
you

everyone and welcome to
Empowering Homeschool Conversations.

Today we are going to talk
about strategic homeschooling,
assessing last year and
planning ahead for diverse learners.

And my guest is one of my co-hosts,
Annie Yorty.

Annie is a wife, mother, writer,
speaker who brings hope and
encouragement to those
navigating tough times.

Her life is filled with unexpected twists,
which has deepened her
reliance on God's presence and purpose.

Annie's advocacy journey
began with the birth of her first child,
who has Down syndrome.

She finds joy in helping
others discover their needs
and sources of support.

Her advocacy spans parenting,
disability support, global missions,
homeschooling, Bible teaching.

And Annie has inspired
audiences across four
continents and contributes
to various blogs and online magazines,

including Crosswalk.

Her book, From Ignorance to Bliss,

God's Heart Revealed

Through Down Syndrome,

shares the hope she found

through her parenting journey.

As a lifelong learner and craft enthusiast,

Annie also enjoys playing

the piano and ukulele,

traveling on mission trips

and spending time with friends.

her Labradoodle.

She lives in Pennsylvania with her husband,

Jeff, an Air Force veteran.

Together, they have three children,

and Annie encourages others

to look upward and perceive

God amidst life's challenges.

I'm so excited to have you

on the show as a guest today, Annie.

I know, it's going to be fun.

Yeah, I know.

When you're on the other side,

it's fun to be interviewed

because there's a whole lot

going on when you're the interviewer.

So it gives you the

opportunity to just share

from your expertise.

And you have so much to
share with our audience.

So I'm excited that you
wanted to talk about this
topic because we're going to be...
coming into a new school year.

And sometimes we feel bad about what we,
we had in the past, but to assess it with,
with the right eyes and to
look forward to the school
year with hope instead of maybe dread.

I remember years where I was like, Oh no,
not another year,
but we don't want you to feel that way.

So Annie's going to give you
some encouragement today.

So stick in with us and, and, and,
and just realize that
there's so much more.

Do you want to just start
out with maybe an
encouraging word to the
parents just to kind of
give them an idea of what
we're going to be talking
about and how this is going
to help with preparing for
the next year and reviewing

the year in the past?

Yes.

I know that we get to the
end of the school year and feel just
ready to be done.

And I get that.

I did not expect that when I
first started homeschooling,
but that first year I was like, oh,
I can't wait to finish and
just put this behind me and have a break.

I liken this concept of evaluation to like,
if you go on a hike or
something like that,
you are going to have a map
or some kind of signposts, you know,
on the trees or you're
going to have a GPS, something,
a compass even.

And if you are just walking
along on your hike without
ever consulting these tools that you have,
you have,
really could get far afield
of that beautiful scenery
that you want to see at the
end of your hike.

Exactly.

You need to actually pause

along your way of the hike
and look at your compass,
look at your GPS, your map,
whatever you're using.

And so that's the same idea here.

This is a homeschooling journey.

And if we don't pause every
now and then and intentionally
look at like what were we
aiming for and you know how
did we do did we meet any
of that um and and why not
or or if we did oh we want
to do more of that so it's
um positives and negatives
we're going to look at both
just honestly and see how
it can guide us for the future
Absolutely.

Yes.

It's not a race to the finish line.

There's,

there's so much to be enjoyed and
to be learned through the process.

And it,

It's so easy to get that tunnel vision,
though,
because we just some of those days

we do survive and we just
want to get to the end of the day.

And I always thought those
people that homeschool year round,
I have no idea how they do it.

I always had to have my
summers off because I
needed a break so badly.

Yeah,
but some can and they just take it
easier.

And I think maybe that's
that's the key to it is
that you're not so stressed
during the school year.

And you can go through the summer.

But however you do it,
get some encouragement.

Yeah, there's a variety of ways.

There's not a one size fits
all way to evaluate.

We think of the evaluation time as just,
you know,

looking at different areas of
our homeschooling journey.

We look at our children.

I think most people look at evaluation as,

Well,

we used this book this year for math.

Did we get through all of the book?

You know,

and then if we don't get through
all of the book, we're like, oh, no,
we failed.

You know?

Yeah.

Yeah.

Because the book was the
rule or the ruler of your success.

But that's not especially with our kiddos.

Yeah.

you know, that's not necessarily our goal.

We may take a couple of
years to go through a book.

We may switch books in the middle.

We may have some modified
goals from that book,
something like that.

So we are just wanting to
see progress for our children,
really any child.

I think that's the way it is
because learning isn't a
neat little package, you know, that, well,
it all fits into these nine
months of the year.

So, right.

you know,

we see just fits and starts on
the learning and that's okay.

Yeah.

Yeah.

So yeah, evaluation is, is important,
but can you talk to us about like,
instead of just assessing
at the end of the year,
what about regular
evaluations and what does that look like?

Yeah.

So, um, we can,
we can pause along the way
in the school year too.

It certainly is like, you know, you,
you start working with
something you think might
work with your child.

Um,

you know, you're excited about it.
Maybe, maybe they're excited, maybe not,
but you're doing it and
you're throwing all you have into it.

And, you know,
you're not really getting
any traction with it.

Maybe, you know,
you're just getting

discouraged with that.

And so there's certainly
nothing wrong with, you know,
come Thanksgiving or Christmas, you're,
you're,
you can look at that and say, well,
what's going on here?

Is this,
maybe the book isn't right for
your child's learning style.

It could be a variety.

It could be that your child
has other needs right now,
that the child may have
some emotional needs that
need to be dealt with, or, you know,
some behavioral needs.

We're going to maybe just
put aside some of the
academics and focus on
and the behavioral needs
that might be presenting themselves.

And that's the beauty of
homeschooling that we can, um,
be that flexible to meet
the child's true needs.

Yeah.

Yes.

And,
and to take those stops and kind of
figure things out and not feel like,
I think a lot of times
we're letting the
curriculum or the books
that we choose dictate, um,
just the overall atmosphere
of our house because we're
trying to gauge everything
around the way that
curriculum was written and
try to make our child fit into that box.

And when the struggle happens,
it just upsets everything
instead of doing those evaluations.

Yeah,
I'll mention one other thing that I
think influences us besides
just that curriculum or
that other people and what we see.
with another family, those children,
you know,
those perfect children over there.

The ones other people have.

We don't see all of them.

Yeah.

That can really influence
our perception of our own

children if we're not careful.

That comparison is sort of deadly.

I think it's, it's, um,

I remember this was actually

before I homeschooled.

My daughter was in public

school for a couple of

years and she was not writing.

I mean,

she could maybe put some chicken

scratch on the paper to

copy some letters.

And she was in second grade at the time.

And the teacher,

this was at the end of the

year at an IEP meeting.

And the teacher,

we had had this IEP meeting

that seemed really positive.

And then at the end,

she pulled out this piece

of paper and on it that

filled the whole page was

this lovely printing,

like a little essay.

And she said, Oh, just so you know,

this is what the other

second graders are doing.

And in writing,
so she showed me and it was, you know,
it was really nice.

But by comparison, like I said,
my daughter was pretty much
just barely able to press
on the page with her pencil.

And she certainly wasn't
creating her own ideas,
putting them on paper.

She could copy a few things, but
I know I just felt like a
balloon that had been deflated.

I was pretty pleased with the,
we had made progress,
but then that just deflated me.

And I was demoralized by that.

I don't know that that
teacher intended for me to be,
so I'm not assigning that to her,
but it took away from the progress.

And that can happen with us
at any time where, you know,
we're hanging out with other people and,

We may observe where they're
at or what those children
are doing and then start
looking at what we're doing
and the progress we're

making as if it's not enough.

So I just want to caution

that evaluation isn't to

make you feel demoralized or discouraged.

It's to help you just take

your next steps.

Yes.

Yeah.

And in a lot of states,

showing progress is required.

Can you talk a little bit

about state requirements and assessments?

Because I know sometimes it's mandatory.

In a lot of states, it's not.

But for those that it is,

it really is a stressor for

a lot of parents because

sometimes they can forego the regular,

like,

standardized testing by showing progress.

But I think parents are kind

of at a loss because it

seems so ambiguous about

showing progress too.

Yeah.

Yep.

It is kind of an ambiguous thing, right?

Because it doesn't say what

kind of progress or how much progress.

Yeah, exactly.

So, well,

I think that just gives us some freedom,

you know,

if the law doesn't really define

it as anything, anything more

you know, with more parameters,

then we have freedom.

And we do want to be

responsible with our freedom,

even when we're in a state

where there's no requirement at all.

And I've lived in those states,

a state like that.

I've homeschooled in a state

where they did require a

standardized test.

And, you know,

that was challenging because

our kids don't always...

take standardized tests very well,

but really there was no, um,

no authority that was saying, oh,

your kid didn't do well

enough on that test.

Now you can't homeschool anymore.

So, um,

I tried to pick a test for her that was,

um, more, um, doable for her.

It wasn't the timed,

it wasn't a timed test.

And, um, I'm trying, if I recall,

it allowed for some,

reading of questions and that,

but it was still satisfying

the state requirement for a

standardized test.

So, you know,

I took that for what it was worth.

Some of it was helpful for me to see, oh,

was there any progress over

the last year or a week?

stagnant or, you know, with this testing,

but we can't always do that

with our kids because some

of them just don't test like that at all.

So, you know,

even if your child is completely,

you know,

not really able to take the test,

if your state has that requirement,

just do it and let the

chips fall where they may.

You've fulfilled the requirement.

Okay.

That's being responsible.

Some states like the one where I live now,
I remember when I moved to
Pennsylvania and
Oh, I did not like having to do,
they have a lot of oversight.
So you as a parent have to
produce a portfolio, which is, you know,
kind of a summary of each
subject that you taught and
with samples and at certain ages,
you have to do standardized testing and
You have to give them a plan
for your year.
And you also have to have
that portfolio and the
child evaluated by a certified teacher.
So I was just like, what?
Why are we moving here?
But that's, you know,
I lived in Pennsylvania, so I have to,
you know, that's what I did.
And after I kind of settled
down and did it,
I actually saw some benefit
from making that portfolio happen.
You know,
the part about going to the
certified teacher, you know,
that we can debate whether

that's good on another day.

The people I went to were helpful.

Like if I had questions and things like that, they could actually, they would help me and give me advice, that type of thing.

But the portfolio itself, was really kind of neat because it forced me to just, it forced me to do this evaluation of where we had started and where we had ended.

And I learned like, oh, we did more than I thought this year when I really started to put it down on paper.

You know, and I basically, you think about all the things that go into a portfolio like that.

You know, for the state, I, you know, there's sort of a requirement of what to do, but you don't have to put everything I'm talking about in yours if you don't have a requirement.

But really, you know,

I listed every curriculum and, you know,
what products, what things we used.
and how much of it we went
through and put some,
if there were grades or
something like that,
when they get to a point
where you're grading things
or needing a transcript
that comes in handy.

I also included a lot of
other stuff that we were doing,
things like field trips.

And you can make this sort
of like a scrapbook.

It's interesting to look back at.

You can do the field trips you go on,
list those.

You can put things like
lessons your child might
take or artwork or service
that they do for others.

All these things are part of
your homeschool year.

And when you put all this together,
it really quantifies what
you've been up to.

And you may not have really
thought about all that,

But I get to the end of the year,
and I was like, here,
I actually dug one out
because it's been a while.

So I dug it out,
and it's just in a little notebook,
nothing special.

And I was like, wow, this is really neat.

And it's something to look
back at and just be proud of.

And so I really encourage people,
after all that griping

about doing this portfolio,

I do encourage people.

people to make their own

portfolio and just think

about all the educational

experiences your child has had and,

and kind of put it all into

that notebook.

And even kids like you could if you're,

if your child is verbal,

you can interview them

about different experiences

they had and record them.

So there's,

there's a lot of good things

that can come out of that.

Definitely.

Yes.

It's we, we,

We tend to think on the worst,

that nothing happened,

that we remember all the

stuff we didn't do right.

But if we have that ability

to go back and see things

that did go right,

the things our kids did.

It's an encouragement too

for both us and our

students that things are happening.

And yes, yeah,

we lived in the state where

standardized testing was required.

My favorite was the Peabody

test because it was oral

and there was no writing required.

And so the testing administrator

it was kind of like a game

show where they asked you questions,

you answer questions.

You had no idea if you got

them right or wrong.

So the way that the tester

ends the test is if the

child gets three in a row wrong,

then they move on to the next subject.

And so they have no idea.

I never told my kids that.

They're probably learning that now.

But but it's it's a little

bit easier of a

standardized test than some

of the other ones.

But yes, depending on states,

there's different

requirements and some

states do allow the

portfolios and replacement

of the standardized tests

and some require both.

it's just, yeah,

you got to know your state laws.

So if you don't know those

contact your state organization.

Yeah.

That's,

I was going to think we do need to

share with the audience how

they can find out this information.

So, you know,

they're not out in the field.

We'll put a link up to the

homeschool legal defense

association because you can
find all of the state laws
on their website too.

And so that would be helpful for you to,
to find that there.

But yes, it,
assessments,
they may just seem like
they're just a lot of waste of time,
especially if they're not required.

But I have to say, you know,
even though I pretty much
knew what was going to be
where my kids were going to
fall for the evaluations,
it still gave me a peace of mind.
that I was making progress,
even though I kind of knew
I was making progress,
but I tend to be the one to
be thinking I'm, I didn't do enough.

And so that is helpful.

Yes.

Yeah.

But it doesn't hurt to do it.

And you know, you just,
it's a basically a day or a
couple of days,
depending on how you do it

and right behind you and move on.

So don't attach too much significance,
but it could be a useful
tool in the evaluation process.

Yeah, absolutely.

So, and also to help you celebrate.

What are some ways or, you know,
criteria or questions that
parents can kind of think
over so that they can put
whether it's a whole year or
just a time block in
perspective so that they
can take the good out of it too.

And I think we didn't do right.

As we do, you know, it's okay to, you know,
to look at things that were difficult.

Certainly,
certainly the challenging things
we can analyze those,
but we want to analyze both
sides of things.

I always say capitalize on
those strengths that you have.

But as we go along in this evaluation,
like you said,
whether it's the end of the year,
middle of the road or whatever,

you can look at your materials and just kind of think about what curriculum you're using and think about what worked well. you know, what, what things seem to really click, you know, and then figure out and just pause and think, why did that work or not work?

And, um, that's going to help you in the future to make a choice for your next thing.

Of course, if you have something that works well, um,

You know, you probably have found something that works with your child's learning style and their abilities and it's well matched for them.

So, you know, that you want to capitalize on that. Like I said, you might think about like a curriculum might be good, but it may not foster

independence from you.

And as moms with a couple of
kids or even one kid,
the homeschooling can
really stretch you and your time,
depending on what you have
in your schedule, how busy you are.

Sometimes some curriculum
needs more of your
direction and others can be
a little more self-directed.

And really,
there's a lot of options or
ways to adapt to help our
kids have a little independence.

I know as mine got older,
Alyssa got older in particular,
she didn't.

want me directing every
little thing so give them
some of that it would
relieve you of some you
know give free up some of
your time if there's a way
that you can find a
curriculum that you know
begins to foster some
independent learning right

at whatever level you're at
so um that's one thing kind
of additionally to think
about when you're picking a curriculum um
So, so, you know,
when you can find something
where you might just need to be near,
but not necessarily hand over hand,
because there's some pretty much always,
but also things like preparation time.

If you've got a busy
schedule and this
curriculum may be a great curriculum,
but boy,
does it have a lot of upfront prep time.
it may not be right for you
depending on your life at the moment.

Right.

Exactly.

Yeah.

If you, if,
if you're in like a situation
where you don't have a lot
of prep time or where, you know,
maybe your life has a lot
of twists and turns,
let's say to put it mildly,
try to prepare things over the summer.

Like look through your

curriculum and see like
what needs to be prepared
each week and kind of try
to get a jump on that in
the summertime and get it
set up and put in folders
or on the computer or
whatever the case may be.

But if you can do that,
then you're not going to be
falling behind as easily
when life... Right.

Or skipping a lesson because
you don't have everything
that you need for it.

Yeah.

I remember being... Yeah.

I mean,
in the middle of my homeschooling career,
I was diagnosed with MS and
my physical condition was really bad.

And that was totally unexpected.

And I just didn't have the
energy to do all that.

So it helped that I had prepared
some things ahead of time
and could rely on that to
keep it going when I had

days when I couldn't get off a couch.

So things happen.

We just don't expect that.

But another question we
might ask is how could we

adapt these materials
better for our child's needs?

Or we may need to use them
differently than they are recommending.

Because we know our child,
we're the expert on our
kiddos and we know what they need.

So it's okay to do that.

You know, take that liberty.

That's why we homeschool.

So we can teach them the way
they need to learn.

So that's, you know,
you may need to break up
lessons into smaller chunks or, you know,
just space them out.

If you have a child who can't write,
you need to find another way
for them to a creative way
for them to show what they know.

And there's lots of things
there you can think about.

Also,

you want to think about like the mix

of the different materials you're using.

So some things for your

child will be more

challenging than others.

And kids need to feel like

they're succeeding at something.

If everything is a challenge.

Well, I mean, we do too, even as teaching.

If everything is just so difficult,

we don't,

we're not motivated to continue on.

So exactly.

Of course we need to challenge them.

You know, there's, there's this,

we want to push them to the next level,

but we need to have a, a,

um a pace that we can say we

have achieved something

here you know and so we

might have you know one

subject that's going to

always be challenging you

know and then find some

balance in that so there's

something else your child

feels very successful at

and um so try to think

about that as you um

as you evaluate what went on
in your schoolwork,
does your child feel like
they have some victories?

You know, and,
and also like homeschooling
isn't just academics, right?

It's a lifestyle.

So have you excluded the
lifestyle part by just an
over-focus on academics?

The lifestyle part I think puts,
Makes it interesting, makes it fun.

And that's where the life
skills usually come in.

Our kids are watching us.

They're learning.

And it's just part of the
curriculum that we didn't plan.

That's right.

Yeah,

it could be things around the house
that they are learning to do,
skills they learn for home living.

It could be some kind of volunteer things.

You know, it could be helping the neighbor,
whatever.

But those are important.

for building the character of your child.

And don't think our children
who have special needs and
abilities don't need those
experiences where they are
giving to other people.

So yeah,

I've been guilty of that where I
get to in a very kind of a tunnel vision.

for what, you know,

we got to get this done, you know,

and forget about those

other experiences that

build our children.

Well,

and that's where these questions that

you just gave us, which are amazing,

help us to evaluate.

Not so much to bring us down,

but to help us then learn

from what we've done previously and go,

how can we make this even

better next year?

And I think if we go into it

with that perspective is

that we're always improving.

We're always getting better.

And I agree.

I just remember, you know,

seeing those moms who have
homeschooled for a while and thinking, oh,
they got it all together.

And I was waiting for that
time when I would have it
all together and I never quite got there.

But I got better at it every year.

I'm sorry.

We can use our evaluation
time to think about our
child kind of as the
individual and where
they're at developmentally.

it's not all just the
curriculum that we're
looking at and evaluating.

We want to know,
think about and celebrate
any achievements they've made,
any milestones or new
skills they learned.

That, you know, that,
that really boosts our
motivation to continue when we do that.

And we want to.

Yeah.

Oh, absolutely.

And we think as moms,
how can we nurture what's begun?

you know,
in this child and to keep that
ball rolling.

And we also like to look at
the interests of our children.

You know,
they might express an interest in,
I don't know,
playing the piano or building with Legos.

You know,
there's a lot of educational
things we can do with some
of the toy-based learning,
but or building something or, you know,
it could be anything.

but if our child expresses an interest,
have we given them an
opportunity to try it, you know,
to see if that's really
something they can take
hold of and to explore it.

So,
and older children can give you input
in that,
but sometimes I might hear my
child say something like that, but again,
I sort of have my little
agenda and it might fall by the wayside.

So,
That's why when we evaluate, we can say,
yeah,
so maybe it'll come back to mind and
we can say, oh,
this year I really do want
to give that opportunity.

Right.

And it's so good to do that
when they're younger,
that they get to try things out,
because making those
decisions and trying those
things out as they get
older gets more challenging.
expensive.

It requires more,
more time away from things that are, they,
they just have more things
going on too in their lives.

And it's harder to find that time.

So trying lots of stuff and saying, well,
you know, that was a good experiment.

Didn't work.

It wasn't rough.

Wasn't for us or wow.

I can't believe you enjoyed that so much.

I, you know,

I've heard from so many parents that

they've delved into things
that they never thought
would stick with their kids.

And they did,
or they thought their kids
thought they would love it,
or the parents thought they
would love it.

And then they walked away and went, Oh,
no.

Well,
that's what I've always heard is kind
of at the younger ages,
let them try a whole variety of things.
You don't need to go deep
into it and become experts at that age.
It's a matter of like
letting them try different things.

And then

As they grow older, you know,
they'll kind of some will
fall by the wayside and
they'll deepen their
interest in something.

So, yes, find their passion.

My daughter was one of those weird ones,
though.

And because I taught her how

to sew like when she was really young,
maybe five or six.

And she, she wanted to sew all the time.

Then all of a sudden the
sewing machine disappeared.

And at about 14,
it came back out of the closet and it,
she couldn't put the thing away.

She started making her own
clothes and I was like,
where did this come from?

And so, yeah, just, you know,
sometimes you just don't know.

You're planting seeds.

I think that's,
that's a good way to look at it.

And you just don't know
which ones are going to pop
up when something might hibernate.

Yeah.

I don't know.

That's a good point.

Yeah.

That's a cool story though.

I like, that's neat.

So we also kind of,

I think one more thing
about just evaluating where
our children are at, like, because,

you know,
we have to deal with behavioral
issues sometimes that
might stem from a disability
or it might not.
It just might be part of everyday life.

But, you know,
because typical kids have
behavioral issues.

But you kind of do have to
look back over your year or
whatever time frame you're
doing this and say,
how are those issues
affecting the learning?
How do they affect the homeschooling?
Are you always butting heads, you know,
with your childhood?

Are there character issues
that need to be addressed
more than academic issues?

Or what emotional needs are
bringing this behavior?

So we might think about,
do we need to modify our
environment to make it more
advantageous for our child?

Are they overstimulated, understimulated?

Did the pace that you're keeping cause...

these behavioral issues,

you have to kind of look at

all these little things.

Sometimes just slowing down

will reduce stress and,

and the behavior will settle.

Sometimes not, but yeah.

And then, you know,

we get to the end of all

that evaluation and we

think about whether we need

to continue with the same materials or,

you know, move on to something new.

We,

If you haven't finished a book,

nothing wrong with keeping

on in the next year.

You've paid for that book.

You might as well use it all.

Just because it says, you know,

fourth grade on the book

cover doesn't mean you

can't continue to use it

into the next year if it worked well.

If it didn't work well,

you can choose something else.

But anyways.

Yeah, no, those are all really,

really good because there's
just so much to sort
through and think through.
And, you know,
I'm hoping that as people
are listening or watching
right now that they've been
processing a lot of the
questions you've been
giving us because it's
important that we think
through and we don't just
keep charging ahead because we're

The problem is then we think
about it afterwards and we
don't think about it in a
good perspective.

It's like this rushed, fearful,
anxiety-driven thoughts
that tend to take us places
that aren't going to be
productive in planning when
we can take the time, we can step back,
we can evaluate with a
peace of mind and then know
that this is all moving us
in the right direction when
we assess it from the right perspective.

So as far as like organizing, I know,
you know,
I've always started out my years
so organized and then
things fall into disarray.
It's kind of like my house.
You know,
everything on the outside looks
really nice.
It just don't look behind
any covered doors in my house.
Don't open that one.
People have those glass
covered doors and I'm like,
I don't know about that.
Yeah.
So, well,
this is a natural time to sort of
organize and put away some
old stuff and then prepare
what you're having going to
do the next year.
I think people wonder if
they need to keep
everything they've ever
done throughout the year.
And I would say, no, you don't.
You're going to have a lot.
Even if it's on the computer,

you don't need to keep everything.

Well,

thinking back to your portfolio you

showed,

if that was a year's worth and it

was that thin, yes, definitely.

I'm sure you did way more

than that in that year.

This is true.

But I saved basically a couple of samples.

when,

when my kids were really young and

they did like little art

projects and things like that, I would,

you know,

put those into a notebook sometimes.

You can just reorganize your things,

throw away some of your things,

take pictures if you're

really feeling attached to it.

Yes.

Organize your stuff on the computer.

Your files,

maybe they're kind of a scattered and

you can sit,

this might be a good time

where you have some time to

sit and rearrange things on

your computer.

It's hard to keep track of

all those things.

Whatever we have stored is, well,

I like the saying that whatever you have,

whatever you own, owns you.

So that includes the files that we keep.

We don't want to keep moving

these and organizing them and all that.

But

take some artwork, frame it,

hang it on the walls and

then let the rest go at some point,

take pictures of them and

also organize your goals

for the next year,

not just your physical materials,

but you know,

you're going to think about

what is coming next.

That's a natural thing once

you've done an evaluation

and you're going to think

about what materials to use, you know,

what,

extracurricular types of

activities you want to

incorporate and the pace of your work.

Absolutely.

I'm always overly ambitious,
putting too many things in,
but then reality will hit
at some point and I'll
evaluate and pare it back a little bit.

Right.

Think about what you might
need to drop some things
from your schedule to make
your life more easy.

Right.

And restful.

So some people write their goals down.

Other people don't.

I think it's okay either way.

I was forced to in
Pennsylvania to turn that
into the school district.

But I didn't always do that.

It might have been a little
more in my head.

But that's a good time to
just look at your goals and
begin preparing for the next year.

Yeah.

Yeah,

some people have homeschool IEPs and
whether they fill in the

goal section or not, that's up to them.

Some people really,
they're very much like to
have a plan based on some
specific goals that they're
trying to reach.

And so that makes sense to do that.

It's also a good time as
you're thinking about the
next year to think about if
you need some kind of
outside help for a particular issue.
you're dealing with with your child,
maybe you suspect there's
some diagnosis or if there
are behavioral issues that
you're really struggling to
get a hold of.

An outside person might be
able to help you with that
and give you a new strategy
to try so that you don't
start out the new year with

I think we have a little lag
here with Annie,
but hopefully she'll catch up soon.

Might have to have a repeat
what she was saying,
and hopefully her pitch

will come back soon.

But yes.

getting help,

having a team so vitally important.

And we talked about that a

lot on the show.

And so if you feel like you do need help,

definitely be considering

that reaching out to people,

asking who's available,

who's got some expertise in this area.

And if you don't know,

it looks like Annie popped

off for a little while here.

If you don't know anybody,

definitely look through our

YouTube channel because

on the Empowering Homeschool

Conversations channel,

you can do a search on

particular topics on our

channel and then find an

expert I did an interview with.

See if they're available to

provide you some resources

or help you out

specifically in that area.

So just some ways to

consider getting some extra help.

And since we are recording this,

I'm going to just stop

talking and we'll stop at

22 or 42 and see if Annie pops back.

Well, can you hear me now?

Sorry, I had muted myself.

After we're done,

I can splice this section out.

That's a little bizarre.

Yeah, that's weird.

Oh, well.

So, okay.

Well,

I think we were at a natural break at

least.

Yeah.

So I'll, I'll bring it back in since I,

yeah,

I added something in about having a

team and, and all of that.

And so, so yeah,

so we'll go from 42 to 47.

Okay.

Thanks for bearing with that.

I'm not sure what was going on there.

Yeah, no.

So we got Annie back.

And I think my next question is about,

you know, how do we celebrate?

I think a lot of times we're like, oh,

you know,

our child's made an accomplishment.

Do we make a big deal about it?

Do we not make a big deal?

What are some ways we can

celebrate different

milestones or when we see

progress in kind of the

right context with our child?

Yeah, I am.

I'm a big fan of fun.

And I like celebrations.

I like to do them throughout

the school year, actually.

But especially at the end of the year,

you and your child or

children have worked hard.

And it's a big deal to get

to the end of that.

And you don't want to just

run past that achievement

without recognizing what's been done.

in the Bible,

God routinely told his people

to celebrate different

events and things that he

had done for them.

So I think we can take a
page from that chapter and, and say,
that's good for us too.

So I think I think it should
be a family tradition that
at the end of every school year,
you do something special.

And that
you know, the sky's the limit,
however you want to do that.

Some people will, you know,
have a big family dinner
together that's got special
food and things like that.

Some people like have a big
ice cream party.

Some do like a co-op celebration.

I know with a group that I
had started years ago,
we would always have an end
of the year celebration
with our friends and

And so it could be all kinds
of ways that you do that.

But I think some of the things that, oh,

I want to say too,

it's great to invite your
extended family or friends, grandparents,

because they, you know,
some of them are skeptical or not,
but either way it's, it's,
they'll see what your
child's achieved too.

So it will just be a moment for them to,
enter into that celebration,
but you could definitely
honor each child with some,
find something they've
achieved and honor them
either just by telling about it,
taking a minute to, you know,
just say some words of
affirmation or you might
make a little certificate
or something like that
about certain achievements.

You might,
give them an opportunity to
show something that they've done.

Could be like a talent show
that each child will do something.

And talent shows aren't just like,
let's sing a song or whatever.

They're going to show,
like your daughter sewed things.

Maybe she's going to show

some of her handiwork.

Fashion show or something, yes.

It could be things like that.

They might play a musical instrument,

but just make that a

special time where they're honored.

And it's not a bad idea.

I know it seems a little self-serving,

but to allow,

like encourage them to honor

you and the work that you've done,

you know,

that gives them an understanding

that someone is sacrificing

for them and help them

to develop an understanding

and appreciation for their moms.

You know, so maybe it's,

maybe there's a dad that's gonna,

you know, take the time to do that,

to say those words or some other way,

but it's not a bad idea to do that.

Some people will, you know,

go out and do something special, maybe,

you know, just a

And some will go like a

weekend trip to the beach,

something like that would

be a great way to end if

you have a beach nearby.

I think one of the most important elements of that celebration is to thank God because it's through his blessing and his equipping that you've been able to homeschool and that your children are learning and achieving something.

And just make sure that he's like the one who's getting the glory for what's happening in your home.

And, you know, that just teaches your children to rely on him for wisdom and guidance and encouragement and help.

Yeah.

all of these kinds of traditions just bond you together and it's fun too.

So suggestions you, you will come up.

If you start thinking about it, you'll come up with many more, I'm sure.

Yeah.

And it is very family specific,

child specific as to what you consider a,

a,

celebration I know even my

kids they all wanted

different things for

graduation um it was not

the same I only one had a

graduation party and that

was kind of last minute

because he's like oh yeah

probably but you know it's

just yeah you just okay

we'll just take the

celebration however they

want you know one just

wanted a dinner at the end

of his all of his high school stuff

like okay just family dinner

that's that's fine that was

good the older children

definitely can have input

um and and the younger ones

may have some ideas some

might be wild but right

exactly we may have to tone

it down a little bit

instead of ramping up but

but all good definitely for

sure um um so once we do an

evaluation of the previous
year close the books um summer
are they learning during the summer?

Let's talk about that a little bit,
because I think we think, oh, well,
you know, school's put away,
so learning has shut down.

Right.

There we are.

Oh, praise the Lord.

Oh, yeah.

There's so many things our
kids can be doing over the summer.

And it doesn't need to all
be programmed by you.

That's the thing about it.

Our kids need time to just
let their brains rest.

Let what they've learned
over the last months percolate,

I call it.

And just, you know, let...

It's a time for them to be bored sometimes,
a time for them to figure
some things out on their own.

You don't have to hover over
them with what's going on in their lives.

It's a time to sort of

provide some materials and
turn them loose.

So we talked about some
other things you can do over the summer,
like teaching some home
living skills that maybe
you don't feel like you
have time to do during
the school year because of
the academic schedule or
other things on your schedule.

I do encourage people to
really limit the electronics.

You know,
you know how quickly when you
pull out your phone,
it can be that like a
couple hours goes past.

Well,
the whole summer can go by like that
for your kids if they have phones.

You know,
they start when they wake up in
the morning and
boom, the day is gone.

So I think it's really
important to not fill their
brains with that easy kind
of games or whatever.

Let them figure out how to
entertain themselves in the
summertime and socialize with people,
have friends over,
go do stuff out in the world,
teach them how to
But plan meals, how to shop on a budget,
just the normal things you're doing,
how to do new chores so
that the next school year
they can take over that,
something like that.

But even things like if your
child does camps or some
might learn to play and
then take some lessons,
like some musical lessons
or something like that to
see if there's an interest
over the summer.

You know,
there's all kinds of things that
libraries to do that are free often.

You could go out into nature
and each one has a little
journal that they sketch or
write about what they're observing.

You know, make scrapbooks.

It's good.

I've been at Good News Camp all week.

Oh, yeah.

You know,

go out in the world and enjoy it.

Hiking, camping, join a bowling league.

make a garden, build something.

Those are,

those are some cool things for

kids to do in the summer,

families to do together,

to just bond you together as a family.

I also encourage moms to

take a little time to

recharge their own batteries.

Absolutely.

You know,

read a book for no reason

whatsoever if that's your

thing learn a new craft uh

you know have someone over

for coffee and just sit and

chat a little bit adult

conversation bible study

for the summer only you

know where you could you

might be able to go out to

do that or even some of

them are online now so

right yeah clean out your
closets that may seem like
work but that's kind of
refreshing to get it done.

Yes.

You can get an information overload of,
yeah,
how much stuff you own and all the
choices you have to make.

So, but yes, you know,
what really stood out to me
as you were saying those
things is those are all
short-term things.

School,

the school year seems like so long.

And so in the summer,
we have those little bits of learning,
you know, kind of places where we're
we're just dabbling and trying things out.

It doesn't feel so heavy.

And it's where you can do
this lighter side of
learning that really isn't lesser.

It just, it doesn't,
it's not all the stuff that we're like,
you know, day by day by day,
trying to create

proficiency and all those other things.

But in the end,

we're creating neural
pathways that all of those
things that we are working
on during the year need.

And we forget how necessary
all of that type of
learning is to make everything else.

That's so true.

And it's just sort of as a
final thought on the summer.

We work really hard as
homeschooling moms and any
homeschooling mom works hard.

But if you have children
with the special needs and abilities,
you can get weary.

And there's nothing wrong
with just taking a break from everything.

Just do that.

Do what you need to do
because this journey is,
it's for the long haul.

This isn't a quick weekend trip somewhere.

This is years you're
investing and you need to
rest along the way.

And don't feel like

everything has to be productive, you know,
because like you said,
some of these things that
don't feel productive
actually are productive for
what's coming next,
developing things in your
child's mind and all of that.

So just take the summer.

If you just say, oh, I'm, yeah,
then take the time you need
so that you can approach the new year
with that fresh attitude and excitement,
knowing that you have the
strength for the next leg of the journey.

Absolutely.

Yes.

Yeah.

That is so important.

Yeah.

And you do such a good job, Annie,
of encouraging moms and parents.

Can you talk a little bit
about your website and what
people can find there too?

Yeah.

So at my website,

I have a blog and every

other week there'll be a
post there that just really helps you to
perceive God in the midst of
your wild and crazy life,
whatever that looks like.

Yeah.

Gives you a little food for
thought and a little
encouragement for your spirit.

I like to be very real with people.

This isn't a show for me.

I think we do best when we're transparent.

I also have, as you mentioned earlier,
the book that I wrote, um,
that was published last year, um,
from ignorance to bliss.

And I think that's
encouraging for any parent, um,
but especially those with
kids with special needs,
because God is always at work, um,
through these situations.

And, um, when you can see what he's doing,
it's amazing.

And then, um, I'm also, uh,
so excited.

I really haven't put out too
much about this,
but I am publishing this fall.

Um, my next book is coming out.

It's a Christmas devotional

and you may recall Peggy.

I love Christmas.

Yes.

Yes.

We've talked about that.

Yes.

We've had an interview.

So if you want to search that,

look back on the past interviews,

that's going to come out

right at the beginning of November,

just in time for that season.

And, um,

I hope people will really enjoy that.

It'll be something you can

read with your families.

And I'm also putting out a

series of videos to kind of

deepen the experience for each devotion.

So I'm really looking forward to that.

So you can sign up at my

website and then you'll be

able to keep tabs on that.

If you're a big Christmas person too,

you're going to enjoy this devotional.

Awesome.

Yes, and that's AnnieYorty.com.

The hyperlink will be in the show notes,
so you can just click on that.

But then information about
your book is all on your website, too.

So you can find everything there.

and he does and is doing, um, on there.

So that's exciting.

Do you have,

you have a newsletter that goes out?

I send out a quarterly newsletter, um,

to just give you some

updates and some fun things,

recipes and things like that.

And also, um,

you can find my work at

crosswalk.com pretty regularly.

I do a fair number of homeschool, um,

blogs there and, um,

other devotions and things

like that are over there too.

Yeah.

Yeah.

And Annie just did an interview.

You just did one on marriage and in that.

And then you've got another

one coming up on writing.

Yeah, that's going to be interesting, too.

So, yeah, lots, lots going on.

So, well, thank you so much.

This has been a great topic.

Really good to address

during the summer months

when we're all kind of.

thinking behind, thinking forward,

and it's good to put our

thinking in the right place.

For sure.

And you did that.

Move on.

Exactly.

Yes.

So good.

All right.

Thanks for having me.

Yeah.

Yes.

Thank you for sharing.

I appreciate you addressing this topic.

It's one that I don't think

we've done and we have, it's been a long,

long time.

So, so yes.

Yes.

But, um,

the next episode that we'll be

playing after this one is

tailoring success,
crafting effective
educational therapy for
homeschooled students.

And that will be hosted by
Stephanie Buckwalter.

So, um,
she's actually interviewing her
daughter's OT.

So, um, they've got some,
some great things to tell you about that.

And so you'll want to, um,
join in for that one, but, um,

Thank you so much, Annie.

I appreciate you as a
co-host and also as a guest.

It's always fun to interview
you and hear all your great ideas.

So thank you.

Absolutely.

And thank you all for joining us.

Have a great week.

God bless.

And we'll see you here next
time on Empowering
Homeschool Conversations.

Bye, everyone.

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