

- Speaker 1: [00:00](#) Welcome to the old fashioned on purpose podcast. Today's episode is all about how we are raising our kids like it's 1955 and we're going to dive into how Christian and I have kind of accidentally stumbled into raising pretty old fashioned kids in this very modern world. Now this has actually been a bit of a hot topic when I have shared these sentiments on my Facebook page and blog and it's actually even stirred up a bit of controversy, believe it or not. So I'm excited to hear what you think after you listen to this episode. I'm your host Jill Winger, and for the last 10 years I've been helping people just like you learn how to leave the rat race and create the life you really want by growing your own food and mastering old fashioned skills. Okay, so before we dive into this topic, I have to preface it by saying I am not a mommy blogger and I'm about as far as you can possibly be from the person who is giving out advice about parenting online.
- Speaker 1: [01:17](#) That's just not me. I don't have amazing birthday parties for my children. I don't make the cool snacks. Our craft time consists of a box of pipe cleaners and maybe a few cotton balls in our school cabinet that they are welcome to use of their own accord. But I generally don't create craft times for them. So I am not the type of mom who usually has wonderful revolutionary ideas on keeping your children occupied. That's just not me. It's never been my space or really what I have felt qualified to share on. However, recently, over the past few months, maybe even up to a year, I have noticed that I've had some posts on my prairie homestead Facebook page and Instagram pages that have received more attention than other posts, more comments, more likes, more shares, and almost always these posts are related to my kids doing kind of unorthodox activities for your average child in 2019.
- Speaker 1: [02:34](#) Now for some of you, these aren't unorthodox at all because these photos and posts on social media that I've been sharing show pictures of my children jumping off our manure pile, playing with giant appliance boxes and turning it into rocket ships and pretend log cabins. And one that got the most engagement was actually a photo of three children, backpacks in tow, traipsing out across our pasture to have a picnic. And that day it was a really pretty summer afternoon. They asked if I could pack them tuna fish sandwiches so they could have an adventure. So I put it all in their backpack and off they went. So to some folks in our very modern society, those things look a little bizarre, right? Cause we're not used to seeing kids do that. Whereas, you know, older generations will recognize those activities as really the basis of childhood. But anyway, it's generated a lot of discussion.

Speaker 1: [03:39](#) And first off, let me say that none of that was on purpose. I didn't set out to be an advocate for what some call free range childhood. It really came out of necessity. When Christian and I bought our homestead property back in 2008 originally, we loved the idea of raising our future children here because we didn't have kids at that point. We were still newlyweds. Now, that being said, I really had zero preconceived notions of what that would actually look like other than I knew our kids would be outside with us, you know, participating with animals and homestead life and all of that good stuff. Now once the kids started coming along, really it just felt natural to have them outside with us. You know, right from the beginning when Mesa, our oldest was a newborn, I would bundle her up in her snow suits sticker in our big jogging stroller that has these big bumpy tires so it can go over rough terrain and she just kind of had to go outside with us because we didn't have a lot of babysitters and that was our only option.

Speaker 1: [04:54](#) We also have really busy lives with a lot of moving parts, so most of the time it's actually easier to pack our kids along with us than trying to arrange childcare, especially living out as far as we do now. That trend is continued with our subsequent children. I have a picture of Bridger, our middle child. I had him snuggled into our stroller at only five days old so he could go out to the barn with me to check on stuff. And Sage our third born, she's three and she's really been doing everything she possibly can to keep up with her older siblings since day one. So that's just kinda been what we did by default. And as much as I'd like to say we were super intentional and created and crafted this magical childhood for them. It really was just more, you know, just getting the job done throughout the day.

Speaker 1: [05:52](#) Now that they're a little bit older, Mesa is now nine. Things have shifted a little bit and it's less about me, you know, packing them along while I do the chores and more about them doing the chores for me, which is pretty darn awesome if you have older children. I know you can relate to that. But you know, after they get their chores done, they've really become quite self entertained. So you know, we do our homeschool in the mornings or in the summertime we have them do their chores sets each morning and then they're kind of on their own. And I give them a lot of free time. Again, less about me doing it on purpose at the beginning and more about just needing, you know, I have other things to do. I'm cooking, I'm running businesses, you know, we're in the garden and I can't entertain them 24 seven now.

Speaker 1: [06:43](#) Honestly, when we started having children and they started growing and I started seeing what other moms around me were doing, it used to bother me a little bit that we weren't able to partake in more activities. And I bet you may relate to this, if you live rurally with children, there's kind of this tension that comes with loving the rural life and the freedom it creates for your family, but also kind of having this feeling sometimes that maybe you're not doing enough. And with US living about 35 40 miles from town, that limits greatly the amount of play dates or lessons or structured kid activities that we can really participate in because it's kind of an all day thing. By the time we get to town, do the activity, run any other errands, you know, that's at least we'll say a half a day that is gone just for a one lesson or one, one hour event.

Speaker 1: [07:48](#) So we have to really limit that. So it kind of bothered me for awhile. I would get into the comparison trap, right? And start to look at other people and say, oh my gosh, I'm failing. I'm not doing enough. But as I've matured a little as a mom and my kids have gotten older and I've started to see a little bit of the fruits of our labor, I'm starting to actually realize that the sort of unstructured childhood that we have accidentally created here on the homestead is actually a really positive thing. Now, some of you might be going, Duh, like we knew that, but it was reassuring for me as a mom, and I know some of you need to hear this, to know that it was not just time devoid of activities, but it was actually beneficial, right? Beneficial for my children to have this unstructured time.

Speaker 1: [08:43](#) And I kind of started to understand the scientific benefits cause there are actual research studies that back up this idea that this old fashioned sort of childhood is more important than we may think. So I see these articles come through different news sites and social media and I kind of have this habit of collecting them. So here's just a few of the things I've noticed over the last year or so. There's a study or an article in the New England Journal of Medicine that actually observed a link between Amish farming communities and a reduced occurrence of asthma, which I thought was pretty interesting. There's another study that shows that a rural childhood with exposure to animals and dust Hallelujah can boost the immune system and actually reduce the occurrence of some mental illness. There was another article in The Washington Post that highlights the increase of childhood balance issues. I guess this is actually a phenomenon they're seeing, where children are having trouble with balance and that's attributed to lack of movement throughout the day because kids are becoming more and more sedentary.

Speaker 1: [10:04](#) And this article went on to explain that the remedy for this was letting your kids jump and run and roll down hills and you know how kids just flail a lot. Yours do that mine do that is just like arms and legs and elbows just in this tornado all day long, just be in kids, right? That's actually helping them grow properly and get that proper balance in their bodies. So that was fascinating. And then there was another post on the World Economic Forum that encouraged parents wholeheartedly to let their children be bored. Let your children be bored. That's a really important note because it has been shown to actually increase creativity. And I think lack of boredom not to get off on a rabbit trail here is a huge issue in all areas of our society right now. Just with the,, you know, instances of smartphone use on the rise and tablets and iPads and we don't have the opportunity to just sit in a waiting room and think about life or go down the road and look out the window and watch the countryside fly by like we, you know, would have done without a smartphone in our hand.

Speaker 1: [11:19](#) So boredom is actually pretty powerful. So you know, as I'm looking at all these studies and looking at these research pieces, which I will absolutely share in the show notes so you can go check them out for yourself. You know, it's easy to brush off this idea of an old fashioned childhood or children playing in the pond, catching frogs, climbing trees, laying in the backyard, being bored on a summer afternoon. We often think of those activities as things of the past, and we think of them with nostalgia and fond memories, but I think a lot of us don't consider them something that needs to be continued on in our current society. But I'm starting to realize we can't afford to relegate these concepts to the history books. We must continue to perpetuate them and we're going to have to be very intentional with how we do that due to just our technological advances.

Speaker 1: [12:24](#) So all that being said, I am not claiming to have this parenting thing figured out, not by a long shot. I'm still learning. And I really am hesitant to give any sort of parenting advice because, well, my oldest is only nine years old and I am still yet to determine how this whole thing's going to turn out. But I am completely and utterly convinced that one of the most powerful parts of a healthy childhood is unstructured free time. And that's something I'm seeing more and more of a decrease in. As you know, we want our children to be successful. We want them to succeed in life, which is not wrong, but sometimes it's so tempting to plug them into all the activities, all the lessons, all the things, and they're missing out on the opportunity to be bored. Okay, so let's shift a little bit from concept to implementation.

- Speaker 1: [13:27](#) So if you're listening to this and you're thinking, okay, how do I actually make this happen? What does this look like? My best advice period. Go. Here it is laying it out. Number one, kick them out the door and leave them alone. Number two, repeat the next day. Okay, so said that with a little bit tongue in cheek knowing that depending on where you live, you know, dangers do exist, right? There are highways with cars. That's an issue. There are predators. We can't necessarily just let our kids go down the main street five miles away from us on their bikes and go get an ice cream. You know, we have to be mindful of those things depending on your situation and your location. But just really, I wouldn't encourage you to embrace the idea of letting your kids be bored. And we do this by, it's pretty easy for us as mom and dad's, right?
- Speaker 1: [14:28](#) This is not complicated. Just letting them play. We do limit the screens. Now my kids do have a little screen time. They are allowed to watch about an hour of screen time in the afternoons, usually around four o'clock. Now that might shock some of you. But I'm all about balance and we have found that works really well for, they play outside or do their schoolwork or whatever all day long, by four o'clock everyone's usually a little hungry, a little tired and a little grouchy. And it just works well to have that hour of downtime where they watch a movie or do whatever. It also gives me a chance to cook supper. So we do a little screentime, but we do limit it. And I think the biggest piece here is we don't use screens as a cure for boredom. So if my kid comes to me around one o'clock in the afternoon and says, I'm bored, I say, okay, here's a list of things you can go do or create.
- Speaker 1: [15:32](#) And if you don't want to do those, I have some chores for you. And then they usually just disappear very happily and occupy themselves. But if I hear the word I'm bored, it doesn't turn into a license for screens because I want them to learn how to work themselves through that feeling of boredom and come out with something productive or creative or enjoyable on the other side. And this applies to adults too. Don't fear boredom because that's really where creativity is born. It's a good thing. Okay, back to my little list here. Fight the urge to micromanage your kids. You know, this is a tough one because we don't want to see them be frustrated or scrape their knee or squabble and there is a time and place to intervene. But try to let them work it out if possible. And there's been several times, more than several times, frequently I'll be outside doing my garden stuff, working in the yard, ride my horse.

Speaker 1: [16:35](#) The kids will be in the vicinity, there'll be a disagreement, breakout or some sort of problem, you know? And sometimes I have the urge to jump in there and fix it, but if I can remind myself just to stand back, oftentimes they problem solve on their own. And this has been really gratifying to watch, especially as my kids do more chores by themselves. It's so fun to see them solve their own problems. You know, when they can't figure out how to lug the heavy chicken water back into the coop, they get creative and they figure out solutions. Or when a horse gets into the wrong pen, you know, and mom's not there to instantly fix it. They figure out ways to set the gates and get the horse back into the right location. So problem solving, it's Kinda magical and it's really fun to see them figure those things out.

Speaker 1: [17:31](#) Another thing I really tried to do is to teach my kids to wonder and ask questions. I see sometimes a lot of adults and children included, they're not really checked into the world around them. Like the natural world around us is so fantastic. And so I try to really model that for my kids, whether it's in the garden and we're marveling at the seeds coming out of the ground and we talk about why that's happening and how it's happening and how cool it is that the seed just sat in the packet for months and months until we put it in the soil and watered it. Or baby animals, new chicks, you know, just teaching them to really marvel at the world around them is helping them to pay attention to details. It's a great science lesson most of the time and I just think it makes more conscientious adults.

Speaker 1: [18:27](#) Now I want to say a little caveat here cause I don't want anyone to under to misunderstand what I'm putting out here. I am not against having your kids do activities right. There is absolutely in time and place for that. We personally are doing four h this year. Mesa is doing goats and horse four h and we also during the school year do a weekly homeschool co-op where we go like every Thursday into town and have a full day of lessons and socialization and time with other homeschool families. So I think there's an absolute importance to having them be in some sort of structured activities where they can be with their peers, they can learn how to learn and challenge themselves. Those are all wonderful things. But I found that when it comes to the most meaningful activities that we do as a family, my kids light up the most when they have a chance to be a part of something bigger than themselves.

Speaker 1: [19:31](#) And that's like if we're outside working in the yard as a family or we are going to gather cattle as a family or something along those lines, my kids eat up the chance to have a role in

something bigger. Right? So we love the activities that we do, but we also try to keep that balanced with that unstructured free time. And also just being able to be a part of the grownup projects and giving them a little bit more responsibility. And yes, sometimes as a control freak, I cringe a little when I give my kids an assignment and you know, something breaks or they mess up or I tell them to mix the dough on the counter and the flour goes flying and there's a huge mess is the challenge. Do you have to kind of work through that as a parent? Sometimes, but that's where they learn.

Speaker 1: [20:24](#)

And if we never give them those chances, then we're really stifling them as they grow and mature. So one more little thing before we wrap up here. I don't want you to feel bad if you live in the suburbs or in the city because you can still create this sort of childhood no matter where you live, and I've had some people, this is kind of where that controversy comes into play. When I've talked about these concepts online, people get a little upset because they're like, that's great, but you don't know I my situation, I live in an apartment or I live with a tiny backyard. I can't turn my kids out the door and ignore them. It's not safe. And I totally get it. I know that everyone's situation is different, but I wholeheartedly believe you can still create that environment of boredom. Healthy boredom, wonder, asking questions and just letting them have that free time to hunt insects on a summer day or look at the clouds or roll in the grass.

Speaker 1: [21:30](#)

And you can do that. Even if you're at a park, you know, you take your kids to the park, no, you probably can't leave them at the park unsupervised. That would not be appropriate that you can sit back and let them call the shots for a little while. You can kind of be back at a safe distance, make sure everything's good and cool, but let them take the lead and have that unstructured time where they can work out who they are and their passions and leadership skills and all those good things. So all in all, I absolutely don't claim to have this whole parenting thing figured out. There are definitely things I could improve on and shortfalls I have. But as my kids grow, I am 100% convinced in the power of an old fashion childhood because like Mr. Rogers says, good old Mr. Rogers. Play is truly the work of childhood.

Speaker 1: [22:31](#)

So if you're ready to do this whole homestead thing, maybe bring some homestead aspects into your life for either yourself or your children, but you're not quite sure where to start. I'm your girl. I have an entire library of resources I put together for homesteaders, whether you're new or experienced, and you can get complimentary access to this library at

theprairiehomestead.com/grow covers everything from gardening to chickens to cooking and everything in between. And that's all for this episode. Folks. Thanks for listening. Remember to subscribe, and I'd love it if you could leave a quick review over on iTunes and I will see you in the next episode of the old fashion on purpose podcast.