

A few words to my younger self

By [Beverley Paine](#)

As a young mum I wanted a different dynamic to the one I grew up in for my family: I wanted one built on mutual respect that nurtured self esteem and confidence. Having children challenged so many of my assumptions about what was important and necessary in life. I wish I'd known some of the things I know now... Plenty of people tried to offer me sage advice but back then I didn't make time to listen, I was too busy keenly learning from my mistakes!



One thing I've discovered as a parent is that if I don't pay deliberate attention to the relationship side of family life it was going to be mediocre. Making relationships a priority, with regular, positive attention, helps them thrive. Home educating our children makes it a lot easier to be attentive to this need as we have ample time in each day to pause and really listen to each other. Instead of needing to deal with issues at the end of a busy day when we're all tired and cranky we can resolve them as they happen. Living and learning together naturally works to build better relationships.



If I could back in time and have a word in young Beverley's ear, I'd pick a time she was feeling calm and happy, ply her with a warm cuppa and share a few things that worked (rather belatedly) for her older self. I'd say:

♥ It's impossible to separate life and learning: accept that your children are learning so much simply by living busy, constructive, creative and active lives. It is enough. And what works in one area of your lives naturally spills over to helping in others. Unlike what we learned in school, life and learning is actually an integrated process. Segmenting and compartmentalizing are useful, but not necessary, tools we can use to help us navigate our home

educating paths.

♥ Yes, it's important, but nowhere near as important or serious as you think it is... Will it hurt to let it go? There is more time than you think there is. We don't stop learning once we reach adulthood, so there's no need to cram in everything during childhood. Focus on nurturing and enabling your child's quest to explore, experiment, create and discover and the rest will take care of itself.

♥ You are doing okay, and okay is good enough. Truly. It's not perfect, but it doesn't have to be. We're all learners. There is plenty of time to hone your skills; you have the rest of your life. Stop comparing yourself to every school teacher or other home educator you meet!

♥ Listen to the voice of your heart, she knows you. The voice in your head is made up of a million other voices, the ones you've heard as you've grown, insisting that they are right, they know best, telling you what they want or expect you to do or be. Sure, they have something to offer but it's not the whole story. Trust in your own voice.

♥ Everyone is different. We're not, and we can't be, all the same. Get to know who they are. Stop assuming you already do. Get to know who you are. Get to know who your children are. Work out what motivates you, what your needs are, work to meet your needs and help others work to identify theirs. It's okay to ask questions; it's one of the ways people learn.

♥ Laughter is the best medicine: find time and reasons to laugh more. It's more important than we think it is. Make time to have fun. Real fun. Like you did as a kid. Play more. It's healthy. And take the kids outside more often. Create playful outside living rooms, ones that entice you outside. Let its magic do the rest. Be intrepid explorers and have lots of adventures. Let the world *be* your classroom!

♥ Have a go. Hesitate before saying no: listen to the voice of your heart, trust her answer. Support her need to stretch and grow gently, at her own pace, in ways that meet her needs. Build support networks and structures that enable, empower and encourage. Don't feel the need to say "yes" all the time either. It's okay to say "no".



♥ Be still several moments a day. Be still by yourself, be still with each of your children, be still with your whole family, and make time to be still with your friends. Hold that space sacred between you; let the stillness heal the wounds between you. And hug, hug often and for longer.

♥ Use words mindfully: language matters. Pause and ask yourself if your meaning is clear, your motive kind. Does it need to be said? Will it help? Do your words build toward a solution; are they helpful, positive, constructive words? Do your words show that you are listening attentively? And listen to yourself: you are wiser than you think. Your questions often hold the answers you seek. Nothing is more missing in education today than the ability to listen attentively. It's an amazing gift: develop, share and give it.

♥ In the end it is the moments that matter most: a collection of moments spanning a lifetime. Sharing those moments with people we love, loving and laughing and playing and learning together, is what we cherish and remember. So, hold onto those moments, don't wish them away in a hurry to be somewhere or do something else. Connect with yourself and each other in each and every moment.

I'm sure younger Beverley would nod kindly, and probably take a few notes in a crumpled notebook, to be read later. She'd create a few goals and put them on a shelf in her mind, because that's what she does. And then she'll rush off, driven by indoctrination and her conditioned habits to try to be the 'best she can be', to 'fulfill her potential', to be 'successful' and to give her kids the 'best education possible', looking over her shoulder to see how she compares against all the other home educating mums. She'll get there eventually.



♥ My awesome family! ♥