

You know that question you always get, especially near the holidays. When are you finishing schoolwork for the year? It's so common, right?

Oh, absolutely. Everyone's thinking about wrapping things up.

Exactly. But imagine hearing this answer from an unschooling family. Finishing.

Um, we haven't even started.

Huh. Yeah, that would definitely make you pause.

It really would. Now, hold on. Before anyone thinks, oh, and schoolers, they're lazy. They do nothing. We need to be super clear,

right? That's a big misconception. The family we're looking at today really stresses this that they are always learning. It's just well it's not school work in the way most people picture it.

It's a totally different framework for education. And that's really what we want to uh get into today.

Yeah.

This deep dive is all about how an unschooling year isn't locked into some, you know, rigid artificial schedule. Instead, it just sort of flows and es. It has its own natural rhythm constantly adapting to life itself.

And for this deep dive, Our source is uh the changing seasons of the unschooling year stories of an unschooling family. We also looked at the online discussions around it too, which is great because you get those firsthand perspectives.

Exactly. It gives us a real look into what actually shapes these uh these seasons of learning for them and how learning really does follow life, not the other way around.

So, let's go back to that first story, the friend asking about finishing up before Christmas.

It really throws the difference into sharp relief. doesn't it? You know, the usual mindset is all about tying up the terms, loose ends,

got to get it done,

check the boxes, finish the assignments, clear the desk for the holidays.

Yeah. But this unschooling family, they talk about it as just slowing down in a natural way as Christmas gets closer. There's no big rush, no finish line they have to cross.

And what's really fascinating there is,

well, for them, the whole idea of school work is this separate thing you have to finish before a break. It just

it doesn't really exist in the same way. Learning is happening all the time, woven into life. So there's nothing specific to finish before a holiday.

Their learning year, as they put it, it just isn't the same from January to December.

It constantly adjusts

constantly based on what's actually going on their lives, that fluidity is key.

Okay, let's unpack that a bit then. If it's not driven by a calendar or curriculum, what does shape their days? What influences these seasons they talk about? Right. Good question. Because it's not random. Exactly. They talk about a whole bunch of factors that naturally guide their activities and what they're focusing on. It shows how learning is just part of living.

Okay.

So, for instance, something as simple as the weather.

Ah, right. They mentioned that beautiful sunny days are perfect for, you know, picnics, nature walks,

trips to the beach, outdoor sports, basically getting outside and engaging with the world physically.

Yeah. And hearing that, it makes you think, doesn't it? How often do we, even as adults, just ignore a beautiful day because we're stuck inside with scheduled tasks.

Absolutely. It's a different way of prioritizing. And then the flip side, cold winter days.

Exactly. That's when the focus naturally shifts indoors. Maybe it's more uh what we might call formal learning or maybe getting into computer stuff, coding, research because the sun isn't calling them outside.

Precisely. The environment itself suggests the activity. It makes sense really.

And it's not just the external environment, right? It's also about their internal state. like health and energy.

Oh, definitely. They describe days when they're feeling healthy and energetic as times to um run along rabbit trails.

Me, too.

Just following interest, delighting in new discoveries, really diving deep into things that catch their attention.

But then if someone's sick or just really tired,
then the priority shifts.

Yeah.

It's not about pushing through some required lessons plan. It's about rest.

So, quiet reading, maybe watching DVDs

or even just sleeping. It really highlights how important self-regulation is in this approach. You listen to your body's needs. You don't force learning when you need rest.

That seems so sensible. And beyond those sort of natural rhythms of weather and body, family life itself plays a big part.

Huge. They mention specific needs like uh having babies and toddlers around. Obviously, their needs come first,

of course,

and then life just happens. You know, unexpected things come up. They mentioned bush fires as an example.

Oh yeah.

Which obviously throw everything off track. And in those times, you just have to go with the flow, as they say, until things calm down again. You adapt.

It really is about integrating learning with the reality of life, curveballs and all. But I wonder, does this complete flexibility mean there's never any kind of external structure? What about things that do happen on a schedule?

That's a really important point. It's not like they live in a bubble completely detached from the outside world's timelines,

right?

They mentioned some activities do line up with official terms. for example, uh outside music lessons.

Oh, okay.

August is always the month for music exams for them. So, naturally leading up to that

there's more pract

exactly extra practice for piano and singing, especially before a concert or the exams. So, you see that blend. The interest is internal, but there's an external structure they engage with.

That makes sense. And they also intentionally take on bigger projects sometimes, right? Like uh Nanorimo.

Yes. National novel writing month. They do that every April and November.

So, that provides specific time frame, a challenge they embrace for intense creative work. It's not imposed but chosen.

Precisely. And their other rhythms, too. They mentioned how the liturgical year, the church calendar, and their own family celebrations affect their life.

How so?

Well, it gives them a chance to really dive into traditions, learn from them, enjoy their own special days without feeling rushed by some competing school schedule. They can fully immerse themselves.

It sounds like a much deeper integration. Actually, one of the comments on the original article really struck me. Someone linked this whole approach to uh abandonment to divine providence.

That's a fascinating connection.

What does that really mean in this context? It sounds quite philosophical.

It is, isn't it? It suggests moving beyond just being flexible. It implies a kind of deep trust.

Trust in what?

Trust that learning will happen naturally. That life itself is the best teacher. It's almost well a spiritual perspective you could say. Instead of feeling you have to control and plan every single learning opportunity,

you trust the process.

You trust the process. Yeah. You trust that life will provide the opportunities and that humans, especially kids, have this innate drive to learn. You don't need to forcefeed it according to a predetermined schedule. It's about surrendering a bit of that control, I suppose.

Okay. So, let's make this really concrete. Can we look at that advent period they described? How did this trusting the process actually look day-to-day?

Sure. So, it's summer there during Advent, they talked about being outside a lot, right? Running through the bush early in the mornings sounds idyllic, doesn't it? And they were heavily involved in all the traditions and preparations leading up to Christmas.

So things like making gifts.

Making gifts. Yeah. Singing and playing the piano for Christmas concerts and church services.

That's practical learning right there. Creativity, music, community involvement.

Absolutely. It wasn't seen as separate holiday stuff. It was their learning for that period. And alongside that,

what else was going on?

Lots of reading, drawing, watching DVDs presumably related to their interests, writing Christmas letters, keeping diaries,

which naturally works on literacy skills.

Exactly. Yeah.

And doing DIY challenges. So, it's really rich mix emerging from the season and their interests.

And woven through all of it, they mentioned the constant talking and discussing.

Yes. Listening to each other. That informal conversation is huge for learning, for developing thinking skills, communication.

It's continuous learning really.

It is. And looking ahead, they mentioned anticipating the husband. Andy's long break from his teaching job.

Ah, so he's a teacher in the conventional system. Interesting.

Yeah. And they were planning lots of outings, picnics, family time.

And then the expectation was that in the new year when he goes back to work and the weather cools down,

life would just change again naturally.

Life would change again. Naturally. And it really makes you wonder doesn't it? How much

that integration?

That's a deep question. It's clear this isn't just this one family's quirky way though. You mentioned the comments,

right? Other unschooling parents chimed in saying they get that same do you school through the summer question all the time

and they had similar experiences.

Yeah. Reinforcing that their learning definitely varies by season, by time of year, adapting to weather, adapting to life's rhythms.

It just felt well normal to them, intuitive.

And you also mentioned something about regulations. How does that fit in? Ah, yeah, that was interesting. The comments highlighted really big differences in homeschooling regulations.

Like where?

Well, someone mentioned New York State, which apparently has a reputation for being super strict.

How so?

Mandatory subjects for each grade, quarterly reports, evaluations, even standardized tests in some cases.

Really structured.

Wow, that sounds intense.

It does. And then you contrast that with Australia where this family lives. Their requirement was basically just gathering records for inspection every couple of years. Much less prescriptive.

So, how does unschooling even work under strict rules like New York's?

That's the fascinating part. It shows the adaptability of the philosophy. Even with those external requirements, unschoolers find ways to meet them, maybe through different documentation or framing their child's natural learning in terms the state understands, the core principles of following the child's lead can still operate even if the paperwork looks different.

So, the philosophy can bend without breaking essentially,

it seems. So, it adapts to the environment just like the learning itself adapts to the

So, bringing it all back, that initial question, when are you finishing schoolwork for the year?

The answer, we're not finishing up for the year, we're just changing seasons, it really says it all, doesn't it?

It perfectly encapsulates the whole idea. It's such a powerful reframe. Learning isn't this task to be completed on schedule.

It's continuous.

It's continuous, adaptable, woven into the fabric of life and its natural rhythms. It really challenges our basic assumptions about what school and learning even mean.

So, thinking about this, what could this mean for you listening right now? How might this idea of seasons apply to your own life, your own learning, or even just how you approach your work or hobbies?

Yeah, it's worth considering, isn't it? Even if you're not unschooling, are there periods where you naturally feel drawn to intense focus? Times for more creative exploration? Times you just need rest?

Could embracing those natural seasons actually make us more productive, more fulfilled maybe instead of fighting against them.

It's definitely something to reflect on. How could you identify your own unique seasons for learning, for work, for personal growth? And how could leaning into them rather than sticking rigidly to an external clock maybe foster a more, I don't know, integrated and satisfying life?

Something to think about.