



Remarks by Pamela Roland at the General Session of WPA's 31st Annual Home Education Conference on May 3, 2014. [The Conference theme was *Homeschooling Simplified.*] Published in *WPA Newsletter #120*, June 2014, p. 5.

Hello and thank you all for coming today. My name is Pamela Roland, and I am the homeschooling mom of three children and a proud member of WPA. My family and I have attended this conference for 11 years, and this community has become a very important part of how we have built our homeschool.

I was asked to speak today about our conference theme "Homeschooling Simplified." I was a little stumped as to what to talk about, since there are many days when homeschooling doesn't seem simple at all.

Then, I sat down with a friend, who is newer on her homeschooling journey, and we were talking about how things were going. She said to me that she really appreciated something that I told her some time ago. Apparently, I told her that figuring out why she wanted to do this and agreeing with her husband on some basic goals would help them along on their homeschooling journey. Honestly, I don't remember saying that, but I started thinking about my homeschool and realized that what we chose as our underlying purpose is what holds our homeschool together. Although I had never thought about it formally, this underlying purpose is the heart of my family's homeschool.

I also started to look around and I found that, although not many families come right out and share their underlying purpose, it is there in everything they do. Every inspirational homeschooling family in my community, every engaging homeschooling blog writer and book author have their underlying purpose flowing through their actions and writing.

Some people go through a formal process of creating a family mission statement, but whether or not you've done that, I imagine that back when you made the choice to live your homeschooling life, you had a reason in mind. You may have wanted to create a life where family was at the center, or a life where there was time and space for the pursuit of things that were meaningful to your family. Maybe you wanted to make sure that you provided a life where faith was the cornerstone. You might have wanted your children to be surrounded by an inspirational environment or to be able to focus on the unique needs and abilities of each child without comparison. Maybe you wanted to focus on academic excellence. For most of us, there is a combination of things that make up our underlying purpose. Whatever is at the heart of your homeschool, see if you can articulate it. If it doesn't seem clear to you, think about the most important things you do each day, each week, each year, and see how they reflect the values at the core of your homeschool.

Once you have that purpose in mind, you may be able to see what you have done already

that reflects that purpose. In fact, I'm sure that it can be found in your homeschool and in your life.

One of my husband's mentors, Dan John (an exercise guy), refers to focusing on your underlying purpose as "keeping the goal the goal." We are used to thinking of goals as something that we set, accomplish, and check off a list, but there is usually a bigger goal or purpose to making that list of goals in the first place. Dan John says that the most important thing to remember when trying to accomplish something is that you must "keep the goal the goal." Here, he is referring to a big goal, not the check list goals. He says that everything you do should support the goal. Everything should enhance the goal.

If we think of our homeschooling goal (or purpose) in these terms, it simplifies decisions and to-do lists for our homeschools a great deal. If we make choices with the question in the back of our minds "Is this supporting my underlying purpose?" things can suddenly seem simpler. Simple isn't easy exactly, but in this case simpler does seem to make things clearer.

It's not always easy to choose things that support your underlying purpose. There are so many distractions out there. Some of the distractions are hard to pass up. Some are even fun. Some distractions are obvious and not preventable, illness for example. Sometimes you need to do what you need to do get past them. Some distractions, however, such as comparing ourselves to others, feeling like a failure when we don't accomplish all that we were hoping to, doing too much or pushing too hard, can be brought into perspective when we measure these issues against our underlying purpose.

Dan John says that "There is no perfect workout." And there is no perfect homeschool. As homeschoolers we are free to determine the direction of our homeschool. We are accountable to ourselves and with so much freedom, it can be a challenge to "keep the goal the goal." Stephen Covey talks about how airplanes are off-course 90% of the time. They are constantly making course corrections, but they still arrive at their destinations. He compares families to the airplanes, but says that having what he calls a family mission statement helps guide us back to our destination, despite having spent the majority of the trip off course.

In a world of nearly limitless homeschooling choices, an underlying purpose helps simplify things. It helps us choose what enhances and supports "the goal" and what is a distraction. It helps us build the homeschool that is right for our family.

Another way to keep us on our chosen path is to build a community that supports us. Of course, having an intimate community that shares a similar goal is ideal, but as homeschoolers, it isn't always easy to find people with exactly the same goal. However, it is possible to surround ourselves with a community that helps support us in living our underlying purpose. When I look around today, I realize that although I may homeschool very differently from each of you, you are here today to support me in maintaining the freedom to homeschool the way I choose and to encourage me along the way, and I am here to do the same for you. I am invested in your homeschooling success. WPA is an incredible organization because its over arching goal is to continue supporting each of us

and our freedom not only to homeschool, but to homeschool the way we choose. WPA is here to help us "keep the goal the goal."

Having an underlying purpose, a mission statement, or a big "G" goal helps us evaluate if we are reaching our little "g" goals. It makes it possible for us to check in from time to time (or in the middle of a weak moment) and decide if we are succeeding in our homeschool. 90% of the time we may be a bit off-course, but "keeping the goal the goal" helps us readjust and return to the path we've chosen.

One more Dan John quote...

He says, in regard to a workout plan, "Everything works." What he means is that doing something is, of course, better than doing nothing. If you have a plan and follow the plan, it will move you forward. Sometimes the plan may need adjusting over time, and knowing why you created this plan to begin with helps you to modify things so that they continue working.

Simple doesn't mean easy, but "keeping the goal the goal" does clarify everyday choices. It encourages us to build our lives and homeschools around our underlying purpose. It helps us create meaningful community, both small and large, and it allows us to look at our homeschools and know that, despite being off course at times, we are accomplishing a great deal.

Thank you. ❖