

# “A Brave Writer’s Life in Brief”

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## Balancing Your Roles as Parent and Teacher

### Podcast S6E3: Julie Bogart

February 5, 2020

Well hello friends!

Welcome back to the Brave Writer podcast! I’m Julie Bogart, your host and creator of the innovative writing program called Brave Writer.

This podcast addresses topics that help you parent, home educate, and become the awesome adult that you are. This season, the topics come from YOU, our listeners. You can make suggestions on Instagram. My account is @juliebravewriter. When you see a podcast post, feel free to drop a topic in the comments and I’ll add it to the list!

Before we get started, I have a wonderful announcement to make. Brave Writer is turning 20 years old in January of 2020. That’s right: we’ve been at this for 20 whole years! You can look forward to a slew of wonderful offers on the horizon so be sure to sign up for our email newsletter so you have all the details. You can go to [bravewriter.com](http://bravewriter.com) and click on the [7 Day Writing Blitz](#) to receive our free gift (7 days of writing fun). That will automatically add you to our list.

Now, let’s get started with today’s topic.

**One of our Brave Writer moms asked: How do you balance being a mom and teacher?**

Such a good question. I’d like to broaden it to include the many homeschool dads that are



now in the picture. So let's reframe it: How do you balance your role as a parent and a teacher at home?

A funny thing happened on the way to becoming a home educator. You were a home educator.

You were presumably at home (at least some of the time) and you were educating your baby, toddler, preschooler—to do all the things, like talking, eating, tying shoes, pulling up a zipper, holding a glass without dropping it, potty training, saying please and thank you, using an inside voice, skipping, not eating the playdoh, chewing gum without swallowing it, weaning off the breast or bottle to solid foods, petting the dog rather than punching it, cracking knock knock jokes, giving hugs, not throwing rocks at people, only into creeks...

You did all of these with hardly a thought. It came as naturally to you as breathing and loving and living. Sure, sometimes the journey took more time or skill than you thought you had. So you researched, collected advice, and tested the theories in the laboratory of your own home and family.

The truth is: home education is merely an extension of all that love, conviction, trial and error, and research. Your task is to be the mother who leads and educates, just as you were when your child was not yet five. What changes is not the expectation of who we are, but what we think education is.

We move from seeing the life-skills of small personhood as essential to master in the bonds of love and help, to seeing academics as something other—as some “thing” to superimpose over the bonds of parental care. That's when we start trying to “balance” motherhood or fatherhood against “being the teacher”—whatever that can possibly mean in this context.

But you are already the prime teacher by virtue of parenting.



My friend Ainsley Arment from the [Wild + Free homeschool community](#) said it perfectly in her new book *The Call of the Wild and Free*:

“You figured out your baby because you were *with* your baby. The same is true now. You are your child’s greatest expert...Trust your natural instincts, even when you don’t know what to do, because if all else fails, you still know how to parent”  
(page 17).

So what is this question really all about?

It’s this: we want to retain the feeling of bonded love and support while also holding a standard of education and expectation of cooperation with those goals. Sometimes it feels like we are harsh taskmasters rather than tender, nurturing parents. And I get it! That is an awful conundrum to live.

It is especially challenging as we get near high school with its sturdy set of credits that feel all official and important.

Here are three ways to become a more effective parent while home educating and a more effective teacher while parenting.

### **1. Give up the need to be an expert in either.**

The pressure you feel may be about doing either or both right or well enough. That’s over. You’ve never parented before and you’ve never been a teacher at home. You’ve got a passel of kids and even if you are on #7, you have never parented THIS child or educated THIS kid before. Start by admitting to yourself that you get to be a beginner the whole way through. Each year that feels new or challenging, calm yourself by saying, “Of course it’s scary. I don’t know what I’m doing yet. But by the end of the year, I will know more than I do right now! I can get there, one day at a time.”



## 2. Take your time.

Give yourself time to discover what your child needs. Usually when a parent says to me: “How do I toggle between mom and being a teacher”, that person is worried that there will be a cost to the parent-child relationship because the parent has to be an enforcer of schoolwork right now, to keep up with the program goals. There’s an urgency about “getting through” and “getting done.”

What if you didn’t feel that the entirety of western civilization had to be mastered by 18? What if your child could read Jane Austen in her 30s rather than at age 16? What if you saw mathematics as a set of skills to be studied at the pace of competence rather than completion of text books?

Our kids get to learn at home at their pace. That’s why they are home. Some will be “advanced” and head off to junior college at 16. Others will linger at home until 20 and start college then. Others still will play around with lots of career ideas and land on their feet at 32! (Ask me how I know)

Which leads me to...

## 3. Outsource what you find difficult to teach.

There’s no shame in hiring tutors for math or chemistry, in taking online writing classes, in joining a 4-H club, in participating in a co-op, in going to the local high school part time for acting and French. As a parent, your job isn’t to sit side-by-side with your child to be the only instructor that child ever has. Your job is to coordinate the need with the resource.

The thing is: we typically get focused on traditional subjects. I recommend outsourcing some of the wonderful ones—like, my older kids were in a Shakespeare company in high school where they were taught by trained equity actors and got to perform on a real stage. I never did do a typical Shakespeare class with either of them because they got so much



more out of that experience than anything that would have resembled a classroom view of Shakespeare.

Jacob took a cake decorating class in junior high. Caitrin studied sewing in a group sewing school in a living room of a friend of mine. She learned how to quilt and sew clothes and enjoyed it immensely. Noah studied carpentry with a friend's husband because neither Jon nor I could meet that interest. Liam took classes at our local zoo for junior high students and Johannah studied vintage dance with an adult troop.

Outsourcing is not just about the hard subjects. You show up as a mom-educator, or a dad-educator when you help your child get the professional, adult-skilled instruction they crave.

Now in the day to day activities of parenting and teaching, perhaps the question is more about how to keep your child from resenting you for enforcing a school routine. This is where your parenting instincts will help you the most. You can negotiate, you can empathize, you can adapt day to day, you can admit: "Ugh! I feel like when I call you to the table, you move from being my happy-go-lucky son to my recalcitrant student. I hate that! Do you too? What can we do about it?"

I think we spend so much time "off stage" with our feelings and hurts, worries and needs, our kids stop seeing us as *human beings*. Perhaps the real question is: "How do I help my child recognize the weightiness of responsibility I feel for her education without alienating her and harming our close relationship?"

The answer is the same for every relationship: "Name it." Say what's happening between you kindly, vulnerably. Problem-solve THAT dynamic.

"Honey, I feel this heavy responsibility sometimes to ensure that you are making academic progress in X area. Sometimes I get worried and take it out on you. Sometimes I feel like we



lose our closeness because of that. I apologize. Can you help me know how to help you hit X goal so that we don't have to argue or fight about it?"

Stay open to unseen possibilities. Force, coercion, punishment, giving up, giving in—these are not your only strategies.

Help your child see you as a person with great resource, but also with real needs. Problem solve over time (it may not all get worked out today). Continue to check in with each other. Be kind. Be fair. Admit when you are requiring so that it doesn't become manipulation. Know that when you require, it costs something—the relationship pays for it. Which may be okay! You might have banked a lot of emotional closeness and that bank can take a hit for today. Just know that deposits are necessary when you do draw on the account to ease your anxiety while increasing his or hers.

I believe in you!

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