

# “A Brave Writer’s Life in Brief”

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## When You Have No Energy To Do Any of It

### Podcast S6E4: Julie Bogart

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Hello! Welcome to the [Brave Writer Podcast](#).

I’m Julie Bogart—mom to five adult kids and homeschool veteran. What will you get from our podcasts? A chance to fold laundry or take a long walk, that’s what! And I hope you also get a chance to pause and think a bit about your parenting, educating, and adulting in new ways too. Let’s get started with today’s topic.

Today’s topic is near and dear to many of us. A mother wrote to us asking, “What if you just don’t have the energy to do all the stuff? The magic-making, the planning, the execution of all the tasks? I know what needs to get done, but I just can’t get myself to do it all. Help.”

I get it. There are seasons of life that make the ordinary tasks feel like bench pressing a truck. When you’re in a season like that, you can’t imagine ever getting out of it. So to address this topic, let’s start by identifying a few of the reasons we lose heart or energy for the tasks of homeschooling.

#### **1. The first one is: The Babyhood stage of life.**

When you are growing your family, a child at a time, there comes a breaking point for many of us. Sometimes it is the third child. Other times, it’s when you hit that magic number 6 or when the twins are born or you have a surprise pregnancy ten years after your last child was born. Or maybe you decided to foster out of the lovingkindness of your heart once your youngest turned 5—and now you are suddenly back knee deep in laundry and middle of the night feedings.

The babyhood stage of life eventually wins in the chess game of energy. Combine sleep deprivation with round the clock baby care, and your life points will evaporate. The good news is: that stage is usually one solid year (give or take six months). So we’re talking about how to get through that 12-18 month season, okay?



Part of what's going on is that you are devoting your creativity to troubleshooting the unspoken needs of a new human being. Your vigilance, kindness, and quick wits are being siphoned off to the newest person's needs which are not academic in nature. Meanwhile, the other kids are growing up. They require new skills from you—to stimulate them, to teach them, to civilize them.

You offer these and sometimes with alacrity. Sometimes you stumble on the magic day when it all goes so well, you imagine that you've arrived in the new reality of reciprocal energy—they give something back to you after all that you are giving to them.

Alas, it never lasts—because you are a parent and parenting is harder with a baby in tow, even though wonderful.

To help yourself in the babyhood stage of life, a couple principles will give you some peace of mind. Your kids can grow leaps and bounds without a lot of extra effort on your part. The goal isn't to turn every day into a Pinterest worthy party. These are the years when you take the extra nap, you use the television if you need to, you provide lots of interesting resources and teach from your life. This is not the season to host the Gold Rush Party or to tackle a new curriculum or to feel guilty that your second grader never learned the Pledge of Allegiance.

You are not quite in survival mode. You are, rather, in crock pot mode. Toss the ingredients that aid learning into the home, simmer on low, and let the learning evolve over time. Sometimes it will seem like nothing is happening, but you can trust what the rest of us have found out. There's TIME! You can go slow to go fast in this season. Focus on one thing a day rather than ALL the things. As you rotate through them, you'll have provided a rich set of experiences for your kids. Remember: this is a short season and beating yourself up for needing to pull in and navel gaze a bit doesn't help anyone. Get a big poster board and write the word "No" on it. Then use it any time you are tempted to do more than you can. Just Say No!

## **2. You are burnt out.**

On the other end of the spectrum is the parent who has been homeschooling for a while. The pencils are broken, the books seem dull, you don't care about algebra, and you wish your kids would take more initiative to provide themselves with a college-ready education. You wish you didn't have to do that research or find that resource or track down that form that will help them get the classes or credits they need.

Burn out is maybe the wrong term. It's more like you are browning out, or perhaps you are simply low on life points. To get more energy for the stuff that no longer holds your interest, you have to make a counter-intuitive move. Instead of obsessing on what doesn't interest you, you need to go get some energy from a place you already love (or that you



find fascinating). The energy that's failing you? It's stimulation. You don't need time off or more time to take Epsom salt baths (though by all means do both if that feels nourishing right now). Rather, the key to recovery from the blahs is stimulation—allowing your imagination to be captivated again.

And by the way: this is the same thing that happens to your kids. We all burn out or brown out or lose interest in our primary mode of living. That's why we want our life partners to take us out on a Friday night where we can dress up and go dancing. Or we decide to join a group of urban hikers so we can see new aspects of our oh so familiar city. We look for ways to re-engage.

So if the homeschool tasks feel like drudgery: good news! You are minutes away from figuring it out! What you need is a little fun—a change of scene, a surprise.

Now I may be reading your mind—are you worried that you aren't going to tackle your responsibilities if you simply start pursuing what feels stimulating to you? Here's what I know. We don't find the energy for what we OUGHT to do if that is ALL we do. Let me say that again. We don't find energy for what we OUGHT to do if that is ALL we do.

That's why keeping your home fires burning inside is so important to all those less-attractive options. It's in pursuing what interests you that you may find one of the following results:

First: you may find a way to combine what you love with your children's education. I did that again and again with art, nature, documentaries, history, literature. By allowing myself to study and read about what interested me, I found new relevance for the studies I offered my kids.

Second: you may discover resources and experiences that you can use for your kids. When I started graduate school, for instance, I realized the value of an expert teaching, using a syllabus, guiding me along. I realized that that experience might be valuable to some of my kids and as a result some of them took classes at our homeschool co-op, at the local public school, and via tutor.

Third: you may discover that you are done. You don't have the appetite for homeschool any more. It's time to make a new decision about what to do with the kids.

Each of these is valid. Here's why. Teaching your kids lessons and subject matter when you find it tedious and have no energy for it undermines their learning experience. They learn to associate the glories of the universe with drudgery, with punishing you. They don't catch fire for the subjects.



### **3. The third possible energy suck is your physical and/or mental health!**

Maybe you are suffering from adrenal fatigue or HIV or postpartum depression or a broken ankle or breast cancer. Homeschool looks different under these conditions. Outsource as much as you can, share with your kids the needs you have (time to sleep, time for therapy, time to prepare the right foods for your health). Enlist their help (don't try to handle your health issues "off stage" where they don't know about them).

Use the crockpot mode of learning and triangle in a support system (mother's helper, your own mother, a neighbor, a homeschool friend who takes your kids off your hands to teach them history with her own kids). This is where you cannot do it alone. You must draw support from your community. If this health issue is persistent and you don't recover your energy, it is wise and kind to both your kids and to yourself, to put them in school. They will have a teacher with energy, and you will have a quiet house for recovery. Even if only for a season.

One of my best friends followed this exact path for a year when she had just moved, had her fifth baby and was hit with adrenal fatigue. The older kids went to the local public school for one year while she recovered and took care of the new baby and toddler. Then they came home again.

### **4. Perhaps, though, you see yourself as the garden-variety person who is just bored with homeschool.**

If that's you, you can use the same strategies for yourself that you are using for your kids. Can you add some surprise, mystery, risk and adventure to your own experience of learning with them? Can you say to them honestly, "I'm bored! Are you? Let's do a great big brainstorm about all the ways we can change the tedium of our daily lives."

Get out the white board and write down EVERY possible answer:

- Let's do math at the beach!
- I want to make scones every morning and then do copywork.
- I wish we could read all the Harry Potter books and not do that dumb history book.
- Why don't we ever do science experiments! I want to blow things up!
- If we had time, I'd want to go to the private airport every week and watch planes take off. I wish I knew how to fly.

Like that.

As you give your kids a chance to dream, they may inject into your mind connections you had forgotten to make, ideas you were afraid to pursue, even their offers to help you make life less dull.



The context matters. We want to vary it. The same old every day makes anyone dull. It's one reason I went to graduate school—I wanted a way to stay stimulated while homeschooling and it had this rich dividend of enlivening our homeschool together.

Ask yourself that Mary Oliver question you see on all the memes: What will you do with your one wild life?

We could retool the question to be: What will you do to uplift and enrich your one boring life?

I know you can! Let's brainstorm together. If you want help, hop into the [Homeschool Alliance](#) where we discuss ALL of this every single day in detail, tailored to your home and family. We miss you! Come join us. The water's nice—not too hot or cold—just right.

If you'd like to follow me on Instagram, go to [@juliebravewriter](#)

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I'd love to connect with you!

Until next time, Keep going. I'm rooting for you!

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