



Class 6: Support & Community

Weekly Agenda:

Notebook- You may find it easier to print the PDF lessons and house them in a 3-ring binder or notebook for easy reference and highlighting.

Lesson Availability- You can download your weekly lessons by accessing the webpage above. The material will be available up to 60 days after the end of the course to make sure you have had time to get everything. I recommend downloading as we go and participating to get the most from this class.

Participate- Ask questions, share ideas and make friends with the others in the course for best experience. You can ask questions under comments on each weekly lesson. I will try to answer as specific as I can, but since this is a group class we may not be able to cover specifics to every situation. If you need further help, email me for private guidance at donnaashton@thewaldorfconnection.com.

Table of Contents

Weekly Agenda	1
Week 6 Overview	3
Getting Your Family's Support	3 , 4, 5
Friends & Neighbors	6
Pop-Culture & Waldorf	6, 7
Playgroups & Co-ops	8
Festivals	9
Common Waldorf Festivals	10, 11, 12
Festivals Template	13
Resources	14
Thank you	15

Week 6 Overview :

You've made it this far and should have started the steps of creating your homeschool. This next piece of the puzzle may be *the most* important one- Support. You don't have to do it alone.



*Class 6: Support & Community***

Getting Family Support

Family, most likely your spouse, will be your biggest influence (for those who are married) If you are single, then there may be an ex-spouse or mom or sister. They can be your biggest cheerleader and supporter because they are close to home. They could also be your biggest obstacle..

Number 1 thing to getting them on board with you= **they must be well informed.**

They need to understand what you are doing or trying to do and why. As you have spent time researching, reading, looking at blogs, they need to understand the process behind Waldorf education and why it works.

You need to understand what you are doing enough to explain the short version to them.

From my own experience: Things were going smoothly with by hubby the first few years but then as they reached that 6-7 age and they were still not learning to read or doing math- the questions began to arise.

Not only him but my mom and sister started questioning. I clearly remember a holiday when my sister was visiting and she took my girls into the other room and started grilling them about their letters!

So, why is family support so crucial? Well, if it is your spouse than it can be a deal-breaker for homeschooling. This is heartbreaking to me but I have heard moms tell me there husbands won't let them homeschool their child.

It is really nice if your spouse is supporting you during this journey. It gives you confidence that they feel you can do this and will help when they can.

I remember the first time I overheard my husband telling someone else that I homeschool and we used Waldorf. I listened to him talk on and on about all the great things the girls have been learning and how they can knit, sew, craft, play instruments, etc..

It felt really good to hear that. He doesn't always say that to me, but just knowing he supports me and understands feels great. I feel supported.

With the lifestyle choices we make as Waldorf homeschoolers (natural toys and playthings, limited or no media, radio, screentime, simplicity in activities and schedules, etc)- All this affects your spouse or whoever is living with you.

Sometimes it is a matter of compromising. I wanted to totally get rid of the tv, hubby did not. So we compromised; no tv until the girls are in bed.

We came up with a decision together.

That is another key; try to make decisions together. If your spouse feels he has a part in the decision he will be more supportive.



Know that that it is a process..

You can start with one area and then move slowly onto others..

With toys, slowly weed them out and add a few new ones in that feel more appropriate.

Keep your family in the loop with what is happening.
After the homeschooling begins, they will continue to scrutinize and ask questions (this still happens for me!)

If it is your spouse, perhaps a weekly or monthly progress discussion would be helpful. Let them know what you have been doing and learning.

For other family members, occasionally fill them in on all that has happened. They are curious. They understand traditional school, but homeschool is different.. It is hard for them to comprehend that you are learning in only a few hours each day.

Family Recap:

- 1) Help them understand what & why
- 2) Make joint decisions/compromises if possible
- 3) Keep them informed on progress

Once you have your families support you will see that everything feels more relaxed. You feel like they are on your side and can even ask for help.

If a family member is good in a particular area, bring them in to teach! Just the fact that my husband knows what is going on and what I need helps me. He knows we have a certain morning rhythm and tries not to disrupt that. We can plan things around school activities.

You may be surprised how many great suggestions your family may have to help you with your lessons!

Friends & Neighbors

Next we will move out a bit more to discuss friends. These could be your everyday friends, acquaintances, or neighbors.

Though it is not necessary to go into as much depth as with family, close friends will want to know what you are up to. I had one friend who could not understand how I was qualified to teach my children and kept asking if I was polishing up all my skills!

You don't have any obligation to offer more than you feel comfortable disclosing, of course.

I think most people are curious about homeschoolers and if you are going to be seen around the neighborhood with your kids, then you can answer a few questions if it feels right.

Pop-Culture and Waldorf

How NOT to isolate yourself when living a Waldorf lifestyle & homeschooling.

This topic is huge and we could have an course about this alone, but I would like to discuss this a bit.

First, I believe knowing what you *will and will not* compromise on is a good starting place. There may be some absolutes NO's and then other things you are willing to give in to.

One example is when my girls go to a party. I normally don't allow a lot of sweets and sugar, but it is unavoidable out in the world. So, tyeknow they may have a cupcake or cake, but must drink water instead of soda or juice.

I feel that they don't need added sugar and they know now to ask for water.

You can't control what is going on at others houses only at your own. You can set a standard for what is done, and when they are away from home, decide what if any compromise will be made.

Maybe you won't let them watch tv at a friends house, but they can watch a movie/DVD.

Identify your hot buttons. My feeling's are that if you have a good foundation at home and a solid rhythm, an occasional diversion from that will not do harm. It also depends on the age of your child. I know that I am a bit looser now that my girls are 10 then when they were 5.

Again, it is about boundaries and creating a foundation. Now, when my girls see or experience something "different" or odd to them, they come back and tell me. Often times they say "it was really weird that she did this... or the mom said we could do that...."

It gives me an opportunity to talk with them about it. If they were younger, it's a chance to re-establish our boundaries "In our home we do it this way.."

In your home, when others visit you can decide the activities and food. Perhaps your house is the only one in the neighborhood that has outdoor games in the evening or hopscotch/jump rope. You can be the place all the children like to go to really play. Like Mrs. Piggie Wiggles house!

Having like-minded friends can be a huge blessing as there are less things to navigate and you can relax a bit. Where do you find these people?



Playgroups & Co-ops

Sometimes you have to be the proactive one. Ask your friends, check at holistic moms network, la leche league, or local organic food market. I have heard of moms putting up a flyer or in the natural magazine for a “play-based playdate”.

Check with your local library, where homeschoolers will definitely be.

A local homeschool co-op is a good place to start even if your child is not yet school age. You can go check out and see if any families mesh or have younger siblings to play with your child.

A co-op is usually a weekly meeting of a homeschool group at a church or other building where they hold classes taught either by other moms, professionals or teachers.

Meeting once a week or once a month is a great way to get your children playing with others but more importantly- YOU talking with someone else!

If you can find a few Waldorf families, that is ideal! You can do festivals together, create a handwork group or even do a book study.

Having even a small close group will be a way to share ideas, resources, inspiration and just talk to someone who knows what you are talking about! It may even install a type of accountability to learn new skills.

I have a very good friend that when she is in town and we meet, it is very rejuvenating. We always give each other ideas, advice, compare what is going on with our kids. It is such a helpful lifeline.

By creating this support you give yourself the opportunity to ENJOY homeschooling and feel like you are part of a group, not alone.

Festivals

Seasons & Festivals are such a fun way to bring in traditions and celebrate the changing of the year. The four main turning points are Autumn Equinox, Winter Solstice, Spring Equinox, and Summer Solstice. Grounding your child with the cyclical rhythms of nature is a gift you can give starting with these early years. Your entire kindergarten can be based on nature, seasons and festivals!

There are many to choose from, but the key is start with just a few. If you have never celebrated a festival before, take some time getting familiar with what it represents. What points do you want to bring and tell stories about? What songs feel right to you to sing?

I created a Festival Notebook where I printed out songs and recipes, verses & stories for the festivals we did each year. Once I had this, the next year it was easy to repeat or add a new song, verse or recipe.

Some festivals may resonate more with you than others- do those! Start with what you know or are attracted to. You are the key to the festival so if you are feeling stressed or unsure, it will be reflected to the overall feeling of the day. It is best to find someone else to do the festivals with if possible. Perhaps have several families contribute food or music etc.. Celebrating with neighbors, playgroup families or friends will increase the fun and decrease the stress, as it is all not “on you”.

When I first started creating these festivals I felt strange saying verses and telling stories. I remember thinking “I hope my family doesn’t think this is too weird!” But, now it seems natural and they miss it if I skip something. It becomes a ritual. After trying out a few different festivals, we chose the ones that worked best for us and that we liked. There are a lot of festivals during the busy holiday season, so choose 1 or 2 and let that be enough. You can try a different one the next year (take this from one who did ALL the festivals the first year and was exhausted by Three Kings Day!)

Common Waldorf Festival Days:



Michaelmas: (Sept.29) - The feast of St. Michael. Known as the conqueror of the dragon (and also the one who through Satan out of heaven) with his starry sword, Michael gives us strength to slay the dragons of materialism and egoism. You can feel a change in the air. It is a time to harvest what was sown in the spring and what grew all summer. The earth is beginning to contract as we begin to prepare ourselves to go inward, and to prepare for the coming winter.

Samheim-(Halloween Oct.31)- Halfway between the equinox & solstice, the beginning of the season of “dark”.

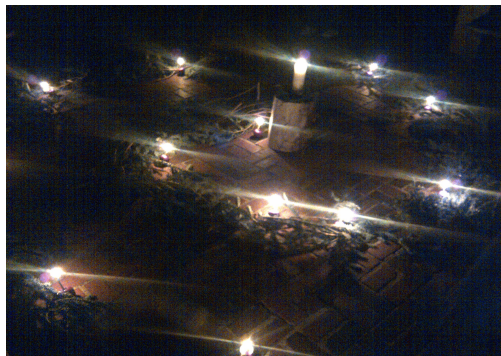
Martinmas- (Nov.11) The feast of St. Martin, The most famous legend of his life is that he once cut his cloak in half to share with a beggar during a snowstorm, to save the beggar from dying of the cold. Traditionally a lighted lantern walk and singing is how it is celebrated, lighting the way through the dark nights of this time of year.

St. Nicholas- (Dec 6)- My girls favorite! There is a lot you can read about this as in European countries he is the bringer of gifts. Put your shoes out Dec. 5th and in the morning treats and trinkets fill them. Great resource is <http://www.stnicholascenter.org/pages/who-is-st-nicholas/> (stories and tons of info)

St. Lucia- (Dec.13) The feast day for St. Lucy where the eldest girl wears a crown of candles, white gown and red sash. She serves breakfast. We had a lot of fun with this!

Advent- (Nov & Dec) Starts 4 Sundays prior to Christmas- It is the coming preparations for the Christ child

Winter Solstice/Yule- The birth of the Sun is the shortest day of the year. After which the sun starts shining longer each day. My favorite festival! Solstice Sun, Shining Bright! Shortest Day & Longest Night. Solstice Wish of Hope & Cheer: Peace on Earth, throughout the Year!



Candlemas/Brigid/Imbolic- Marks the growing presence of the sun and when the candles were made and blessed for the year. (also GroundHog day in US)



Spring Equinox- (Mar 21-22) First Day of Spring Day and Night are equal. We always plant our spring garden then and our wheat grass for our Easter baskets. Easter- Easter falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the vernal equinox. Coloring eggs and the Hare or Bunny is always fun. Nature is waking up and everything is new and reborn.



May Day – (May 1) May Day may be best known for its tradition of dancing the maypole dance and crowning of the Queen of the May. In ancient times, it was considered the first day of summer (thus Midsummer being mid June) There are many traditions on this day for fair maidens and the fest of fertility.

Summer Solstice/Midsummer Night- The celebration of Midsummer's Eve (St. John's Eve among Christians) was from ancient times a festival of the summer solstice. Some people believed that golden-flowered mid-summer plants, especially Calendula, and St. John's Wort, had miraculous healing powers and they therefore picked them on this night.



Simple Festival Template

- Choose your festival, read about it , familiarize yourself with the mood of it. Is it light and joyful, solemn and reverent, busy and bright, calm and subtle?
- Experience the seasonal expression of the time of year. Go out and play with your child, notice what you feel , see, hear and smell
- Bring some of that rich sensory experience back home with you in the form of natural objects. Stones, branches, moss acorns berries etc.
- Display these in a prominent place to be enjoyed daily

- Choose a time to celebrate your festival , invite friends and family or keep it simple with just your family.
- Celebrate by sharing a story, song, poem or verse related to the festival
- Make a craft related to the festival, use the craft to create an activity related to the theme
- Share simple seasonal beautiful food

Here is an example of autumn festival and how to celebrate it according to the template:

- Martinmas - celebrated mid autumn as the light dwindles and we move toward the darkest days of the year. The mood is one of reverence and of connecting with our own inner light.
- Cool days, wind blowing, colored leaves falling, walnuts scattered in the yard , apples falling off the trees.
- Nuts and leaves on the nature table with a little wooden fox and rabbit
- Early Evening celebration with family
- Tell the Story of St. Martin, sing “ this little light of mine”
- Make lanterns with colored tissue paper, glue, and little mason jars with wire handles. Put a tea light in the lantern and walk outside at dusk each person carrying their own little light.

- Share a simple meal of soup and bread and then deliver some soup to a neighbor or friend in need of a little light in their lives!

Resources

[The Waldorf Connection Fan page](#)

[Waldorf Homeschool U Facebook Group](#)

Yahoo groups

[Holistic Moms Network](#)- check for local group

[La Leche league](#)

A HUGE thank you to all you wonderful homeschooling moms who are going through this program!

I am so grateful to be able to share my experiences and knowledge to help you avoid the roadblocks I went through.

Good luck on your journey and blessings to your family,

Donna



Simple Festival Template

- Choose your festival, read about it , familiarize yourself with the mood of it. Is it light and joyful, solemn and reverent, busy and bright, calm and subtle?
- Experience the seasonal expression of the time of year. Go out and play with your child, notice what you feel , see, hear and smell
- Bring some of that rich sensory experience back home with you in the form of natural objects. Stones, branches, moss acorns berries etc.
- Display these in a prominent place to be enjoyed daily
- Choose a time to celebrate your festival , invite friends and family or keep it simple with just your family.
- Celebrate by sharing a story, song, poem or verse related to the festival
- Make a craft related to the festival, use the craft to create an activity related to the theme
- Share simple seasonal beautiful food

Here is an example of autumn festival and how to celebrate it according to the template:

- Martinmas - celebrated mid autumn as the light dwindles and we move toward the darkest days of the year. The mood is one of reverence and of connecting with our own inner light.
- Cool days, wind blowing, colored leaves falling, walnuts scattered in the yard , apples falling off the trees
- Nuts and leaves on the nature table with a little wooden fox and rabbit
- Early Evening celebration with family
- Tell the Story of St. Martin, sing “ this little light of mine”
- Make lanterns with colored tissue paper, glue, and little mason jars with wire handles. Put a tea light in the lantern and walk outside at dusk each person carrying their own little light.

- Share a simple meal of soup and bread and then deliver some soup to a neighbor or friend in need of a little light in their lives!