Week 2

Deschool yourself + connect

This week isn't about doing more. It's about questioning what "school" has to look like, deciding what you actually want for your child, and putting connection before curriculum.

YOUR WEEK 2 CHECKLIST

- [ ] Watch Video 3: Deschool Yourself + Connect
- [ ] How did we get here? (page 2)
- [ ] What's the goal? Talk with your child (page 3)
- [ ] School taught me vs. what I want (page 4)
- [ ] Pick one book from the bookshelf (pages 5–6)
- [ ] Watch how your child learns for 3 days (page 7)
- [ ] Start a 10-minute daily connection ritual (page 8)
- [ ] Week 2 check-in (page 9)

1 video
about 12 minutes

8 pages
spread across the week

10 min
a day together

How did we get here?

Watch: Video 3, Part 1 — What Is Deschooling?

> **Read this first:** For most of human history, children learned by living alongside adults. School as we know it, with kids sorted by age, subjects split into periods, and everyone at a desk, is less than 200 years old.

Thousands of years	Kids learn through family, apprenticeships, church, and community.
1642	Massachusetts requires parents and apprenticeship masters to teach children to read.
1843	Horace Mann tours Prussian schools and brings back ideas like teacher training and graded classrooms.
1848	Boston's Quincy School opens, often cited as the first U.S. school to sort kids into grades.
1852	Massachusetts passes the first law requiring children to attend school.
1918	Mississippi becomes the last state to require school attendance.
Today	About 3 million U.S. kids are homeschooled, and the number keeps growing.

Critics often call schools a "factory model" built for the Industrial Revolution; some historians say that story is oversimplified. Either way, the system was designed to teach large numbers of children at once, not to fit your one child.

FROM MY PODCAST — DR. PETER GRAY, EPISODE 162

"The schools we have today do not come out of any science of children's learning. They are simply a product of history."

What he means: nobody sorted kids by age or split the day into subjects because research showed that's how children learn best. That's just how school developed over time, as a way to teach large numbers of kids at once.

Knowing how recent "school" is, what feels less required to me now?

What's the goal?

Watch: Video 3, Part 1

> **Do this:** Most of us send kids to school without ever naming a goal. Name yours, then ask your child about theirs. The world they're growing into, with AI and new kinds of work, will look very different from ours.

When my child is 18, who do I hope they are and what do I hope they can do? (not a job title)

Does the way we're learning now get them there? What would?

ASK YOUR CHILD — write their answers in their words

What do you love doing so much you forget about time?

What do you want to get really, really good at?

If you could learn about anything at all, what would it be?

PATHS TO EXPLORE TOGETHER

- ☐ College
- ☐ A trade or apprenticeship
- ☐ Starting a business
- ☐ Creative work
- ☐ Service or military
- ☐ Something that doesn't exist yet

SKILLS THAT MATTER ON ANY PATH — circle your top 3

Curiosity · Teaching yourself · Reading well · Clear communication · Problem-solving · Working with people · Money basics · Real-life skills · Using tools like AI wisely · Grit

School taught me vs. what I want

Watch: Video 3, Part 1

> **Do this:** Answer in order. If you catch yourself writing what you "should" say, cross it out and write what's true.

What did school look like for me, growing up?

What am I assuming "real learning" has to look like?

If I didn't have to recreate school at home, what would learning look like for us?

What has my child already taught themselves? (a hobby, a game, a skill)

BELIEFS I'M READY TO QUESTION

A BELIEF ABOUT "REAL" LEARNING	WHERE IT CAME FROM	TRUE FOR US?
		☐ Yes ☐ No
		☐ Yes ☐ No
		☐ Yes ☐ No

The deschooling bookshelf

Watch: Video 3, Part 2 — Books That Change How You Think

> **Do this:** Skim all seven, then check the **one** that pulls at you most. Many are free on audio through Libby or Hoopla with a library card.

WHERE SCHOOL CAME FROM

☐ Dumbing Us Down

John Taylor Gatto

A former New York State Teacher of the Year argues that school's "hidden curriculum" of bells, grades, and constant supervision teaches kids to be confused, dependent, and indifferent, no matter what subject is on the board. He lists seven lessons he believes school really teaches.

Read this if you want a short, sharp insider's look at what school teaches beyond the subjects.

☐ Indoctrinating Our Children to Death

Alex Newman

A journalist writing from a Christian perspective argues that public schools aren't broken but are working as designed, steering children away from faith, family, and freedom. He traces where the system came from and offers ways families can respond.

Read this if you want the faith-based case many Christian families give for leaving public school.

HOW CHILDREN REALLY LEARN

☐ Free to Learn

Dr. Peter Gray · my guest on Episode 162

A developmental psychologist argues children are built to educate themselves through free play and following their own interests, drawing on hunter-gatherer cultures and the Sudbury Valley School. In his view, sorting kids by age and splitting learning into subjects works against how they naturally learn.

Read this if you want the research-based case for play and self-directed learning.

☐ How Children Learn

John Holt

A teacher's close observations of real children learning to talk, read, count, and reason. Holt argues kids learn best when they're driven by their own curiosity, and that "learning is as natural as breathing."

Read this if you want to learn to watch, and trust, how your own child learns.

The bookshelf, continued

WHAT HOMESCHOOLING CAN FEEL LIKE

☐ **The Call of the Wild + Free**

Ainsley Arment

The founder of the Wild + Free community invites families to reclaim wonder in childhood: time outdoors, great books, adventure, and freedom. Part inspiration, part practical guide to a modern homeschool.

Read this if you want a warm picture of what homeschooling can feel like.

☐ **The Brave Learner**

Julie Bogart

The founder of Brave Writer says learning thrives on enchantment, not pressure. Add surprise, mystery, risk, and adventure, follow your child's curiosity, and be a brave learner yourself.

Read this if homeschooling already feels like a grind and you want the joy back.

A REAL FAMILY'S STORY

☐ **Taking Back My Life**

Mary Wainwright

My friend Mary's memoir. She went from the public school world and a hospital NICU stay to homeschooling, home birth, and homesteading, taking back control of her family's time, learning, food, and health.

Read this if you want a real, relatable story of one family's shift.

AS I READ

One idea that stood out to me:

One thing I want to try because of this book:

Watch how your child learns

Watch: Video 3, Part 3 — Learning, Not Performing

> **Do this:** For 3 days, watch your child like a curious scientist, not a teacher with a grade book. Keep this page on the fridge and jot things down in the moment.

DAY	WHAT I NOTICED	WHAT IT TELLS ME
Day 1		
Day 2		
Day 3		

What does my child get curious about without being asked?

When are they most focused and absorbed?

When they don't know something, what do they do? (ask, try, give up, get frustrated)

So what does "learning" look like for my child?

Daily connection

Watch: Video 3, Part 4 — Daily Connection

> **Do this:** Pick one ritual. Do it for about **10 minutes, at the same time every day**, for one week. Small and consistent changes the feel of your whole home.

- ☐ Read aloud together
- ☐ A walk outside together, no phones*
- ☐ "Best part, hard part" of your day, at dinner or bedtime
- ☐ A board game or card game
- ☐ One-on-one time with each child, their choice
- ☐ Draw, build, or play something together
- ☐ My idea: _____

Reading aloud? Any library books are fine for now. In Week 3, I'll show you how to get a whole month of great books at once.

*A nature app is fine: try Merlin Bird ID to name the birds you hear, or snap a photo of a bug and look it up together.

Our time each day: _____ **What might get in the way:** _____

My reset for hard days: _____

Ideas: stop, go outside, read together, start again after lunch.

MY 7-DAY TRACKER

DAY	DID IT?	WHAT I NOTICED
Day 1	☐	
Day 2	☐	
Day 3	☐	
Day 4	☐	
Day 5	☐	
Day 6	☐	
Day 7	☐	

Week 2 check-in

> **A quick pause**, not a test. Notice where you are before Week 3.

One "school" assumption I'm ready to let go of:

Something about my child that surprised me this week:

How did our daily connection ritual go?

ONE HONEST NOTE FROM ME

Deschooling can feel like you're "doing nothing." You're not. You're resetting what learning looks like in your home, for your kids and for you. Give it time. A rule of thumb many families use is about a month for every year your child was in school, but there's no deadline.

— Cheryl

Notes