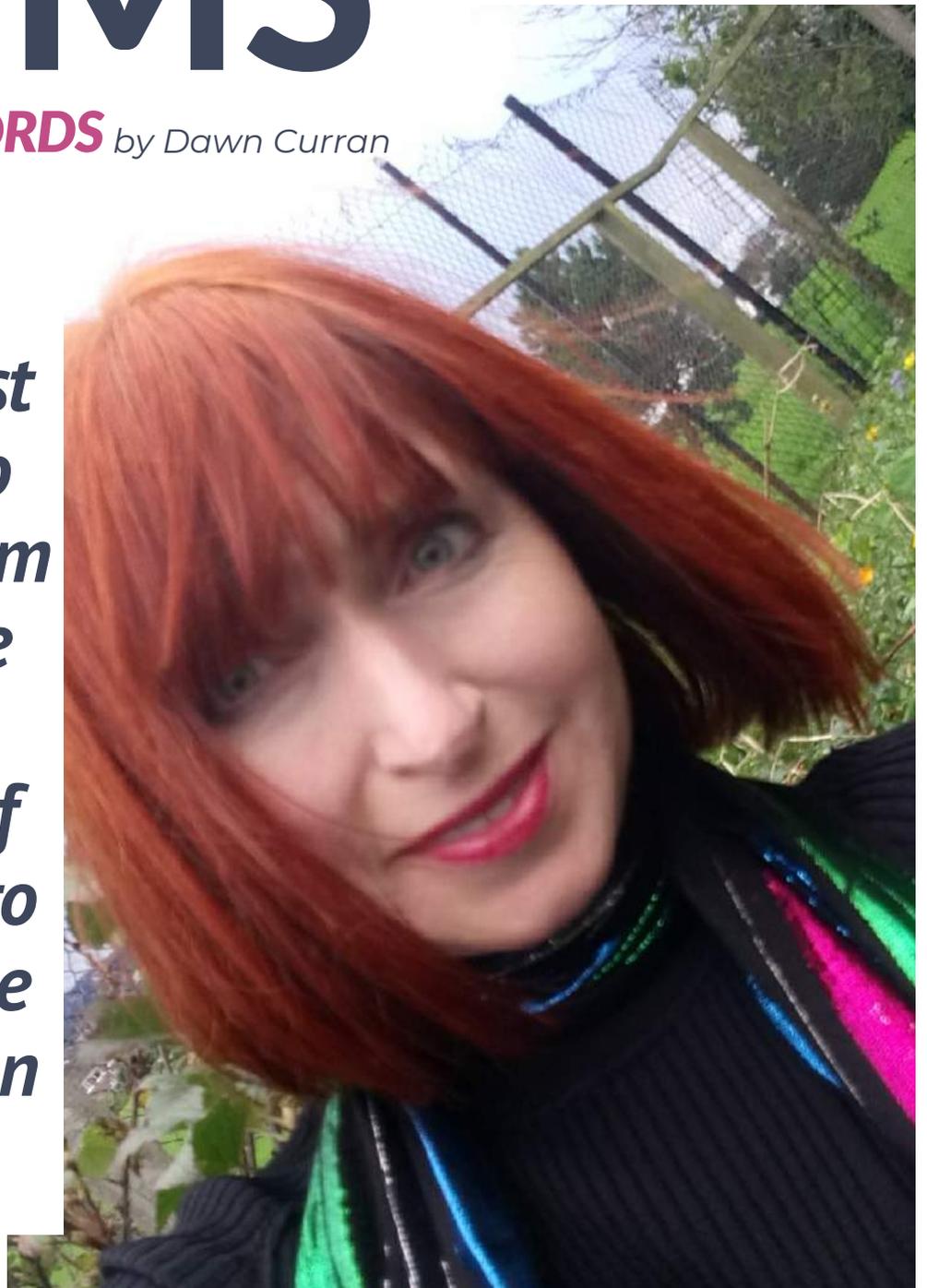


Lights On MUMS

IN MY OWN WORDS by Dawn Curran

I was first drawn to Explorium when we were a couple of years into our home education journey.



My husband and I had experience with the school system with our older six children. We knew there wasn't a magic wand we could wave that would create any huge changes to the path they were on, and had de-registered our two youngest children for different reasons.

My daughter, who has dyslexia, wasn't getting the support she needed, and her creativity and joy were being crushed out of her in an environment that wanted her to 'fit in the box' and learn like everyone else. It affected her to such an extent that she began to have nightmares about school.

My youngest son had become bored with learning, and was totally unmotivated. Before he began school, he used to think, talk about and play with maths all the time. He said, 'I used to love maths, but when I started school I hated maths. It was boring. School was boring'.

They were both happy with home educating. They had physical and mental freedom and hours of outdoor play everyday. They had peaceful, leisurely, healthy meals and plenty of sleep; they had a healthy social life and a lot of quality family time. But there were still things that were bothering me. My son still hadn't rediscovered his love of learning - he did the academic work I gave him each day, but he couldn't wait to get his 'work' out of the way to do the things he was interested in.



I learned at Explorium that I was still doing things 'old school', drawing a line between academics and his interests instead of embracing the energy and magic he experienced when creating. The pathway to exciting, meaningful learning was there all the time! It was looking at me every single day in the way he created stories in imaginative play, in words, and in the way he drew exciting adventures. He was a story-maker! Not only could he develop the gifts he had in these areas, but he could become a Lights On learner through creating his stories.

At times though, he would get frustrated during various projects and would give up. This is where learning about neuroscience and participating in the mindset challenges helped him to develop a growth mindset, and the Lights On framework helped him create strategies to overcome the challenges as they arose.



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Through home education, my daughter got the help she needed for literacy in a way that was not harmful to her self confidence. It was the 'never being enough' no matter how hard she tried in school that was the ultimate insult; the comments of not concentrating enough, not working hard enough, of not doing enough. She worked harder than any other person in that room.

Once she began home educating she was almost instantly back to her enthusiastic young learner self. She explored so much, learned so many things, and was interested in almost everything - cooking, knitting, drawing, crafting, art, building mathematical shapes with various mediums, nature journaling and more - but she wasn't diving into anything too deeply.

The Lights On framework gave her a way to go deep into some of her projects. We did this in a focused, manageable way, building draft on draft, allowing her to make mistakes, learn from them and apply what she learned at the next level. She was discovering exciting learning opportunities every single day.

When I started the SYLO programme I wanted to discover how to create an amazing culture of learning in our home, the ultimate in personalised learning; learning that was not 'done' to my children, but was in sync with them as unique individuals. I wanted them to become lifelong learners, self-led, and going for excellence in their greatest passions. And I wanted them to enjoy the journey!

I wanted us to discover how to learn in the best way possible, to achieve our dreams. I wanted to understand learning on a deeper level, so I could become a strong facilitator for my children and so they could make their dreams a reality.

What surprised me was that by rediscovering my own interests and passions, especially

photography, I could lead Lights On learning by example - exploring, making mistakes, talking about frustrations, finding strategies to overcome challenges, and finally celebrating. All I had to do was model it.

With me modelling learning, we have been able to discuss the mistakes and challenges we all have, and see it all as part of the process. I am not asking my children to learn and make mistakes, to be vulnerable, without doing the same thing myself.

Society expects children to be vulnerable, to show up and put their learning under an evaluative gaze, often without choice, and that is not something adults often willingly do themselves! I cannot make a stronger show of believing in Lights On learning than by being part of it myself.

We can share, discuss, and throw a bit of humour into the process as well. If we get stuck, there are always strategies we can share, or we can find one together.

One of the first things I learned was to include my youngest children and my grandchildren in the learning portal whenever it was beneficial

to do so, so that they could understand what I was learning too. They especially loved the neuroscience behind the learning.

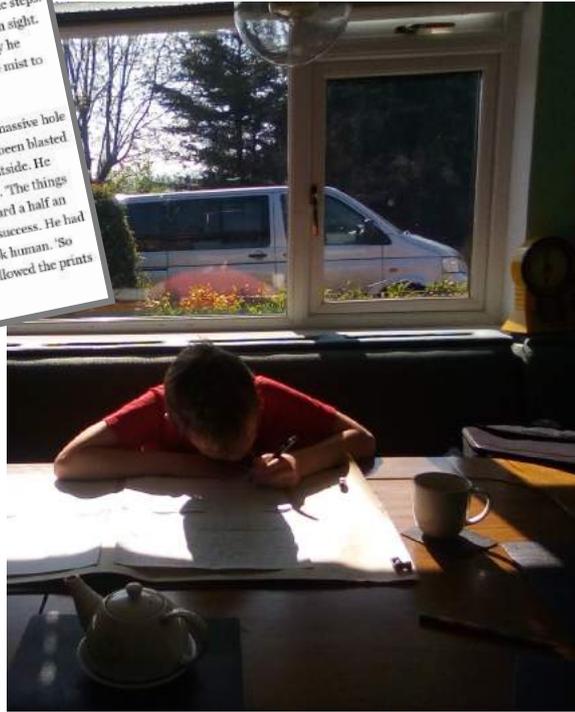
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We dived into the mindset missions as a family, and we experienced all of those emotions of learning - the excitement, the frustrations, the 'oh no' moments, the wonder, humour, surprise and happiness. We really experienced the energy of Lights On learning. It was all exciting stuff, and it is something that we continue to do on a regular basis.

We also explore and experiment often, and it is wonderful to discover new areas of interest through the learning carousels. The children have been working on their personal projects within the Explorium framework, taking their learning to a much deeper level.

The guard saw it from his tower. A long black line moving in the direction of the fortress. He turned to his partner. 'What is that thing?' No answer. He peered out of the tower. A dark stain marked the steps. The guard quickly ran out of the tower. There wasn't anyone in sight. Then everything went black. When he woke up it was so foggy he couldn't see his fingers. He stumbled around, waiting for the mist to clear. When it did, nothing was familiar.

He walked up rotted steps to a rotted house. There was a massive hole in the wall and a skeleton lay on the floor. The stairs had been blasted apart and the food was rotted. The guard walked back outside. He walked to the town centre and found a mound of bodies. The things that made this massacre must be gone,' thought the guard a half an hour later. He had searched the entire fortress but no success. He had found footprints but they were massive and didn't look human. 'So they are riding something,' thought the guard. He followed the prints out of the fortress through the wasteland for miles.



My son has created this fabulous story which he is continuing to grow.



At first, he had trouble keeping the story moving, but with the strategy of writing every single day, even for only 5 minutes, he was able to develop it.

My daughter has taken an original drawing of a fantasy bird, making her first rough draft on paper, then another draft using fabric markers on cotton, then with paint and gutta on silk; she has worked a couple of different designs on that material.

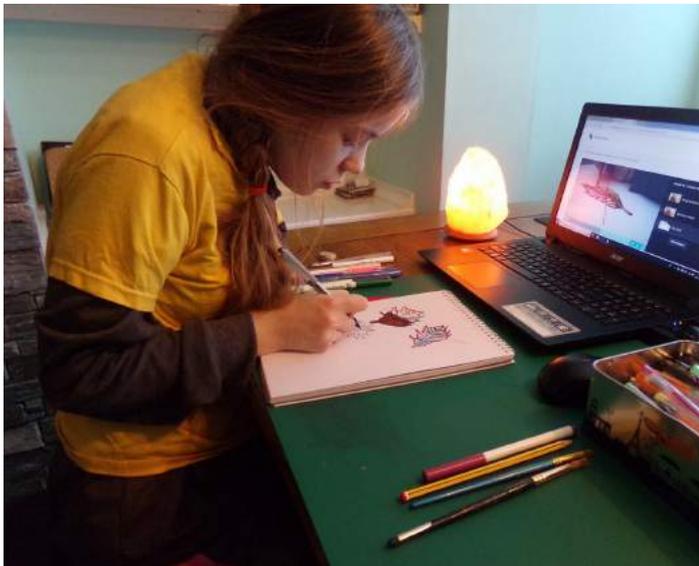
She has also twisted wire into an armature as a base for her sculptures and is creating various animals, mainly horses and dogs.

And in a collaborative project, my children are making a detective film with my grandchildren.



Personally, I had some major mindshifts that I consider really important for my moving forward. First, dropping the limiting beliefs that I held, especially that due to her dyslexia and because she learned differently to most other people around her, my daughter could not cope in groups. She has gone on to surprise me recently with her work in physical theatre, her swim lessons and her dance class, and this was because she knew I believed in her.

I also stepped back to let her show up in her own way, and importantly, I learned that it was okay if not everyone 'got' her, because by showing up as her true authentic self, she made a lot of fantastic friends and was able to participate and add her own unique qualities to the group. Her confidence and belief in her strengths through projects has transferred to her learning in all areas. She understands herself a lot more as a learner.



**I also decided
that if you are
not going to
drop a label,
then wear it
with pride.**

In my daughter's words, 'Yes, I have dyslexia, but I think in patterns and colour, and I can solve problems. I can come up with some really good ideas!'

I realised the children need to take ownership of their learning; they need choice and to be able to control what they are setting out to do. We can support and facilitate, but they are in charge. I also found that learning and growth are a continual cycle, and that the further you come in your journey, new challenges will happen, so we need to continually practise and exercise the brain to work.



A daily gratitude journal helps you to notice the good stuff and rewire the brain to see the positives. I've also seen that making mistakes is necessary for learning - if we are afraid to risk doing something out of our comfort zone because we will get it wrong, then we will never reach for anything new, and we will never grow.

WHERE WE ARE NOW? WE ARE STRONG, SELF-LED LEARNERS, AND WE HAVE SO MUCH FREEDOM TO EXPLORE AND LEARN ABOUT THE THINGS WE ARE INTERESTED IN - EVEN WHEN THINGS GET TOUGH.

Looking forward, I have a few interests on the go which I would like to develop for myself, such as my interests in photography and dance. I would also like to help all of my children see their big dreams or visions as something they can achieve with the right mindset and hard work. We are also in the midst of putting together a small business idea with a few of my children involving their art and design. These are very exciting times.

Written by Dawn Curran
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If you want your story to change like Dawn's has, book in for a learning consultation with us: www.explorium.co.uk/apply

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