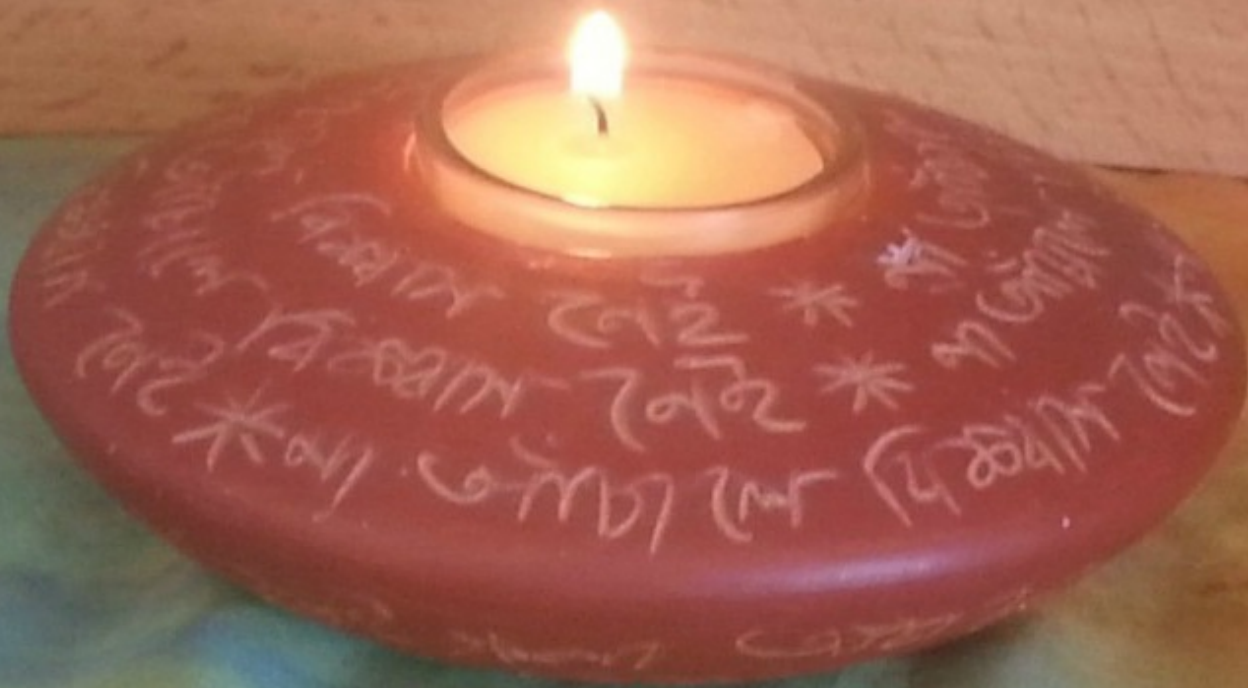


Understanding Waldorf?



What is Waldorf?

Waldorf... do you understand it... or are there things you discount?

You know me... I tend to write about things that are on my mind... sometimes things that keep me up at night, lol... often things that come up on the Facebook groups or in my in person interactions with friends or some of the families I work with. Today I thought I would tackle a few things that I see often. Maybe it will resonate and maybe it won't. We'll see.

Do you understand Waldorf?

Waldorf is not like anything else. I can spend two paragraphs talking to you about the anthroposophical underpinnings or quoting Steiner (I can totally do that, just ask!) but what I find most helpful to parents coming to Waldorf and even those that have dipped their toes for a while is to talk about the REAL WORLD. I am pretty choleric. I love the pretty and the fluff and LOVE LOVE LOVE the inner work of Waldorf, but the choleric in me loves the nuts and bolts practical parts of Waldorf. The understanding. The logic.

Waldorf is about age appropriate material at the correct time. It is about bringing things at the proper time in development. Who defined this development? Steiner didn't completely define it, but he did pull it into the realm of education. From this we know that children in the first 7 years are rooted in imitation. The second 7 years are rooted in imagination. The third set of 7 years in truth. For a complete conversation about this topic, please check out WaldorfEducation.org.

Waldorf isn't about delaying academics as much as it is about not pushing them and allowing the child to unfold. So often people think of education as filling a vessel. Waldorf doesn't think that way. We know that everything is contained inside the vessel, as teachers we draw it forth. We do that by educating the whole child. Each part of the child is met – head, heart and hands. Now that doesn't have to happen in the traditional Waldorf school way. Sure there are iconic things that you will see and know that it is Waldorf, but there are also other ways to accomplish some things. Waldorf is about being flexible and teaching our children to think flexibly. We can't draw forth at the appropriate time if we are stuffing things in before they are ready. Take your time. Let them unfold like the beautiful flower they are.

This curriculum belongs to the Divine.

Okay, so I may get bashed for that one, but I do believe with all my heart that this IS the curriculum for humanity. I do not believe that Waldorf is just a way to "do homeschool" this is a way to reframe your life. So that sounded cultish! LOL it wasn't meant to. While I do NOT believe Waldorf is a religion, I do believe that it is a way to frame the world. If we had more people educated with Steiner in mind maybe we would have more peace. More love. More responsibility. Accountability is something that this planet is sorely lacking but 100 years ago a man talked about it, he talked about how we needed to educate children so they were free thinkers AND respected each other.

Understanding Waldorf

When I hear people say “Waldorf just doesn’t work for us” I get super stumped. What part of educating the whole child doesn’t work? I often find that it is a lack of understanding that there are things in Waldorf that take time to see to fruition. Like the vitamins we take and don’t see an immediate change from – over time we feel better, Waldorf is like that. Form drawing and the endless painting, drawing and modeling. The understanding cultures by discovering their stories, their economics and geography. How all the pieces intertwine. That is the essence of Waldorf. That is the big picture.

As you are learning, allow yourself the space to get frustrated. Allow yourself the time to climb mountains. Allow yourself to give a gift to your children, a gift that will carry them their whole lives – whether you have a perfect Waldorf classroom at home or whether you live what Waldorf means to you. Don’t give up just because you struggle to understand something. It is through adversity that we find our strengths. Just allow.

Recently I had the pleasure of attending the graduation of new Waldorf teachers. It was a wonderful reminder to me of just how living this work is. It was also a call for me to share so that hopefully our readers are also seeing it as a living work. I often get questions from moms that are concerned they aren’t doing it right or that they are missing something. They stress about the perfect circle time or the fact that Waldorf is baking centered and they don’t bake. Sometimes it is the worry that they won’t be good at painting or drawing or their kids are too wild.

STOP.

Let’s take a moment to breathe in Waldorf. You can almost... almost breathe it in from all the pretty blog pictures and videos of Waldorf homes... almost. We are not looking for the almost. We are looking for you to feel comfortable in your own skin doing this. That comfort doesn’t come from devouring all the information you can and asking a bunch of Facebook questions. It comes from somewhere deeper.

WHERE?

Close your eyes and be still. It is that seed that is deep within you. It stirred when you first learned about Waldorf. It gave you the courage to join those awesome Facebook groups. It made you rearrange all the kids Christmas gifts. But it also has more. So much more than the fluff. Only seeing the fluff is how this can feel flat. It is just a picture. It has to penetrate your soul and begin to really grow. That growth comes from studying, from learning and from DOING. Stop collecting, stop pinning, start doing. Once you feel the flow of the paint, once you manipulate the beeswax in your hands... be still. It can’t live for them if it doesn’t first live IN you.

Know your stuff. Do the planning. Do your inner work. Practice yourself. Take the time. It is only when it lives in you that you can bring it to them.

Use those resources to study and then DO. Don’t be a collector be a doer. Realize that it will take some time to let this fully grow in you. I have been at this for many years and there is still growth in my limbs! A LOT of it! Remember not to compare yourself to others, it is your own pace that matters – direction is more important than speed.