

How do you get children excited about maths?

Submitted by Sarah Fitz-Claridge on 20 June, 2005 - 19:58

Posted on the Home-ed List on 18 Dec., 1996, at 9:28 a.m.

by **Sarah Fitz-Claridge** (<http://www.fitz-claridge.com/>)



Does anyone else find all this stuff about getting children to memorise maths facts and do tests deeply depressing? It is all so unnecessary, and it seems so sad that even home educated children cannot escape the destructive effects of well-meaning educational manipulators.

You shouldn't *be* trying to get a child to “do” maths. If the child isn't interested, find out what the child *is* interested in, and help him to pursue that instead.

The reason mathematics is such a big problem is precisely because of the horrendous educational coercion and manipulation with which it is associated. It is not surprising that parents have difficulty getting their children to do maths, because the parents themselves shudder at the thought of it.

The way I got over my school-induced mathematics phobia was by spending time conversing with people who are passionate about mathematical ideas, and who told me with shining eyes about the latest mathematical discoveries. To start with, we kept well away from bits of maths that are taught in school, and thus avoided invoking the

Maths Alarm! Warning! Mind will shut down in ten seconds!

But getting over education-induced mathematics phobia is by no means easy, so why not do something unusually positive and *don't give your child a phobia in the first place!* It is easy: just *forget about “teaching” the child maths.* That way, the child may not be too damaged to become interested and to pursue maths in years to come. *First do no harm.*

A home-educated friend of mine whose education was entirely autonomous and largely autodidactic and who certainly wasn't “taught” maths, *did* become excited about maths, and chose to go to college to study maths. He was younger than his classmates by several years, and he found it amazing that his classmates seemed to have so much difficulty with the courses. As a child, he used to talk to his father about maths (amongst other things) over a pint of beer in the local pub. His father was *not* “trying to excite his interest in maths” or “teach” him. My friend attributes his interest and creativity in this area to the very fact that he did not have parents bent on educating him.

More articles

- [TCS Theory and Practice](#)
- [Feeding The Family: Some Tips For the Cooking-Phobic](#)
- [No Way Out - And Loving It](#)
- [Why Stuff-Management Matters](#)
- [How Would You Like It?](#)
- [The Education of Karl Popper](#)
- [Unschooling And Schooling as a Continuum](#)
- [Breaking The Spiral Of Coercion](#)