

- Don't expect the home education environment to look like school. Home education doesn't really work that way. There's no need for a dedicated schoolroom or strict timetable. With home education, life and learning are greatly intertwined, with everything being a learning opportunity. Learning doesn't just happen in an environment that looks like school.

- Don't suggest putting the children back in school if your loved one tells you they've had a tough day. Instead, think about what you can do to help. Are you in a position to assist with an activity, such as a game or a play at the park with the children?

- Don't show up unannounced unless the parents have told you that's okay. A family's plans and routines are part of their home education life. Don't assume that because they're home educating, they'll be home and therefore it's okay to pop in at any time. It's always best to call ahead and arrange a time.

- Don't give the parents your personal opinions on what you think they should be doing. Not only is it inappropriate, but you may damage your relationship with your loved one. Home educators greatly appreciate support from their families and friends. Don't be the person who makes them feel put down for their decision.

- Don't criticise the parents because you feel the child isn't 'where they should be'. The parent is the best judge of that and you may not be aware of any difficulties the child may be facing.

There's a lot you can do to support your loved one: simply being a listening, non-judgemental ear can go a long way and be appreciated.

Perhaps you are a grandparent or relative who would love to spend more time with the kids. Home education works really well for extended family relationships as there's often more time for visits. You could visit a gallery or adventure park together, or invite the family over to teach the kids your favourite recipe. The possibilities with home education really are endless!

Home education is increasingly becoming more common, however families will usually always experience some negative comments and unfortunate assumptions from others. You may find that people give their negative opinions to you personally, if your loved ones come up in conversation. A simple reply of "they are doing what is best for their children" should suffice.

Your support and positive words really do go a long way.



Supporting friends and family who home educate



With compliments of
Home Education Network Victoria

www.home-ed.vic.edu.au

HEN helpline 9517 7107

So, a loved one has told you they're going to home educate their children.

DON'T PANIC!

It's really okay.

You will be fine!

These parents have thought long and hard about their decision. There's a load of information and research out there on home education and chances are they've done their homework behind the scenes and come to decide that home education will be the best fit for their children.

They may feel apprehensive telling you, or others, because they are afraid of negative comments. Unfortunately it is quite common for home educators to encounter opposition from family and friends, who they had hoped would be supportive and respectful of their decision.

Here are some friendly Do's and Don'ts of supporting a friend or relative who has made the decision to home educate.

YOUR FRIENDLY DO LIST

- Do understand home education is perfectly legal in Australia and has been for a very long time. Each state/territory has education regulations covering home education.

- Do understand that home educated children are not locked up at home all day. They go out in to the community, interacting with people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds, something children in a school classroom don't get to experience as much.

- Do understand that home ed kids have friends, whether it be other home ed kids, kids from school or the kids down the street.

- Do understand that home ed kids get jobs and enrol in uni too. Sometimes, much earlier than their school peers due to the different pathways available.

- Do understand that being withdrawn from school due to problems such as a bullying can have a very positive impact on the child well in to adulthood.

- Do understand that if the child has had a tough time at school, home education can be the best thing possible for them, in some cases life saving.

- Do trust that the parents have their child's best interests at hearts. They are, after all, the parents and realise their responsibility.

- Respectfully, please do understand these are not your children. And while you may love the kids dearly, remember that the parents have the legal right to choose how to educate their children. Do try to respect that they are the parents and this is their decision, not yours.

- Be an ally. If you don't agree with the decision, try to keep your thoughts private. Your support means much more than you realise. An oppositional comment can be crushing for your loved one, more than you may be aware of. Being an ally also strengthens your relationship, and they may be more likely to consult you and inform you if you are supportive.

YOUR FRIENDLY DON'T LIST

- Don't quiz the kids when you see them, to test that they're being 'educated properly'. This is inappropriate, hurtful to the parents and often uncomfortable for the kids.

- Don't ask "but what about socialisation?" This is the most hated question asked of home educators. Home education doesn't mean isolation and being cut off from peers. This is a tired old myth!

- Don't keep second guessing the decision to home educate in an effort to get the parents to change their decision, especially in front of the children. You may not be aware of the whole situation or difficulties the child may be experiencing, hence the decision to keep the child out of the mainstream school system.