

10 Steps That Led Me to a Wholesome Life & My Homesteading Dreams

First of all, a wholesome life to me doesn't mean I have to "do it all", or be perfect. In fact, I've found it's quite the opposite. The simpler things are, the easier it is to be at peace & enjoy everything. To me, it's like baking something in the kitchen. If I start to try and bake a cake and my kitchen and house are a disaster before I even begin, all I'm going to be is distracted & stressed. But, if I take the time to clean up a bit, organize, *and simplify* my surroundings, everything flows much smoother and I can enjoy the process. I try to apply the same concept to my life, while remembering it's about progress, not perfection. As a recovering perfectionist, this is something that took time to learn. But this is how I've gotten to a wonderful, fulfilling place in my life, and eventually was able to start living my homesteading dreams. This did not happen overnight, so please don't be discouraged no matter which step in the journey you are. I had to prioritize certain things with the budget I had, & fit in things when I could (which is how we still operate today).

I could chat about this for hours but below are 10 simplified steps I took to get where I wanted to be:

1. Start with a Plan & Get Organized

I outlined my goals and visions for my life. Focused on paying off any debts we had (*sighs* in student loan interest), and tried to make sure we were setting ourselves up for future success by not spending more than we made. Make yourself a monthly budget & start by making sure you are not spending more than you make.

In a nutshell, I started a "Life Binder" with everything important to me, all in one place. My hopes & dreams, my To-Do lists, my schedules, etc. This truly helped me clear the noise out of my head. Get yourself a binder & start adding in everything that you think about on a daily basis- grocery lists, To-Do's, your calendar, your recipes, crafts you want to try, etc. Make it as detailed as you can & the trick is to keep it all in one place. If you're currently a techy person & prefer to have things on your phone or something of the sort, I encourage you to *try* keeping a physical version instead. There really is something about physically writing & offloading everything in your mind into a physical list & space. Figure out your dreams and goals for your homestead. What do you hope to have? A garden? Chickens? Large personal food storage? A farm stand on your property? Make a vision statement for yourself. Mine was: "Within 2-4 years, my husband & I will have paid off our debts, own a home, start trying for a baby, & start preparing our life to operate a homestead".

2. Simplified my Home & Life

I am not a minimalist whatsoever. In fact, some might call me a hoarder. I hold so much sentimental value to things, and things in my home bring me so much joy. Plus, I am a huge hobbyist and I LOVE crafting. But, for a while my home was in total chaos. Nothing had a place, my basement/attic/closets were packed to the brim and I couldn't enjoy anything because I felt like my life was in disarray. I highly suggest simplifying what you have. Sink time into organizing your home, and my number one tip (probably controversial): it doesn't matter how *much* you have, it matters *where* it goes. If everything has its own home, it makes keeping your home clean, infinitely easier. Before I bring anything new into my home or start any new projects, I think about where it will go in my home & make sure it has a designated space.

3. Learned the Basics

So, there are some essential skills such as gardening, cooking, animal husbandry, food preservation, and even basic carpentry that I think everyone who wants to begin homesteading should learn. Doesn't mean you need to learn everything all at once either, but focus on learning about what your goals are! Use your free resources- the library, social media, community centers & your local town's groups, etc. Refer back to your vision statement for yourself & figure out which goals you have, & which skills would be most beneficial to learn first.

4. Became Aware of the Products I Used

After realizing the trickery of mass-produced foods, it also sent me down the rabbit hole of the products I use in my home and on my body. I started taking a look at my cleaning sprays and soaps, candles, perfumes, shampoos, makeup, deodorants, laundry detergent, dishwasher detergent, etc.

I started by making swaps for cleaner products from the grocery store, but some of the things I was finding did not really fit into my budget long-term – specifically cleaning spray or disinfectant spray. Making this at home is pennies compared to buying it at the store for me.

But my point is, switching these products allowed me to control and eliminate toxins in my home & keep my families health my main priority.

5. Switched to REAL Food

I'm not here to get you to go on a certain diet. But I am here to tell you that I know without a doubt there is ONE diet that is guaranteed to benefit everyone & be “right” for everyone, & that is a diet of real food.

By real food, I am not necessarily even referring to “non-processed” foods. We still technically consume processed foods, i.e. foods that are processed in a facility & packaged to sell. But the key-word here is “real”. For example, we may buy tortillas, a cereal, a pasta from the grocery store sometimes, but I am extremely intentional about the ingredients it is made with. We absolutely avoid anything with added chemicals, preservatives, artificial flavorings, artificial colors, etc. when we can.

As a family we also do our best to avoid added sugars or seed oils, but this is something that you need to decide what is right for your family. My suggestion is to just move towards a diet of real food, made from real ingredients to begin with, then go from there. The goal is not perfection, that's impossible. But if you start with a few things at a time and find products you can switch things with that suit your family's needs, you can reach your goals.

My last point with this, is hydration, and drinking quality water. A large portion of the population is dehydrated. I aim to drink 120 oz of water each day, with a portion of that being organic coconut water to provide natural electrolytes. We use a “Berkey” water filter, but there are so many options on the market to filter your water (whole house filtering systems, pitcher systems, etc.) just find something that is right for your family.

6. Started Gardening

You do not need acres upon acres to create a garden to supply food for your family. My first garden was completely in pots on the steps and patio of our old mill building house, and it supplied food for us for the better part of the year.

Sure, there is also a learning curve to gardening once you fully get into it. You can learn about pest management, soil preparation, companion planting, garden zones, etc. But don't forget how easy gardening can be. Seeds + soil + sun + water.

Some crops I recommend regardless of where you live or what your garden zone is are: cherry tomatoes, zucchini, radish, lettuce, herbs, squash, & cucumbers. These are easy to grow & while you're learning, will still provide you with fresh produce for your family. If you don't have any land to do an in-ground garden, consider building a raised bed out of wood or cinderblocks, or using pots (all of the crops I mentioned above do beautifully in large pots!)

7. Pursuit of Self Sufficiency

At this point, we have now begun making a lot of things at home instead of purchasing them at the store. For two reasons- we can control the ingredients within them & it saves us money (I do enjoy making things to, so I guess three reasons!). Yogurts, dressings, sauces, puddings, cookies, popsicles, doughs, grated cheese, dry pantry mixes, nut butters, breads, crackers, jams. Once you open this door of beginning to cook things from scratch you will realize how easy it can be, and actually how much money it can save you overall. My page is a great resource for this & I will be having multiple resources coming out soon with all of these recipes in one place. But the online community, books, your local farmer's markets, are all such wonderful resources to find the recipes you may need.

Other ways we pursue self-sufficiency are canning/preserving food, collecting rainwater, composting, and simply growing our own food. You will define what goals you have for your family based on your vision statement for yourselves. Take it one step at a time & start with a few new skills, adding more as you gain confidence.

8. Raising Animals/Livestock

For me, raising animals has been the most fulfilling part of this lifestyle. If you are wanting to add animals to your homestead you'll need to do some research to ensure that owning them is allowed (for example HOAs or towns may have ordinances on what you can/cannot have).

Once you decide what you'd like to start with you'll of course need to learn the best care practices for them, what they need for shelter, food, water, additional nutrients, what their common ailments are, what breeds do best in your climate, etc.

I think bunnies (kept outdoors) and chickens are excellent first animals to begin a homestead with. They are relatively easy, and chickens are very rewarding obviously from their eggs.

Owning animals is much more than just adding a pet to your home. Livestock depends on you, rain or shine. No matter the temperature or weather. No matter if you're sick. Being responsible for animals has been a wonderful form of self-discipline for my husband and I, but also a great learning experience for our daughter. There's a phrase "there is no livestock without deadstock" and it couldn't ring more true. Inevitably you will mess up, nature will run its course, diseases will strike. Etc. So, just make sure you're prepared for the highest of highs, and lowest of lows.

9. Self-Care & Balance

It is easy to get caught up in the race of "wanting more", especially as a homesteader. But it is also easy to become overwhelmed & burnt-out, especially as a homesteader. It may take some time, but eventually you'll find your balance between the things you can realistically do, and the things you *hope* to do someday.

It took me a while of organizing my dreams vs to-do's, making realistic goals and lists based on our current finances, etc. to figure out a good balance for our family.

Something I also tried to keep in consideration was taking care of myself, one of my biggest struggles honestly. I have always been a giver & never know how to slow down enough to see if I may personally be struggling. But after some intense battling with anxiety/panic attacks I was forced to slow down and really figure out what to do for myself when I'm feeling overwhelmed. So, my advice to you would be to do this before it's too late and before you're feeling burnt out. You're not failing if you need a break, we all need to rest and recharge.

10. Focused on What I Truly Loved

I started focusing on community, God, my daughter, husband, family, crafts, and leaving out the things that didn't serve me. What do I mean? From a "homesteading" standpoint- If you don't love making sourdough- don't make it! If you prefer to buy your butter at the store, do it! My point is, only YOU can decide what is best for your family. Homesteading is not a competition of who can do the most, and anyone who tells you you're not a homestead if you don't "xyz" is simply wrong.

Lastly, I'm certainly not here to convert anyone, judge anyone, or exile anyone who doesn't have the same beliefs as I do. But it is so glaringly obvious to me that my life did a 180 once I started reaching out to God and having a relationship with Him, so this is something I did want to include because it would be a huge disservice to myself if I didn't.

I hope you'll follow along, and I am here to help you with whatever I can. If you ever have questions for me I'm happy to try to answer, and if I don't know the answer, point you in the direction of someone who does.

Here's to striving for a wholesome life, a life we deserve & can be proud of,

Hannah
A Stay at Homestead Mom