

## Hygge: The Danish Practice of Coziness

The four Ports of Entry are best nurtured when we consider the properties of hominess and connection. In this, the Danes are experts, and their lifestyle has caught the global imagination.

In the last several years, articles and books about *hygge* (pronounced *HOO-gah*), the Danish word for “coziness,” have proliferated like wildflowers in spring. The Danes, subject to eighteen to twenty hours of darkness per day in winter, have perfected the art of making the home a place of light, warmth, connection, and well-being. They believe that productivity in the workplace and restfulness at home rely not on better technology or tools, but on how well each person is nurtured and welcomed into those spaces.

The health of the mind, body, heart, and spirit depends on creating a context that relieves stress and improves concentration and relaxation. *Hygge* fits the bill! Add one *hygge* feature to your lives today. It's not always the program that's the problem; sometimes it's just the context.

- **Light and color:** Danes burn thirteen pounds of candle wax per capita per year!<sup>10</sup> Candles, small table lamps, twinkle lights, LED or battery-operated candles, and lanterns offer warm cozy lighting. In the fall, when it gets dark early, a pot of tea simmering on a tea warmer with a bright tea light within invites children to gather.
- **Fragrance and sound:** The aroma of baking cookies, the scent of pine in a centerpiece, musical scores from favorite films, soundscapes of nature—these create an invisible mood.
- **Food:** Half-moon orange slices with cinnamon, a square of chocolate, a cup of warm tea—the simple act of dipping a hand repeatedly into a bowl of almonds and dried apricots while working on math problems can make the difference! Good protein for the mind, good action for the body, good color for the eyes, yummy flavor for the heart.
- **Cuddling:** Soft throws, fuzzy socks, a mountain of pillows, those baggy pants you only wear at home, wool for knitting, sheepskins on the floor in front of the fireplace, chairs that envelop you—cuddle up! Snuggle a puppy or kitty cat.
- **The outdoors:** In addition to making the home a cuddly, nourishing, well-lit space, *hygge* includes a love of nature at any time of year. Bring some of it inside (pinecone arrangements, roaring fires, plants) and go out to it (hikes, walks, skating, visits to parks). Look for hearts in nature. I've found puddles, snow stacked up between tree limbs, and a cactus in the shape of hearts. Getting outside in all temperatures and seasons maintains your circadian rhythm, and keeps everyone from going stir-crazy in a long season of snow, rain, or heat.
- **Connection:** Being with loved ones is a top priority. Homeschooling allows us to spend the days with our favorite people (our kids). Connection is created when your little people see that you want their happiness—a happiness they would choose for themselves.