

# Unschooling FAQ

## Unschooling 101

Yes, you can quit school, get an education, and go on to university and college!



Unschooling is self-directed education

### **In one sentence, what is unschooling?**

Unschooling is education whereby the learner determines **what** he learns (content, pace, depth), **when** he learns it (any age, or not at all), **where** he learns (home, community, online or school) and **how** he learns (self-taught, teacher-taught, facilitated, classroom, apprenticeship, online, correspondence, book, video, game, experiential, lecture, volunteering, project, job, or travel).

### **Isn't that giving a lot of control to children?**

Ultimately, every child has this ability to determine what he learns because every learner decides what to remember and what to forget, whether they are homeschooled or institutionally schooled. Children who tune out, act out or drop out of school are already deciding what parts of their education they will keep and which parts will be dumped. Unschoolers are just more direct about it.

### **How do children learn if there is no teacher? How do you know learning has taken place with no exams or writing?**

All humans and mammals learn whether there is a teacher or not. If one breathes, they learn. Babies learn to walk, toddlers talk, preschoolers learn to add and subtract, school-agers learn to read, all without school.

How do we know if our children are getting enough vitamin D? Observation. It's a very powerful assessment tool. It takes time and documentation and is not used very much in schools. But it is useful in the home. Parents know exactly what their children know because they spend so much time with them.

The learning process works like this: When children read something in a book or off a screen or is told by a lecturer, some of that information is stored in short term memory. Most students use this information to pass the test, the course and finish assignments.

The act of using the information and making associations strengthens neural brain connections and moves the learning into long term memory storage.

For society to know that learning has occurred, children need to produce output such as a written expression, graphic expression, physical expression or verbal expression so that it will move into long term memory. Many unschooled children do this. But it is not documented. Some children express learning through their play, and others through product production. Some expression will be invisible to others and only done by the child, such as reflection. Other times, the observers in the environment will see, hear, touch, taste or smell what the child has produced, as a teacher would see in a classroom setting.

Parents, as the education professional in the home, have great powers of observation. Teachers, as the education professional in the classroom, have to use many different assessment methods because they are managing 45 kids, not 1.

### **How is unschooling different from homeschooling and school?**

Unschooling is a self-directed education. If a learner in school or homeschool is empowered to decide the **what, when, where and how** of his education, then he can technically unschool at a free-learning school or in a homeschool.

### **Is this new?**

This philosophy of self-directed education is almost a 100 years old, beginning in 1921 with Summerhill school in the UK.

Every parent unschools their child from ages 0-6 years. The child is in the driver's seat of what they learn and given a rich environment of resources, unstructured time, and an adult supervisor/facilitator, vast amounts of learning takes place during those formative years. Children learn to walk, talk in any language, learn to read, play music, do math, distinguish between colors, shapes and numbers before starting formal school at age 6. All children have a learning agenda. Schools tell them to push it aside when they turn six.

### **If Unschooling is so great, why doesn't everyone do it?**

Most people haven't heard about it. Unschooling can't be monetized. It doesn't earn anyone money, or create jobs, so it is not widely advertised. For each dollar the government gives to the education industry, two dollars are taken from families and taxpayers, to pay for it. Families give up their freedom along with their taxes. School is a multi-billion dollar a year industry. Many industry jobs are on the line if the public knows a child can learn from video games just as much as school attendance.

As well, some people want the government to take care of them from cradle to grave and are willing to outsource all their needs such as daycare, preschool, school, university, jobs, and homecare. That's fine. Other's want their family to be the centre of their life and will take care of their own needs at home including birthing, education, work, and even dying. Everyone should be aware of their options.

### **Does unschooling work for everyone?**

Yes, unschooling can work for any child. Even if a child with lots of family adversity (poverty, isolation, parents with untreated mental illness), really wants to become an engineer, nothing will stop her. All it takes is grit. The internet is free. Kahn academy is free. There are no financial boundaries or limitations on education supply now, as most students are now borderless with the internet. There are loans and scholarships. One can't force a child to learn and one can't stop a child from learning.

However, if a child gives up too easily due to temperament, I can see how unschooling might not work. But institutional schools are not going to work either. The child has to want to learn.

### **Where is the research that shows unschooling works to educate students?**

Summerhill School in England, and Sudbury Valley schools in the US, are some of the best examples of research.

The Fraser Report 2007 titled, *Homeschooling: From the extreme to mainstream*, and The Fraser Report 2015 titled, *Homeschooling in Canada: The Current Picture 2015*, are two very good sources of evidence.

Be aware that our culture worships scientific studies. We have a fixation on all things measurable and quantifiable. If it can be measured, it is treasured. Often, unless an issue or phenomenon is studied, and has a measurable outcome, it is perceived as not existing. We need to acknowledge that some things can exist even if they have never been measured or examined. Unschooling has existed outside schools for many years but not any wide spread studies have been undertaken on their effectiveness.

### **How many people unschool in Canada?**

Most homeschooling families estimate that about 10 percent of homeschoolers unschool. There is no hard data because many provinces do not require homeschool registration and most provinces that do, don't keep records on the education philosophy or methods chosen by non-institutional learners.



### **ACADEMIC CONCERNS**

#### **Can kids really “catch up” on 12 years of schooling when they are teenagers?**

Children are not catching up on knowledge but switching to a different track – one that requires more output/demonstration of what they already have learned. They have the

knowledge. Through their play, projects and field trips, they have been picking up all kinds of information, skills and knowledge, but they have little requirement to prove it. When they reach the teens years, they learn the “proving” requirements such as how to take an exam, how to write an essay, how to present a powerpoint, how to speak a debate. They learn the output required to “demonstrate” learning, but the input is already in their brains.

**Some people suggest that unschooling is neglectful child abuse. Families should be regulated; required to register with a school, have certified teachers visit, and children must be made to follow the government curriculum and be tested.**

Teachers are education experts in the classroom. Parents are education experts of their children in their home. Teachers receive no mandatory education in the uniqueness of home education or unschooling in their degree programs.

There is no government academic, social or emotional oversight of parenting children ages 0-5 when critical brain development sets a trajectory of health and education for life, so there is no reason for academic oversight when a child reaches their 6th birthday. There is no need for certified teachers or government to interfere in home education. 99.9% of parents have their child’s best interests at heart and we must entrust them to do the best for their children as we do in the early years as set forth by the Declaration of the United Nations.

Children in abuse situations are already covered by child welfare laws. It is up to society to notice when children display signs of abuse. Many abused children go to school and are not detected. Adults in the park, grocery store, post office, and many places should notice and care if children look abused. It’s not necessary to hammer down laws on homeschooling when 99.999999 % of homeschoolers do not abuse their children.

**Kids don’t know what to learn unless you don’t introduce them to.**

Children are natural born learners. Curiosity begins at birth and never ends. How would a five-year-old know what they want to study? When kids play, they are already taking control of what to study. We just need to get out of their way.

How will they know they like poetry if they are never exposed to poetry? How can a child never be exposed to poetry? Do they not listen to music? Advertisements? Jokes? I don’t know one child that would go through 18 years of childhood without touching on the subject of poetry.

A love of any subject is exhibited at a young age by finding it in everyday life, and not segregated as subjects. Life gives way to learning opportunities and further exploration.

I don't think we have to worry about exposure thanks to the internet. There is no information out there right now, that we can possibly shield from children. We don't directly teach sex education and somehow the kids figure it out!

### **Some parents do facilitate an education, but what about parents who just let kids do nothing all day?**

I have to say that there were times that I was NOT interested in facilitating my child's desire to learn something (like the second world war) and it was NOT my decision to further his education or not- my child would pester me for resources and eventually found them on his own when I wasn't forthcoming- great training practice for future university research.

We seem to think we are the gate-keepers to knowledge, but we are not. We are facilitators when we choose to be – but if we are not, our children will find out what they want to know anyways in spite of any obstacles in their path. It is arrogant of ourselves to think that we can stop a person from learning. You can't force a child to learn and you can't stop a child from learning. I keep thinking about the poem by Kahlil Gibran:

Your children are not your children.

They are the sons and daughters of Life's (learnings) longing for itself.

They come through you but not from you,

And though they are with you, yet they belong not to you.

### **Unschooling doesn't look like a quality education. It looks hit and miss, and quite wishy washy. Children should be forced to follow the government curriculum.**

Who decides the quality of education? Parents? Teachers?

Government? Judges? Social workers? Every curriculum has built in bias. Should it be government bias or parental bias that is taught to children? It should absolutely be the parent's values and control. They know their child best. Education is everywhere.

Children should be free to learn what they want under the loving guidance of the parent.

There is so much content around, that a child can't help but learn. Parents can guide, but a child is the vessel that soaks up so much information. One can't force a child to learn and one can't stop a child from learning. One doesn't have time to learn everything, so one has to make choices. Isn't the learner the best person to decide that?

### **Kids need a broad education. How can unschooling provide that?**

With the internet, kids can easily go as broad as they want. School is becoming the narrow filter in that it can only cover so many topics. Options in junior high are limited to 6-10 subjects. In high school, they have 10-40 subjects depending on the funding of the school. Of all the information available in the world, schools can only focus on a few topics. They go very narrow and shallow in order to be as broad as they can. With class sizes of 30 children, a teacher cannot individualize learning according to a variety of interests. They must choose a narrow topic that all children will be standardized graded on and study. Why can kids only study Brazil in grade 8? Why not other countries or them all? Not enough time.

With unschooling, kids have a chance to go deep and narrow according to interests and wide and shallow on topics they are not too interested. Children don't want to waste time learning things they really don't want to know about. Ultimately, we all must go deep and narrow at some point in our lives as we choose careers. But even that is open; the average adult changes careers and may have 5 in a lifetime.

### **What about math?**

Math is problem solving issues in daily life. A child learns fractions by baking and cooking. They learn decimals from shopping and allowances. Not everyone is going to need linear equations and polynomials though. Why do we need to drill it into 100% of the population when only 30% might use it? Sure, it is good training for the mind – but so are a lot of other skills that the student might enjoy more. The 30% of students going into a career that requires higher level math will be motivated to learn it, when they decide they need it.

### **Education is so competitive today. Isn't more school better in order to give kids an edge?**

Research shows that the quality of education matters, not the quantity. More academic and earlier school entry leads kids to early burn-out. When school kids start winding down their educational drive, around grade 8, unschooled kids who never had formal learning start engaging and ramps up their enthusiasm for learning during the high school years when marks really count.

Rich resources, engagement from the learner and competent facilitators make for a quality educational experience. Not the name or rank of the school one goes to.

### **What's wrong with toddler school, preschool, tutoring, Saturday school, and homework?**

More and earlier formal learning in school for the general population is not better. It may have small beneficial effects for targeted, disadvantaged groups, but not for everyone. The problem is that kids burn-out from 16 years of school (age 2 to 18) before they even get to university. Is it no wonder they party and mess up that first year, out from under parent and school thumbs?

One study shows that the more years children spend in formal school or formal homeschool programs, the less likely they were to pursue post-secondary education. (Dr. Peter Gray, 2013)

### **Kids will forget things not drilled into them.**

Yes, if it is not relevant or useful to children, they will forget it. Even now in school, retention is lost over the summer because most of what is learned is forgotten. It's deleted from memory because it is not relevant. Most people who don't use math for their careers lose it. Until their children get to high school and they want to help with homework and have to relearn it to help them.

### **There are some things kids just have to learn.**

Unschoolers do not force continued exposure on children who demonstrate a dislike for the idea or activity, like is done in school. Without coercion, many children will try the activity again, perhaps later and find they like it then. Much like forcing vegetables down children is a guaranteed way to get them to dislike them.

### **Won't a child have gaps?**

Yes. Children in public school have them too! Public school is designed to give kids a broad, general education with little room or time for depth in any particular order. Children that are not interested tune out. They lose that knowledge from their long-term memory. Perhaps that is why so many children graduate without knowing what their passions are or what they want to do as opposed to what their parents, society and friends tell them they should do. They have been listening to other's opinions of what is good for them for all their lives.

### **How do unschoolers get to university in Canada?**

Very few of the major post-secondary institutions in Canada require a high school diploma to go to university. There are at least 13 different ways to get in to university that do not require a diploma.

### **How do post-secondary institutions know that unschoolers have a benchmark of knowledge before admittance?**

Most unschoolers present a portfolio of work or write the same government grade 12 diploma exams that all other students have to write. They also present SAT, ACT scores or other equivalents. Because Alberta Education courses are based on outcomes, how a student acquires the knowledge and skills required is irrelevant. If students have the education needed for good exam marks, they can bypass the entire grade K-12 system and still be accepted for post-secondary education.

### **If kids have content at the touch of their phone, what are we teaching them?**

We are moving as a society from content to competencies. It is not just what you know, but what you can do with what you know. That involves relationships. School does not have a monopoly on teaching children competencies. Children can self-teach competencies or learn them from parents, coaches, grandparents, neighbors, siblings and friends if they wish.

Taking initiative, perseverance and mastering a topic area are all competencies. Committing to doing something because you gave your word is a competency that can be taught in so many other ways besides school – family chores, volunteer work, jobs, or even a computer game guild.

### **Are you suggesting that kids will just play video games all day?**

Children learn from everything and anything. Video games are educational that they teach content and competencies and spur other interests. As well, certain types of kids are drawn to them and some are not. If a child chooses to play via games, chances are

he/she will choose a career in computers, art, etc. Video games are just as valid on the “education buffet table” as “math workbooks”.

**If a child is given a choice between reading a book and playing video games, surely, they would pick video games?**

No. Not if we don't sort the choices into bribes or punishments. We tell parents in “Picky Eating” classes (I'm a Family Life Educator) to start putting desert on the same plate as the meat and vegetables. Parents reluctantly try it and are surprised to find out the child gives equal preference to both. If the broccoli (math) is given equal status on the buffet table as the chocolate (video games) the child will pick what they need at the time, giving no thought to its status of desirability.

**How do you deal with a child who is cranky about learning? A teen?**

That teen has probably had “school” shoved down so much that they are burned out of learning. They need to de-school and find their passions. By the teen years, they have been drilled that learning is not fun. It is an activity they do out of fear of punishment (truancy charges, detentions, class humiliation, bad marks) or bribery (good marks, pizza coupons, sports awards). They are burning out when they really should be gearing up because those courses are what is going to get them into the schools of their choice – post secondary.

**How will they adjust to university if they have never had a school “schedule”?**

When children go from taking no courses, or a single course in the high school years, to a 5-course load in post-secondary, there is a few months of a learning curve. But they do fine. They adjust when they need to. They get up and get out the door for 8 am classes, even if they have just spent the previous 12 years sleeping in until 2 pm. They learn to juggle multiple final exams in one week and they learn how to study. Adults need 21 days to learn new habits. Universities have many workshops on study skills and time management because many kids still don't learn that in school.

**How do you prove they are learning?**

How do you prove that they are not learning? It is interesting how questions always focus on the perceived inadequacies of unschooling and not the real inadequacies of the school system.



**SOCIAL CONCERNS**

**What about socialization?**

Forced association is not socialization. In any area of life, people come together from different ages, genders, cultures, religions, nationality, and occupations. Except school which sorts children according to the above categories.

Raising children in a home and diverse community environment is more like the real world than raising children in an age-graded artificially segregated institution. Sometimes home schooling is called community schooling because very few families actually stay at home. Communities provide rich, diverse, social interaction opportunities with greater adult-child ratios to facilitate caring, decent social skills and relationships.

In institutions, socialization amounts to the ability to be controlled by the status quo rather than a set of values determined by reason or faith, apart from peer pressure.

The purpose of “socialization” is, or should be, enabling children to become ethical, kind, and helpful citizens as adults. Unschooling provides this, with actual social interaction with actual adults providing actual role modeling. The more I think about it, people who worry about ‘socialization’ are probably more worried about children’s lack of indoctrination, entirely BECAUSE they are upsettingly independent thinkers. The best person to teach a 15-year-old boy how to be a man is not another 15-year-old boy. It is a man.

Generally, people who throw out the “socialization” argument are people who don’t know any homeschoolers and are just repeating what they’ve heard in the media where for some reason this myth pervades. The person making the comment tends to imagine mom sitting at a table all day with her kids, teaching. In this imagined scenario, the kids never get a chance to make friends outside of their siblings. I think we all agree that this is inadequate, which is one of the many reasons that homeschooling parents work so tirelessly to provide such a rich and diverse set of experiences for their students.

**Teen culture dictates that children need peers to be emotionally healthy. If kids are not raised in huge cohorts of peers, won’t they be missing out?**

Do teens who have not been raised in an artificial institution called school, have the same peer influences on family life that school teens do? No. Is peer influence necessary? No. Teens cling to peers in school and resist family time because they are socialized to do this. It is assumed that ALL teens go through separation from parents and peer bonding is a natural developmental task of all teens regardless of how they were educated. This assumption is born out of a lack of studies in the area. Most studies done on children have been done in the cultural context of institutional age-graded schooling for 12 of their developmental years. Most homeschooled teens I’ve met have cherished family and play with their siblings and are much less attuned to peer influences than teens that have gone to school.

**Where do children learn how to line-up, wait for their turn, wait to speak, and listen?**

If school is where kids learn to listen and take turns, when did they stop learning those basic courtesies? Go to any cocktail party and listen to the adults that have forgotten those important listening and respect skills. Go to an amusement park and watch the

number of children butting in line. Children need these skills taught by parents, not just at school.



## **SOCIETAL CONCERNS**

### **Giving kids control of their education is giving them too much power.**

Learners already have the power. The assumption that we “allow” control of their education is a myth. A child has power and control. We adults hate to acknowledge it! Eating, sleeping, toileting, and learning are all things parents have no control over. Sure, we can put the buffet foods on the child’s plate, but we respectfully can’t force him to eat it.

At some point in time, every child must take control and ownership of their education. The problem now is that kids are coddled too much by parents making children’s education, the parent’s responsibility. The kids know this. When someone else is responsible for your homework, grades and assignments, you don’t have to be. When puberty hits, the schools expect kids to start taking more responsibility. We hope it happens by junior high in that we have to stop nagging about grades and homework. We hope it happens by high school so we can let go and kids own their education. I know parents of university kids that still bribe them to get good marks. Who is owning that education? If the motivation is not internal by then, the child is not in the field they want or should be. They are the ones who will change careers in five years and have to re-study again anyways. Isn’t it better to find your path earlier? Unschooled kids own their education since birth and continue to take responsibility for it. Their parents empower them to steer their education, rather than “allow” them.

### **Working towards something challenging and tough is an accomplishment that builds self-esteem and confidence. How will they learn a healthy work ethic?**

To devise a project and fail at it or succeed at it, brings its own accomplishments and self-esteem. Internally motivated projects are the best kind. Unschooled teens have the drive and grit to finish a project, a video game, a book or a job term. They don’t need school or external bribes and punishments to learn a healthy work ethic. Self-discipline or what we now call, executive function, is received through brain maturation.

### **Aren’t there some things kids just have to do?**

Yes, but do they have to do them at the tender age of 6? As my friend, Bailey said, “Is this a lesson they truly need to learn today?” Can many things wait until later when they have the brain development and executive function (discipline and self-control) to fully appreciate and understand the need for them? Chores, volunteering, helping others,

cleaning up the environment, voting, etc. are all things children should do. Education should not be one of those. Learning should truly be pleasurable, not a chore.

**Unschooling sounds too easy. Kids shouldn't be allowed shortcuts.**

Are we speaking about true learning or doing time in an institution? Of course, kids that catch on quickly shouldn't pay the penalty of having to do busywork. Kids that catch on longer should be allowed to take their time without penalty or ridicule.

As for parents, unschooling is sometimes more time-consuming and harder than for school and homeschooling. Interests erupt at inconvenient times and learning is a 24 hour per day, 7 day per week process. School is done in 6 hours a day (plus homework). Homeschooling is done in 1 hour a day. Unschooling takes 24 hours a day.

**How do children know what they want to study? They are too young to know.**

They don't. They only play. What catches their interest in play is educational and very absorbing for them. We may see their play as being frivolous time fillers rather than educational, but play is the way children learn.

**Kids must have a prescribed set of outcomes that they need to learn.**

Again the assumption is that they will not dive into math, Language arts, science, music, art, and social studies just through the course of their play or if they are not required or forced to learn it. Most people think those subjects are separate from real life and experience when in fact, they are inextricably melded together. Try to cook or build a table without math skills. Try to read a newspaper without language arts. Try to understand weather patterns without science and try to understand the government process without understanding social studies. Life and course subjects are not separate. Most of what is in the curriculum, children can learn through their play and living their life.

**Kids do better with structures and routines.**

Structure and routine are also life skills and can be weaved with the family setting, jobs, volunteering and community environment. School is not the only training ground for learning self-discipline.

**Shouldn't our society expect our children to know and be aware of certain basic things like for example, "the Louis Reil rebellion" or "the Holocaust". What lessons are not getting passed on if we don't ensure that our children have this basic knowledge.**

Again, the underlying assumption is that school is the only way children learn about these issues.

Yes, we can feed children prescribed curriculum, but does it stick? I studied Brazil extensively in grade 8 , but as an adult, all I know about Brazil now is basic trivia – it's a country in South America. As soon as I passed the grade 8 social studies test, Brazil

was out of my brain and mind. As an adult, I can visit Brazil and truly understand more about the country, because now I choose to. We took our children to visit Dachau and it was much more absorbing and understanding visiting the memorial than it was reading about it in a book.

### **Public education is the foundation of our democracy and the cornerstone of an egalitarian society.**

There will always be a need for public education. Public education is needed for employment support. But it shouldn't be the only choice for children. My goal in writing this book is to ensure every parent and child knows that school and homeschooling are not the only choices available. Unschooling is also a valid choice in education.

As parents, is the welfare of the "system" our first consideration when we make choices for our child? Never. Every parent acts in best interests of their child, and their family. We can't deny our children a better education because some other parents don't want us to have it. It's like assuming that every worker needs to work in a big company, and no one can be an entrepreneur, because it would undermine the middle class. Choice in education is democracy. Choice in education is also funded choices.

### **Public education serves two purposes: one is for the child, but one is also for the public good. Do unschooled children miss the values in public education?**

There is an assumption that parents of unschooled children don't want or care about providing the best for their child. No parent wants to raise their child to encounter hardships later in life. That is why most parents do their best in raising the next generation. Unschooling parents' value responsible, caring and empathetic citizenship just as much as any other parent of a child in school. I have met many parents of unschooled children who lie awake at night wondering if they are doing "enough" and comparing their children to school-based kids. I have not met an unschooling parent who doesn't worry that they are giving their children their best. And they do an amazing job unschooling.

Public education is still there for people who want it. It serves a valuable need of providing childcare and employment support. Keeping my child away from it, in no way hurts the system. Which brings us to the next question...

### **Keeping kids out of the public system doesn't support it financially and hurts it. Right?**

No. All citizens pay taxes regardless of the type of education they get or even if they have children at all. When parents choose alternative education, they pay double. They pay taxes that support public education for everyone, and they pay tuition fees for private school and they also pay in lost income, and out of their own pocket for homeschooling and unschooling costs. In addition to supporting the system by paying taxes, they also support the system by not drawing the resources they pay for. The system can allocate the funds saved from homeschooling students to other priorities. For example, our family of five children pays \$2,500 a year in education taxes. We

receive \$4,500 a year for resource funding to educate five children. We don't draw out the \$50,000 a year that our children would cost the system if we used it. Thus, we save the government \$45,500 per year we unschool. Add in our tax money and it becomes \$48,000 that goes to other children whose parents choose public education. In no way does our choice financially undermine public education. It supports it. Over 12 years of education, we have saved taxpayers a half a million dollars.

Some critics of unschooling tell us to keep our kids in the system and work hard to change it. Perhaps we did for a time and got tired of banging our heads against the wall of a big unchangeable bureaucracy with little incentive for change. Too many invested interests do not wish to see change – and the wellbeing of our children is often the last consideration ahead of jobs and funding. Change in a big entity happens usually when outside forces start pinching it.

We discovered that the way to change the school system is not to subject our kids to it, but rather create alternatives that could become popular enough, and viable enough, that they force the traditional school system to incorporate their key values. Look how self-publishing disrupted the book industry? Change happens with very small movements of committed, disgruntled people with huge amounts of energy and thick skins try something different. As one parent said, "I cast my biggest vote of all by showing 'no confidence' in the school system by not sending my kids to school."

**Any school alternative is creating niche enclaves and elitism and serves to segregate students. This is not good for the moral fabric of society.**

Any educational choice is a niche community into itself. Individual schools are stand alone communities with their own mascots, uniforms, logo, governance, routines and culture. Homeschooling has various communities as well depending on the type of homeschooling such as classical, eclectic, worldschooling, and unschooling. As kids leave one community and enter another, they learn a new set of rules, norms and practices. Getting along with people is a life skill, not a school skill.

**But perhaps the most compelling argument against unschooling (and independent education, generally) is that, if adopted on a large scale, it's bad for society. Where are common social values learned?**

At home and in the community. Diversity is a good thing, and it's even better in education. Schools tend to be the homogenous institution. Unschooling celebrates diversity.

**When a child can choose to do whatever suits his whim, aren't we giving him the message that he is the centre of the universe and that is plain wrong?**

Are we talking about education or parenting? There are still many times that a child has to be told "No" and their rights do not supersede others, and they learn how to cope with that disappointment and frustration. We don't force any adult to choose a job. Why do we force a child to do curriculum? Is it because of the age difference? When a child grows older, they can understand that certain standards are required as a prerequisite

for what they want to do and they may choose to undertake those. We may think we know what is best for a child, but ultimately, they do and eventually make those choices.

It all boils down to choice. At what age does education become a choice for children? What about food? Sleep? Religion choice? Marriage partner? When do children “own” their education? Birth? Age 6? Age 18? Age 65?

**Do parents take the summer off from unschooling?**

No. Learning never takes a holiday. It begins at birth and ends with death, and no time off for weekends, holidays, birthdays or even sick days. It’s constant, and omnipresent.

**Will unschoolers be able to meet deadlines in the workforce?**

Yes, as much as the rest of the population. When they need to meet a deadline, they will work hard to meet it.

**Homeschooling is used by parents to hide abuse.**

Hard cases make bad laws. Why does the entire population of families who drop out of the school system need to be heavily regulated in order to catch a small percentage (0.0001%) of the population who might be abusive and neglectful? The percentage of abusive families is proportionally greater in the public system, than homeschooling, yet, we don’t demand stricter controls of public school when a child is found to be abused and attends school. The media loves to broadcast that families are homeschooled when abuse cases are exposed. It adds to the fear and distrust. That is not fair or good practice.

Many schools in the 70’s and 80’s turned a blind eye to abuse. But they are one element in a child’s life, and not the only one. Neighbors, churches and the community stores get to know children too. Every adult has the responsibility to report abuse – not just schools.

**All children need and have the right to an education. Parent’s rights to decide their child’s education must not over-ride the public interest in cultivating an educated public.**

Government regulation is also so last year. Homeschooling parents are only in charge of their own children – not others. Thus, there is no more public interest in education than there is in good parenting. Do we trust parents to have their own children’s best interests at heart? Either we do as a society or we don’t. Most parents do a good job teaching and caring for their children for the first five years of life and we trust them to oversee their education when the brain development is most sensitive to environmental influences. All parents homeschool from birth to age 5 and that caring and teaching doesn’t stop when there are 6 birthday candles on the cake.

Most parents are motivated to pull their children out of school in order for them to flourish and do better. They will go to great lengths for their children's education as they have the most vested interest in how their child turns out.

Parents make every decision based on love for their child. Schools and governments don't. They make decisions based on funding. Parents who undertake their child's education should be given more flexibility and trust, not less. They know their children best.

**Homeschooling at the high school level is hard. Most parents are not up for the task. Parents do not always know all the ways in which they should help children develop. This might result in stunted learning or incorrect skills and habits that are difficult to correct later.**

Homeschooling at the high school level has never been easier. Unschooling children can access the internet's many free videos and courses. Parents do not have to know the material in order to teach or procure resources to teach their child. Curious kids will learn what they need through the various ways they can seek out information. Incorrect skills and habits can always be relearned. The brain's capacity for learning new things never ceases.

**“But don't you need a break? Homeschooling is very hard on the mom.”**

“I could never do that! You are such a better woman than me!” “You work and you homeschool five kids? Wow, you must be superwoman!”

Homeschooling and unschooling are the easy choice. School is stressful. In unschooling, there is no homework, tests, PD days, lunches, inclement weather, extra-curricular activities, uniforms, overdue library books, field day permission slips, over-tired kids, science-fair projects, fundraising, classroom volunteering, and parent-teacher interviews. A typical day of unschooling is like a Saturday afternoon in July. Fun. Relaxing. Close relationships.

Children who are not used to having their days filled by adults, learn to fill their own days with healthy activities. Most homeschooling parents have children around; but in the next room or working side by side with them. Having presence with another person in the room, (which is nice for a lot of people) is different from having to entertain another person. One is comforting and connecting, and the other is hard work. Many unschooling parents run businesses, or work in paid work outside the home. Having children around enhances the experience and doesn't compete.

**Some kids have no nurturing, encouragement or positive role models at home. If they didn't get it at school, where would they get it?**

Teachers can be a very nurturing, encouraging influence in a child's life, and studies show that having one interested adult in their life can help them survive a dysfunctional family life. However, teachers rarely have the time to establish relationships because of all the outcomes they must teach in the ever-expanding curriculum. School is in the

business of teaching academics, not parenting. Yet, the relationships that children get in school, especially the teacher-student relationship, is the best, and most crucial outcome of school life.

**Unschooling may work with a caring adult and rich resource environment, but what about children who come from homes without an adult, books, or even a computer? Isn't school a haven for those children?**

The worst we can do to those children is put them in online courses which is where our education system is heading now. Online courses are someone else's agenda (usually the government) of what they think learners need to know. Learners must obey instructions because the learning is not their own. Online education needs structured parenting overseeing it or an extremely self-motivated student. More than anyone, these children need adults in their lives and resources are secondary. At the minimum, a library card and internet connection can help them, but a caring, attentive adult, who can give smaller ratio attention will be most beneficial in developing competencies.

Welcome to the wonderful world of unschooling! Where learning occurs with NO motivation problems.

Like this FAQ? Purchase the book, *Unschooling To University*, and you will have all this and more in a tidy bound book, for your reference, or for a family member who doesn't understand self-directed education.

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