

FEE's Essential Guide to --- SELF-DIRECTED **EDUCATION**



**FEE's
Essential Guide to
Self-Directed
Education**

*Essays from the Foundation
for Economic Education*

FEE

— **FEE.org** —

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What Is Self-Directed Education?

Dan Sanchez

This book bears good news. Great parenting is much easier and more fun than most people think, even if you homeschool: in fact, *especially* if you homeschool.

- You don't need to be an expert, whether in education or any given subject matter, for your child to learn.
- You don't need to be a taskmaster for your child to become self-disciplined and successful.
- And you don't need to regularly rebuke your children over their behavior for them to learn good manners and grow up to become decent, moral people.

You can relieve yourself (and your child) of these onerous burdens, because *kids teach themselves*.

This is the fundamental insight underlying Self-Directed Education, a burgeoning movement and philosophy that has grown out of ideas associated with homeschooling, unschooling, peaceful parenting, Montessori education, and other child-centered approaches.

As biopsychologist Peter Gray wrote in his book *Free to Learn*:

Children come into the world burning to learn and genetically programmed with extraordinary capacities for learning. They are little learning machines.

We are all born autodidacts — self-educators — blessed with an instinctive drive to acquire, exercise, test, and improve new abilities that will help us thrive in life.

As children grow more aware of the world around them, they yearn to engage with it, and to do so with ever greater independence. They see how adults and older kids use their minds and bodies to do wondrous things — moving, communicating, performing, creating, etc — and this inspires them into emulation.

This is not to say there is no fundamental difference between children and adults. Children are not yet fully independent. They cannot provide for themselves, and they mustn't be allowed to toddle into deadly danger. As such, they need adults to give them a considerable degree of protection and provision. They also need affection, which serves as emotional assurance of such life-securing support.

But, what children do *not* need (and what is almost always imposed on them) is continuous external direction in their daily doings. Children can be trusted to self-direct, and to self-direct toward ever greater self-actualization.

As John Holt, who coined the term “unschooling,” wrote in his book *How Children Learn*:

All I am saying in this book can be summed up in two words — *Trust Children*. Nothing could be more simple — or more difficult. Difficult, because to trust children we must trust ourselves — and most of us were taught as children that we could not be trusted. And so we go on treating children as we ourselves were treated, calling this “reality,” or saying bitterly, “If I could put up with it, they can too.” What we have to do is break this long downward cycle of fear and distrust, and trust children as we ourselves were not trusted. To do this will take a long leap of faith — but great rewards await any of us who will take that leap.

This is not to say that parents have no role in the education of their children beyond basic life-support. Great parenting means facilitating self-directed education by providing children with access to resource-rich environments, and then stepping back and allowing them maximum freedom to engage with those resources however they please: in other words, freedom to play.

Some of these resources are material: toys, stuff for building, natural materials, etc. Children are naturally drawn to manipulate, explore, and experiment with stuff: especially new things.

And children especially need access to what Dr. Gray refers to as, “the tools of their culture.” For children in hunter-gatherer societies, this meant, “knives, digging sticks, bows and arrows, snares, musical instruments, dugout canoes, and the like.” For children in the modern world, this means cooking utensils, cleaning instruments, handiwork tools, creative materials, books, computers, and other hi-tech devices: yes, even the much-maligned smartphone and tablet of “**screeentime**” infamy.

Just as hunter-gatherer children learned to play with primitive tools by observing their elders, modern children need to see adults and older children using the tools of their work and pastimes. So access to “human resources” is just as important as material resources. Parents must first and foremost provide access to themselves. And from there, children should be allowed to branch out to other family members and non-related friends of all ages. Any member of a child’s community can serve the child as a model to emulate and as a playmate to interact with.

Such play is how children self-educate. They observe others doing things they themselves cannot yet do. They try their hand by roughly mimicking the behavior. They request help when they need and are ready for it. And they **obsessively** repeat new behaviors over and over again. During these reps, they compare their own actions and results with the actions and results of their models, notice discrepancies, and refine accordingly. And they continually challenge themselves to approach the performance levels of their elders.

This is how children learn to walk and to talk. And if our teacherly ministrations don’t interfere, it is also how they can smoothly teach themselves to read, write, draw, sing, dance, sport, build, or undertake anything else that interests them.

Voluntarily following self-directed pursuits is how children learn such virtues as self-discipline, industry, and grit. And social play is how children learn how best to treat other people: in other words, how they **learn morals and manners**.

The flipside of the insight that kids teach themselves is the unsettling realization that adults, in trying to be good teachers, too often obstruct

and sidetrack the efforts of children to self-educate: especially once children are enrolled in school.

This message should be especially easy for lovers of liberty to understand. Human beings, both adults and children, thrive under freedom. And authoritarian interventions, no matter how well-intentioned, generally muck things up: whether the intervener is an overbearing teacher or a busybody bureaucrat.

As Gray wrote:

Nature does not turn off this enormous desire and capacity to learn when children turn five or six. We turn it off with our coercive system of schooling.

Free play is the natural work and study of children. And, even for adults, the highest, most productive and creative forms of work and study are indistinguishable from play. Displacing the free play of children with adult-imposed, coerced work and study only serves to cripple the child's self-educating spirit and to stunt the child's development.

The main lessons imparted by coercive education are (1) that work and study are fundamentally boring endeavors to pursue grudgingly for someone else's sake, and not your own, and (2) that submissiveness and blind compliance will be rewarded in life, and so are prime virtues, while initiative and self-driven enterprise will be punished, and so are dangerous vices.

As Holt wrote:

In short, children have a style of learning that fits their condition, and which they use naturally and well until we train them out of it. We like to say that we send children to school to teach them to think. What we do, all too often, is to teach them to think badly, to give up a natural and powerful way of thinking in favor of a method that does not work well for them and that we rarely use ourselves.

I invite you to explore this way of thinking with the essays in this book. If you would like to explore these ideas further, I've compiled a list of highly recommend the following books and resources at the end of the book. Let the self-education begin!

There Are Consequences for Eliminating Free Play

Kerry McDonald

Mammals are innately playful. Our large brains and complex social structures require that we learn vast amounts of information in childhood to help us thrive in adulthood. How do mammal children learn all of this?

They play.

Benefits of Free, Unstructured Play

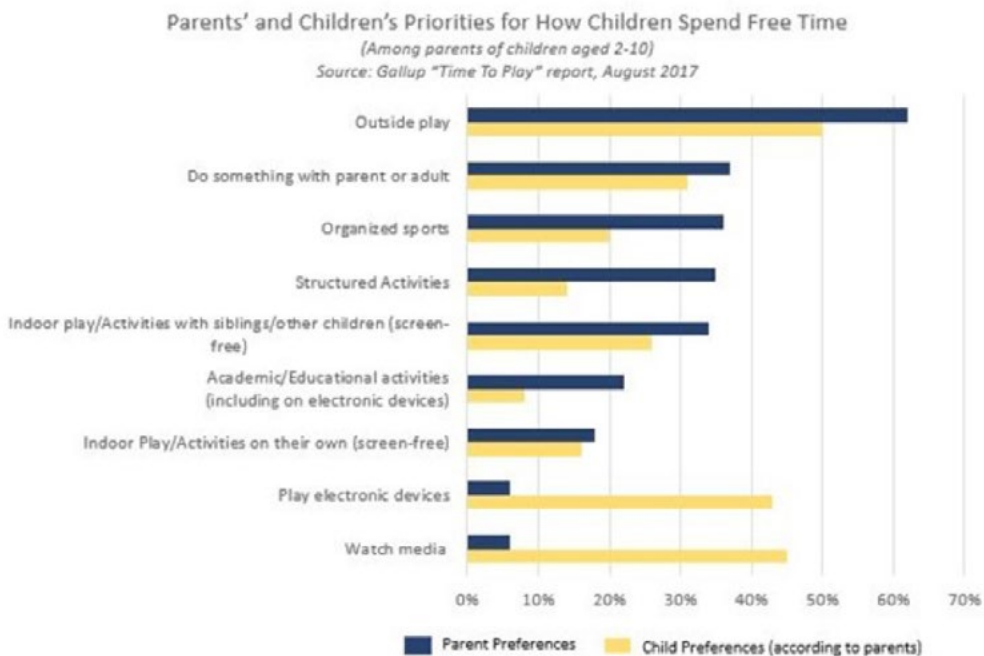
But it's not just any play. According to researchers, the most valuable play for normal human development is free, unstructured play. In a *Scientific American* [article](#), scientists report that free play “is critical for becoming socially adept, coping with stress and building cognitive skills such as problem solving.”

Despite these benefits, natural, free play — the kind most of us had as kids — is rapidly disappearing. According to a 2005 study in the *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*, childhood free play declined by 25% between 1981 and 1997. The catalyst for this drop in free play, according to the study, was an increase in time children spent in structured activities.

Childhood play deprivation is not without consequences. Psychologist Peter Gray, who studies play and childhood development, [writes](#) that “over the past half century we have increasingly deprived children of opportunities for free play, and over that same period we have seen dramatic and continuous increases in all sorts of emotional disorders in children.”

Despite this alarming trend away from free play, most parents are not clamoring for its return. According to a newly released [Gallup study](#), parents acknowledge that free play “fosters creativity and problem-solving,” but they do not prioritize these qualities.

In fact, the study found that “child-led, independent indoor play ranks near the bottom of the priority list for both children and parents.” Self-confidence, social skills, and academic skills were the top three priorities for parents with children ages 10 and younger.



Barriers to Play

Parents in the Gallup study placed a high value on structured, purposeful play activities — such as organized sports and educational programming. In contrast, these parents reported that their children place a higher value on screen time — perhaps one of the few remaining outlets children have for unsupervised playtime.

The good news is that both parents and children in the study value outside play; but parents reported that weather (too cold, too hot, too rainy), and fear of sending children outside without adult supervision, were the top two barriers to more unstructured playtime outdoors.

The Gallup report concludes: “Many parents may not recognize the positive role that unstructured, child-led play can have on their children’s development, despite the scientific research linking this type of play to the development of problem-solving skills, social cooperation, resiliency and creativity.”

In the accelerating quest toward early academics, organized activities, and purposeful play, we may be losing sight of the innate and time-honored benefits of free, unstructured childhood play.

The mounting focus on childhood success and academic achievement at ever-earlier ages may result in children who are less creative, less collaborative, and less emotionally resilient than they were a generation ago. As parents, we should fiercely protect and preserve our children’s free playtime, prioritize unstructured, unsupervised play, and encourage them to go outside — even in the rain.

Wise Parenting Uses Natural Consequences, Not Artificial Ones Imposed by Force

Dan Sanchez

The great slogan of classical liberalism is “Life, Liberty, Property.” Essentially this means, don’t murder, enslave, or steal. And this in turn is essentially what we teach children when we say no hitting, bullying, or grabbing. Yet, when kids are introduced to the concept of government, suddenly murder/hitting (war, police brutality), slavery/bullying (conscription, regulation, prohibition, imprisonment for victimless “crimes”), and stealing/grabbing (taxation, fiat money inflation, eminent domain) are okay if the perpetrator has a certain badge or title.

We add injury to inconsistency when we ourselves inflict upon our own children assault/hitting (spanking, slapping, and worse), slavery/bullying (ordering our kids around), and stealing/grabbing (confiscating and redistributing toys and other belongings, or never allowing them to own anything in the first place).

The Freedom Philosophy Applied to Parenting

For many libertarians, “Life, Liberty, Property” is encapsulated in the principle of non-aggression. Should this principle extend to children?

Some libertarian theorists contend that because children are not capable self-owners, they must be held “in trust” by their guardians, and that therefore parental coercion, short of abuse, is justified. Even, for the sake of argument fully granting this, it would obviously be foolish and disastrous for a parent to assert such “justified coercion” to the hilt,

controlling each and every move the child makes. It is easy to see how such complete, though “conditional,” quasi-slavery would be nearly as damaging to the moral and mental development of the child as complete chattel slavery is to the character and psychic health of the slave.

But what is true of the extremes is just as true of the approach to the extremes. Temporary and incomplete quasi-slavery (like that of the child under his parents in many cases), even if consistent with libertarianism, is morally and psychologically damaging to the individual for similar reasons as permanent and incomplete actual slavery is as well.

After all, it makes sense that when one is preparing for a future challenge, one should practice under the conditions that characterize that challenge. If you practice under wildly different conditions, you will end up prepared for something else entirely, and poorly prepared for the actual challenge. As Herbert Spencer wrote,

Were your children fated to pass their lives as slaves, you could not too much accustom them to slavery during their childhood; but as they are by and by to be free men, with no one to control their daily conduct, you cannot too much accustom them to self-control while they are still under your eye.

We wonder why, after years of allowing them very few decisions, our children end up such poor decision-makers. We give them little responsibility and wonder why, as young men and women, they are so irresponsible. We endeavor to inculcate strict obedience to every parental dictate, and wonder why every generation is so servile and submissive to the state.

But if unchecked by parental authority, will not a child yield to his impulses, to the detriment of his socialization, education, and even physical safety? How can the child mature, if there are no consequences for misbehavior?

Two Kinds of Consequences

It is not a question of consequences or no consequences. The question concerns the kind of consequence. There are two kinds, as distinguished by Spencer in his [groundbreaking and foundation-laying essay](#) on education.

On one hand there are the artificial consequences imposed by authority. “If you tease your sister, I will send you to your room.” “If you break that, I will spank you.” Such consequences may indeed, however ineptly, inculcate “good habits” that would serve the child later in life. But it will also inculcate a broader habit of appeasing involuntary authority.

Furthermore, good habits, inculcated in this way, then rest chiefly upon internalized authority, and not on a true understanding of what makes those habits good. This is not true prudence, but merely residual obedience. Such a basis, if it holds at all, can lead to an inflexible life ridden by irrational guilt. Often however, it is a thin reed, that will snap once the child is out from under the parental gaze.

On the other hand there are natural consequences imposed, not by arbitrary authority, but by the laws of justice and physical and social reality. Spencer called these “true consequences” or “natural reactions,” and they are far more constructive and edifying than the other kind.

To extend Spencer’s analysis, misbehavior can be divided into 4 categories:

1. Personal Vices (unwise behavior)
2. Interpersonal Vices (non-violent antisocial behavior)
3. Injustices (violent antisocial behavior)
4. Catastrophically dangerous actions (behavior with high-probability risk of loss of life, limb, or liberty).

The natural, constructive, and edifying consequences of each are:

1. Personal Vices: Consequences imposed by physical reality
2. Interpersonal Vices: Non-coercive social consequences

3. Injustices: Coercive (if necessary) and proportionate restitutive and protective justice
4. Catastrophically dangerous actions: Emergency coercive intervention.

The natural consequences of unwise or antisocial behavior (like a child being careless with her Gameboy or rude with her siblings) are the ones given by physical (a broken Gameboy) and societal (not being invited to play cards one evening) reality, not the ones given by authority (spanking, forced labor, confiscation, etc).

The former will teach a child to treat her possessions better so as to deal better with the material world and her friends better so as to deal better with society. The latter will teach a child to treat her possessions and friends better so as to appease the giant bully she's trapped with (It will also teach the child to resent the parent for physically assaulting, expropriating, or enslaving her for reasons she doesn't fully understand.)

Unlike those imposed by parental authority, the consequences imposed by material reality and non-coercive society follow the child into adulthood. By letting physics and society give her the consequences (as long as those consequences don't threaten life, limb, and liberty), you teach her how to be a better free person in the world. By giving her coercive and violent consequences yourself, you only teach her to be a better slave.

The only cases in which consequences imposed by force are called for (other than to immediately save life, limb, and liberty) is, with children as with adults, when it a proportional and restitutive response to force initiated by the child.

Justice is the natural, constructive, and edifying consequence of injustice. If your child aggresses against you, another adult, or another child, it is beneficially instructive and moral to take from the child's possessions to make the victim whole. (This is one of the many reasons it is important to allow the child to fully own things in the first place.) But this never justifies spanking. Physically assaulting your own child

does absolutely nothing in the way of providing restitution to a victim; it only creates one more victim.

Here is an example of this approach from my own recent parenting experience. The other day, my wife and three-year-old daughter were playing Chutes and Ladders, and my wife said something in a silly voice. My daughter must have been cranky, because she loudly and rudely told her mommy to not say that.

Rather than scold her in return, my wife just looked a bit sad, and went into the other room. I was working at the dining table, and sweetly explained to my daughter how what she said made her mommy feel. She said “No!” so I too withdrew, saying, without a hint of harshness, “bye bye,” and returned to my work.

My little girl sat there for a moment, and then went to find her mother in the other room, hugged her, and said, “I’m sorry Mommy.” My wife said “it’s okay,” we had a family hug, and they happily returned to their game.

We afford our daughter her dignity and freedom as an individual, yet also assert our own dignity and freedom to withdraw our company if we are being mistreated. This way, she learns to avoid being rude to avoid the natural consequences of being rude, and not simply to appease intimidating authority figures that won’t always be present. That is how children learn character, and not mere obedience.

Thinking Outside the Authoritarian Box

This approach to parenting, which may be termed “Spencerian” after Herbert Spencer, is like libertarianism in that they are both so radically different from the authoritarian ways we do things now, that people are prone to simply dismiss them out of hand at first.

People are so habituated to automatically resorting to coercive solutions to social and family problems, that their powers of imagination totally break down when faced with the idea of either a society or a household without masters. “Who will build the roads?” is akin to “How else will she be made to learn?”

Murray Rothbard skewers the “who will be build the roads” objectors by pointing out that if the provision of shoes had long been a state monopoly, people would be baffled at the thought of the market providing shoes.

And who would supply shoes to the public if the government got out of the business? (...) Which people? How many shoe stores would be available in each city and town? How would the shoe firms be capitalized? How many brands would there be? What material would they use? What lasts? What would be the pricing arrangements for shoes?

Similarly, the authoritarian approach has been so long the *modus operandi* of parents, that they can't fathom doing without it. “If I can't strike, boss around, or confiscate things from my child, how will I influence her?”

Of course, while not every detail can be predicted by proponents of liberty, the market does manage to handle shoes, and it would manage to handle roads. And both, far better than the state.

Similarly, while general best practices and sample solutions can be offered, not every detail of parental practice can be unerringly prescribed to other parents (especially of children they've never met) by proponents of the freedom-based approach to parenting.

But devoted, imaginative, venturesome, and principled parents can figure out what non-coercive solutions work for their child's individual needs. And whatever unique particular approach the parent arrives at, the child will be far better off for not having gone through the first 18 years of her life spiritually shackled to another person's will.

Want Smarter, Healthier Kids in the Fall? Let Them Play During the Summer.

Annie Holmquist

Harper Lee's novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* is known the world over for its deep lessons on racism and equality. In focusing on these lessons, however, it's easy to breeze by the simple, lighthearted picture with which the book opens, namely, that of children goofing off and having a good time in the summer.

That lesson is one which many children no longer experience, nor even know how to execute. This is because they are scheduled from sun-up to sun-down with a myriad of activities to keep them busy and "learning" during the summer.

The Importance of Downtime

Such pre-scheduled activities are well-meaning, but as author and psychologist Lea Waters explains in a [recent article](#) for *The Atlantic*, the inability to goof off and have downtime may be preventing children from reaching their full potential:

Smart strength-based parenting means holding firm against the pressure to constantly schedule kids so they look busy on the outside. Children are always busy, even when they don't look it. Letting a child press the pause button allows her to reboot her attentional resources and come back strong to continue building her strengths. Good goofing off is as an important part of a child becoming who they are.

To back up this statement, Waters cites a variety of research, including a study from Columbia University.

The Columbia researchers found that grade school children who were given a variety of downtime during their school day “showed significant improvements in attentional skills and cognitive functioning... compared to having a full day of traditional academic classes.” Such research, Waters opines, shows that “attention is built through rest and play.”

“Health Must Not Be Sacrificed to Learning”

Thomas Jefferson advanced the same idea several centuries ago. In a [1786 letter](#) to Peter Carr, Jefferson advised regular exercise during which the mind should be allowed to rest and run in a neutral state:

Give about two of them [hours], every day, to exercise; for health must not be sacrificed to learning. A strong body makes the mind strong... Never think of taking a book with you. The object of walking is to relax the mind. You should therefore not permit yourself even to think while you walk; but divert your attention by the objects surrounding you.

Today’s culture is characterized by busy-ness and the ability to multitask and run in several directions at once. In fact, many Americans pride themselves on the ability to do this and believe that making their children do the same will give them a head start in life.

But will it actually do the opposite? Do we need to recognize that today’s children might be healthier, wealthier, and wiser by simply allowing them to have more downtime, goof off, and just be kids?

Kids Thrive Under Self-Directed Learning

Kerry McDonald

My 10 year old daughter attends [Parts & Crafts](#), a local self-directed learning center for homeschoolers/unschoolers here in the city. She goes once a week and loves it. At the beginning of each session, the facilitators work with the young people to generate ideas for classes and then the kids pick which classes they want to take. They also always have the choice not to participate in any classes and spend their time as they choose, tinkering with the abundant makerspace materials, reading, knitting, playing board games, etc.

Freedom to choose is a fundamental principle of [Self-Directed Education](#). Young people can choose to take a class or not, or to leave the class at any time for any reason, or to leave the learning center altogether. This affords children the same respect and autonomy that we grown-ups enjoy. For example, I choose classes based on my interests. If that class is not meeting my needs then I have the freedom to leave. My children have the same freedom.

Children Are People, Too

I make sure when I register for classes for myself, or for my children, that I am prepared to eat the full cost of that class whether or not I/they decide it's not working, and if I am not prepared to pay that amount then I/they don't register for that class. The freedom to stop doing something that isn't working for us, as long as we don't cause harm to others, is something we grown-ups take for granted but often expect otherwise from our children.

Boston College psychology professor, and [Alliance for Self-Directed Education](#) founder, Dr. Peter Gray, writes that the freedom to quit is the most basic human freedom. He **asserts**: “In general, children are the most brutalized of people, not because they are small and weak, but because they don’t have the same freedoms to quit that adults have.”

At Parts & Crafts, my daughter chose woodshop for one of her classes this term. Yesterday she was telling me about the class and how she is working on creating wooden swords to give to her younger brothers for holiday presents. I asked her to share more details of the class. She said the facilitator is working on a specific, prepared project with some of the kids but that she and two other kids are working independently on their own projects during that time. I love this. Kids can take a class to learn how to do a project with adult guidance, or they can work autonomously on their own projects if they choose.

The true promise of Self-Directed Education is in how it enables human flourishing. Young people are given the freedom, respect, and agency to drive their own learning, with adults available to provide resources, guidance, and support when needed. As John Holt wrote in *Instead of Education*: “My concern is not to improve ‘education’ but to do away with it, to end the ugly and anti-human business of people-shaping and to allow and help people to shape themselves.”

Helping people to shape themselves is what Self-Directed Education is all about. It fosters choice, freedom, autonomy, and the ability to learn in non-coercive environments, always with the ability to opt-in or out. In essence, it grants children the same freedom from coercion that adults enjoy.

We need to let go of the notion of schooling — something someone does to someone else — and instead reclaim learning — something humans naturally do. Self-Directed Education provides the pathway to do this.

Bully-Proofing Won't Work Until We Give Kids More Freedom

Kerry McDonald

Imagine if, at your workplace, you were constantly harassed, humiliated, and even physically attacked. You would probably dread going to work and call in sick often to avoid it. You may talk to your boss or someone in HR to see if the problem could be fixed. If it couldn't, you would quit. You may even file charges if you were physically harmed, or take out a restraining order against your perpetrators. You have recourse. You have options. You have choice.

Not like School Kids

Children who are bullied in school have very few choices and very little recourse. Required by law to attend an assigned public school, many children and their parents have minimal agency to withdraw from a bullying scenario. Some parents will look for alternative schooling options for their bullied children, like private schools, charter schools, online schools, or homeschooling. But for many families, these choices are not available or accessible.

In those cases, bullied children must endure daily battering that would be criminal if inflicted on adults. Is it any wonder that we have **a rising suicide rate** among children? In fact, according to the CDC, the suicide rate among 10- to 14-year-olds has **doubled** since 2007.

Wounded By School author Kirsten Olson refers to bullying as “an expression of the shadow side of schooling.” She writes:

If we create school systems in which compulsion, coercion, hierarchy, and fear of failure are central features of the academic experience, and essential to motivating and

controlling students, then the energy from those negative experiences will seek expression.

In other words, if people are placed in environments where they have little freedom and control, this can trigger bullying behaviors; and if those who are being bullied can't freely leave, then hostility may continue indefinitely.

As Boston College psychology professor Dr. Peter Gray writes:

Bullying occurs regularly when people who have no political power and are ruled in top-down fashion by others are required by law or economic necessity to remain in that setting. It occurs regularly, for example, in prisons. Those who are bullied can't escape, and they have no legislative or judicial power to confront the bullies.

Bully-Proofing

As another school year approaches, bookstore and library shelves are filling with titles aimed at “bully-proofing” children. Articles and blog posts share strategies on how to help students who are victims of bullying. School administrators and teachers develop policies, plans, and professional development programs for dealing with bullying.

While well-intentioned, all of these efforts ignore the central problem: bullying exists due to a compulsory schooling environment that mandates attendance, eliminates freedom, and limits the ability to opt-out. Until that issue is addressed, no amount of reading, policymaking, teacher training, and “bully-proofing” is going to stop bullying from occurring.

The best way to avoid bullying in schools is to question compulsory attendance laws, expand education choice, and create learning environments that nurture childhood freedom and autonomy. After all, if we wouldn't tolerate bullies in our lives, why should we ever expect our children to?

The Five Things Your Kids Will Remember about You

Tamara El-Rahi

Parenting is hard work. It calls on mothers and fathers to really forget themselves and put their kids first. So it's no wonder that sometimes, we take shortcuts. We buy them a toy rather than spend more time with them; we lose our temper rather than practice patience; we put on the TV at dinnertime instead of having a conversation.

That's why a recent article from Time Magazine really stood out to me — because it was a reminder that tiny parenting moments, which seem so trivial at the time, can add up and have a lasting impact on our kids. Here are the five things kids will remember of you:

When you made them feel safe

My baby is not yet four months, but I can already sense how she feels safe when held by my husband or myself, especially when she's in an unfamiliar environment. Kids are vulnerable; they have an innate need to be protected. When you think about how reckless children can be, it shows that they subconsciously put all their trust in their parents. But by the same token, they'll remember the times they felt unsafe — something to think about when we lose our temper with them or show anger in their presence.

When you gave them your undivided attention

So simple, yet so often not done! I read an article recently about how 10 to 15 minutes a day of undivided attention for your child — no phone, no TV in the background, nothing else on your mind — is so beneficial. Talking with them, reading them a book, colouring with them, or

anything like that will do the trick. As the article put it, “What that gives them? The essentials to feel loved, safe, secure, self-assured, and valued. What it gives you? Much of the same and so much more.” Not to mention that it will help you create a relationship with your child that will last through to when they are adults.

The way you interacted with your spouse

I once read a fact that has always stuck with me: kids get a lot of security from seeing that their parents love each other. How beautiful and how true! I can see that my siblings and I certainly did benefit from the love between our parents, knowing that divorce was not an option for them. I think if parents are united — not fighting in front of the kids, only having good things to say about each other, and being affectionate and loving with each other — kids can't help but feel safe.

Your words of affirmation

Parents are a kid's whole world — it's only natural that what they say will be remembered. I feel that if a child is told over and over that he or she is naughty, that's how they'll end up acting, as it's expected of them. If they are told the opposite and encouraged to be better, they'll feel that their parents have faith in them to be their best selves. Correction is necessary for kids, of course, but as the Time article puts it, “let your words be full of love, encouragement and positive reinforcement.”

Your family traditions

I think that family traditions contribute to the feeling of belonging; something which is so important for kids. Whether it's everyday things like dinner together around the table, weekly events like Sunday lunch with the grandparents, or the way that birthdays are celebrated (in my family, everyone would sneak into the birthday person's room in the morning to wish them happy birthday and open gifts), they are all bonding moments for the family unit — as well as customs they will use to build their own family unit one day.

Obsession is the Ultimate Skill

Dan Sanchez

I have many times heard the following refrains about education:
“It’s not about learning any one particular thing. It’s about learning how to learn.”

“It’s not about solving any particular problem. It’s about learning how to think.”

The speaker often assumes that kids best learn how to learn and how to think at school. They consider it perfectly fine if the things kids learn in school will not be directly useful to them outside of school because the “meta-skills” of effective learning and thinking are transferable skills that can be applied to picking up marketable knowledge and skills later in life.

But such imposed learning is antithetical to an even more fundamentally important transferable skill: passion.

Passion is the self-motivated devotion to a pursuit. Passion is the ultimate transferable skill, because it is the most powerful motivator for learning and creating in any field.

By definition, passion cannot be taught through compelled lessons. It is a plant that can only grow wild, that cannot be nurtured by anything else except freedom.

Children are born passionate. And, with sufficient freedom, their passion grows with time and experience. At times, passion will reach the pitch of obsession. Children will become obsessed with one particular activity (a sport, a video game, a creative art, etc) or subject (a line of toys, dinosaurs, etc).

To adult eyes, the obsession may seem pointless or excessive. How will exhaustive knowledge about Pokemon ever advance a child’s prospects? But the important part is not that the child is learning about Pokemon

per se, but the fact that the child, by following his bliss (to use Joseph Campbell's phrase), is learning how to immerse himself in something.

This, again, is the ultimate transferable skill. Later, it is this built-up propensity for self-motivated immersion that the individual can harness to master any art, any craft, any trade: from graphic design to computer programming to running a business.

But parents, teachers, and school officials often do their utmost to squelch the development of passion. Children are redirected from their own interests to the pursuits that adults consider more important. And even imposed pursuits are never allowed to be delved into too deeply. In an effort to make the child "well-rounded," his pursuits are constantly interrupted and rotated. Only shallow explorations are ever allowed.

By the time the child exits the school system, his capacity for passion — for the self-motivated devotion to a pursuit — is completely atrophied. He can no longer follow his bliss, because he has forgotten such a thing even exists. The only thing that can propel him forward toward accomplishing anything is extrinsic motivation and direction from authority figures. At work and in life in general, he is rudderless. He is either towed by others or floats aimlessly through life.

I remember having, in my early childhood, a succession of what I then called "fevers." A certain subject would dominate my interest for months. But eventually, I would become sated, and move on to the next thing. I would become obsessed with dinosaurs, animals in general (I remember collecting the scientific names of species from issues of National Geographic), and then later He-man, Transformers, etc.

Then my susceptibility to catching such fevers was stunted and worn down by the apathy-fostering grind of compulsory schooling. But after graduating from college, my capacity for passion sprang back with a vengeance. Re-learning the skill of obsession was one of the most important stages in my de-schooling process.

After suffering an existential crisis, I became obsessed with researching theology and cosmology. After realizing I didn't understand the world around me, I became **obsessed with teaching myself world history**. After I discovered the ideas of liberty, I became **obsessed**

with teaching myself Austrian economics and libertarian political philosophy. Following my bliss along these paths of obsession eventually **led me to a fulfilling and successful career.** My only regret is that such a happy development was so long delayed by the life-devouring, spirit-stunting ordeal of being schooled.

Don't yield to the temptation to frustrate your children's passions, to check their obsessions. Trust their choices. Let them cultivate their inborn capacity for self-directed devotion to their own pursuits. Passion is their most precious asset: the keystone skill that can beget all other skills. Don't steal it from them. Let them build it up. It will make you proud some day.

Why I No Longer Ask Kids How They Are Doing in School

Kevin Currie-Knight

As a rule, I no longer ask school age-children how they're doing in school. Let me explain why.

Recently, my wife and I took a trip to see family and friends, several of whom have school-age children. I noticed that when adults interact with children, one of the first questions they pose is “How are you doing in school?” or some variation (“So, keeping your grades up?”).

I also notice that if the child answers that they are anything other really well, the adult responds as if this is a bad thing, “Well, I’m sure you’ll do better next quarter.” Perhaps most revealingly, children — even engaging in small-talk — rarely, if ever, ask each other this question. I can only assume that they know better.

Doing School

I am a professor in a College of Education who studies schools and how they work as part of my living. On the basis of that research, I have become more and more uncomfortable with asking kids how they are doing in school, largely because it sends the message that how they are doing in school is, to me, one of the most important things about them. I think adults ask children this, at least partly, because we assume that “how are you doing in school?” is a proxy for “what are you learning?” My own study of schools convinces me that this is a very bad assumption.

There are several reasons I say this assumption is bad. The first is research done by Denise Pope who, for her dissertation, followed around several well-performing high schoolers to see how they learned in school. She found that the secret to their success tended to be their

ability to treat school as a game. They found strategies to curry favor with teachers, ace tests with a minimal amount of study, and succeed in school without having to do much deep learning. When she published this as a book, she appropriately titled it **Doing School**.

Decades earlier, a teacher named John Holt came to similar conclusions in a book called **How Children Fail**, based on journals he kept as a fifth-grade teacher. Holt was puzzled at the learning his students were doing in class, which seemed superficial, rooted in the desire to get the right answer rather than to learn.

Ultimately, Holt came to the conclusion that even young students, “come to look on school as something of a racket, which it is their job to learn how to beat. And learn they do; they become experts at smelling out the unspoken and often unconscious preferences and prejudices of their teachers, and at taking full advantage of them.” Doing school indeed!

More recently, **a research study suggests** that high school GPA (and particularly, being best in class) doesn’t at all predict who will become standouts in their fields. High school performers often go on to comfy careers, but are seldom among the trailblazers.

Why? Doing well in school requires conformity, the ability to give authorities what they want rather than develop your own strong passions, to get (what will satisfy teachers as) right answers rather than develop sophisticated thinking. As the study’s lead author says, “Essentially, we are rewarding conformity and the willingness to go along with the system.”

Stop Asking Them About School

For these reasons — that certainly jibe with my recollections of school — I no longer feel comfortable asking school-aged kids about how they are doing in school or what they’re learning. Not only does that send the message that yet another adult defines them by their school performance, but also that doing well in school equates to learning.

This is a subtle distinction, so let me explain. What I ask instead is something like, “What kind of interesting stuff are you up to?” The

kids I've asked pause for a second, then their eyes light up. They tell me about projects they have going on. For one, it was a series of books he was reading and really into. For another, it was an art project she was engrossed in. A third told me about a car that he, by his own initiative, was fixing up.

What do all of these interests have in common? First, they demand sustained concentration and the children are consumed by them. Second, the students are interested in them. Third, they (I assume) were self-chosen; no one made them do these projects, and if someone had, I assume the projects would have lost their attraction. Fourth, there was no obvious reward for doing them well, and no penalty for doing them wrong, only satisfaction from the activity itself. These are all elements that schools disincentivize.

Passion and absorption are great until the bell rings and it's time for the next class. Interests are good, but only if they align with what school is teaching at that very moment. Self-chosen activities? Sometimes students get to choose things, like the group of students they work with that day or which one of several assignments they want to do next, but that's about it. And there is very little we do at school where the reward is just the satisfaction of doing it well. Usually, school work is about getting a good grade or meeting the teacher's expectations.

My suggestion is that next time you talk to a school-aged kid, be cautious not to ask how they are doing in school. Instead, ask about what cool stuff they are doing at the moment. That allows them to tell you about their actual lives. If something cool they are doing is school-related, they can tell you; but they can tell you other stuff too. My guess is that they'll appreciate that you're asking about them and not school.

Stop Pushing Your Kids Into “Safe Spaces”

Dan Sanchez

For human potential, few things are more dangerous than a “safe space.” A flourishing life requires what Nassim Taleb calls “**antifragility**”: the adaptive capacity to self-improve in response to challenge and adversity.

When young people are artificially insulated from the trials of life, they are deprived of the opportunity to develop this vital virtue: to become antifragile. The prolonged fragility that results is often used as an excuse by parents for extending dependence, which only prolongs fragility still further.

The campus “safe spaces” that college students have loudly demanded are political in nature. Critics justifiably worry that such safe spaces are danger zones for free speech, open discourse, mutual understanding, and intellectual growth. However, what is far less recognized is that colleges long ago became “safe spaces” in an even more dangerous sense.

This was brought home for me recently when I attended a college graduation. The commencement address, delivered by a student elected to the honor by his classmates, was not very political, yet it was positively dripping with the “safe space” ethos.

Those Who Carried Us

“Where do you come from?” he asked the audience. To illustrate his own answer, he told a story from his childhood. He recalled falling asleep in the family car and waking to find himself cradled in his father’s arms. “My baby tired?” his father cooed while carrying him into the house.

After being gently deposited into his bed, he opened his eyes to see his mother's dotting gaze.

The student's punchline was to reveal that he was 14 years old at the time.

An artful speech opening, to be sure, but a troubling one at the same time.

"Being carried" was the explicit theme of the rest of the young man's speech. He discussed all the ways in which, just as his father carried him to bed, he and his classmates have been lovingly "carried" by others throughout their lives.

He spoke of all the parents who, that very day, would once again help their graduating children pack their clothes and fold their bedding. He told the story of how one year, he had neglected to pack up his dorm room until the day before he was leaving the country, and how a group of his classmates came to his rescue and packed it up for him.

He related another story of how one of his professors had invited his class to her home for dinner at the end of the semester. He didn't attend, because he was ashamed of his poor academic performance. His professor nonetheless had a home-cooked meal delivered to him to make him feel better.

The commencement speech contained little-to-no celebration of individual achievement or excellence. Far from it, what was celebrated were such "community" experiences as partying together and submitting papers late together (often both on the same day, he noted).

He returned to the original question, "Where do you come from?" and answered that we all come from the communities of people who carry us through life: parents, friends, and teachers.

The crowd was clearly touched, but I was rather appalled. A number of questions sprang to mind.

A group of people who "carry me": is that a healthy notion of "community"? Surely it is important to be grateful. And "community" is indeed all about mutual service. But "being carried?" Is the condition of an invalid really the best operating metaphor for your life? Is

being languid, neglectful, and needy what you want to emphasize on graduation day?

Is gratefulness for “being carried” the only thing you can think to celebrate after four years during the physical and cognitive prime of your life? Are there no teachers to whom you are grateful for inspiring and challenging you to grow and excel? Can you speak only of collective gratitude and say nothing of individual pride? In addition to “where you came from” can you not spare a word for “what you have achieved?”

Judging from the crowd’s reaction, the speaker was well-chosen by his classmates, for he had clearly tapped into the contemporary college zeitgeist. With such a prevailing culture, it is no wonder that so many college graduates suffer a “failure to launch,” moving back in with their parents and remaining financially dependent for years on end.

Safe Space U

What undergirds that culture is the modern college experience itself.

Going off to college is generally considered a rite of passage: the child taking flight and leaving the nest. But in truth, it’s an artificial extension of childhood dependency. While the son or daughter is no longer living at home, mom and dad still generally pay for almost everything. Thus, it marks an expansion of freedom without a commensurate expansion of responsibility. It is no wonder that for so many, college is largely a four-to-five year party. The parental welfare state can be just as debauching and debilitating as the governmental welfare state.

College has become a “safe space” in the sense that it keeps the student safe from self-responsibility. Insulated from the economic demands of life, the student is deprived of the opportunity to develop independence, enterprise, self-discipline, and antifragility.

Neither are these vital traits picked up by the “good students” who buckle down and work hard in college. Instead of learning to navigate the real world, these “high achievers” merely become expert at jumping through artificial hoops set up by authority figures. Instead of self-

discipline, they develop “other-discipline” or obedience, just as they did in grade school.

In the workplace, past “star students” tend to require extensive instruction and routines, and have difficulty creating value on their own initiative. They gravitate toward “safe” careers with a defined set of hoops to jump through (graduate school, certificates, licenses, professional associations, government-imposed standards, etc.). If, because of the economic and technological change that is an unavoidable aspect of life, any of these paths prove not to be “safe” after all, such hoop-jumpers lack the antifragility necessary to adapt, and so often sink into a personal crisis.

The Role of Nurture

These problems are merely an extension of the backward way we have come to approach parenting in general.

As Nathaniel Branden wrote in *The Six Pillars of Self-Esteem*:

The proper aim of parental nurturing is to prepare a child for independent survival as an adult. An infant begins in a condition of total dependency. If his or her upbringing is successful, the young man or woman will have evolved out of that dependency into a self-respecting and self-responsible human being who is able to respond to the challenges of life competently and enthusiastically. He or she will be “self-supporting” — not merely financially, but intellectually and psychologically.

A newborn infant does not yet have a sense of personal identity; there is no awareness of separateness, not, at any rate, as we who are adults experience such awareness. To evolve into selfhood is the primary human task. It is also the primary human challenge, because success is not guaranteed. At any step of the way, the process can be interrupted, frustrated, blocked, or sidetracked, so that the human individual is fragmented, split, alienated, stuck at one level or another of mental or emotional maturity. It is not difficult to observe that most people are stranded somewhere along this

path of development. Nonetheless... the central goal of the maturational process is evolution toward autonomy. It is an old and excellent adage that effective parenting consists first of giving a child roots (to grow) and then wings (to fly). The security of a firm base — and the self-confidence one day to leave it.

Thus, in the upbringing of a child, there is indeed a place for “carrying” and “safe spaces.” Human beings don’t come into this world fully-developed and independently capable. Parents must provide safe spaces and do a lot of carrying early on.

First the mother carries the child in her womb, which is the ultimate safe space. Being carried, enveloped, sheltered, completely dependent, completely irresponsible, and completely unfree is not only developmentally appropriate but absolutely necessary at that stage. The fetus is not even capable of suckling yet, and so must passively feed through the umbilical cord.

But then birth occurs, and the doctor or midwife “cuts the cord,” which is the first major symbolic step toward the child’s separateness, selfhood, and autonomy. Yet even then, the infant still cannot walk or even crawl, and so must be carried in the arms of his parents.

The cute helplessness of the child, and the heart-rending sounds of her cries, evoke affectionate, nurturing sentiments in the parents. The parental nurture and affection that follows is comforting and delightful to the child.

All of these behaviors and emotional reactions are survival mechanisms. The child has urgent needs, nearly all of which must still be provided for by the parent. For the child, happiness and the absence of distress is, at first, mostly a function of receiving parental nurture and affection (which is an indicator of nurture), since nurture is decisive for survival. The early “safe space” provided by parents is essential for the child’s short- and long-term psychological well-being. Also important for survival is the parent protecting the child from herself: i.e., keeping her from eating harmful things or from crawling into deadly dangers.

The Importance of Action

But, from the beginning, and ever more so as the child matures, there is another source of joy for the child: independent action. This too is ultimately a survival instinct. Such joy is a reflection of the child’s growth toward being able to provide for her own needs.

Delight in action begins in infancy. Babies revel in learning how to operate their own bodies. I remember my daughter doing “super-hero” poses as a newborn: repeatedly extending her arms and staring in fascination at her tiny fists. Infants are also tickled by their own vocal improvisations. Eventually such enthusiastic explorations culminate in such developmental milestones as learning to grab and manipulate objects, to crawl, to walk, to speak.

We see the inherent human drive to learn in the way children, from toddlers on up, love to emulate adults, and frequently object to parental “help,” insisting “I want to do it!” or often even “I want to do it by myself!”

Such joy in intrinsically-motivated, independent action is one of the two main sources of lifelong learning and mental development. The other one is **experiencing the consequences**, both good and bad, of such actions. By enduring minor tumbles, children learn how to stand and walk steadily, and how to maintain due control when they are running about. By enduring social repercussions, children learn how to treat other people respectfully and kindly. For example, they learn a little lesson every time a friend withdraws from play after being mistreated.

Growing up is a process of the child drawing ever more joy and instruction from her own actions, and becoming ever less reliant on parental nurture, affection, and intervention for her happiness and safety.

Some parents cannot countenance such a diminution of their own relative importance to their child, and so react by becoming controlling and intrusive. They constantly nudge and nag the child into preferred behavior. If the child plays a little bit wildly or treats a friend a little bit rudely, the busybody parent swoops in to “correct” the child instead of letting her experience the instructive consequences of such actions.

Hyper-restrictive parenting for the sake of “child safety” has become so extreme that it has triggered a backlash in recent years.

This is often only the beginning of years of “safe space” “carrying” that continues straight through college.

The Bane of Schooling

Even for the children of many of the best parents, a dark shadow is soon cast over their ebullient life of self-development: the spectre of school. From kindergarten onward, for the bulk of her waking hours, the child’s self-actualizing and self-educating pursuits are arrested, as she is coercively subjected to obedience training. The busybody parent is joined by an army of busybody teachers and administrators in the work of interfering with the child’s self-development.

Autonomous actions are then often punished as “willful disobedience,” as her life becomes regimented. Teachers force-feed her “nurture” in the form of praise for obedience, and eventually she becomes addicted to such external validation, and is weaned off her intrinsic appetites for independent pursuits. Her growth toward greater autonomy is stunted.

As the child is schooled, she regresses: more of her happiness and instruction again becomes dependent on “nurture” and stems less from the pleasures and lessons of independent action. Instead of joyously reveling in and learning from her own pursuits, she either becomes a “good student” by learning to obsequiously undertake pursuits assigned to her by authority figures, or internalizes the message that she is a weak and/or worthless person (a “bad student”) because she fails to do so. In either case, she forgets the joy of passionate learning through autonomous action.

In preparation for school, many parents frustrate the self-development of their children even earlier, by enrolling them in pre-school, scheduling them for nonstop structured activities, and generally fussing over their behavior and doings.

Let Them Walk

Schooling, from the first day of kindergarten to college graduation day, is thought to be a great promoter of growth and development. Parents think they are doing their children a favor by forcing them to undergo fifteen thousand hours of regimented, artificial “preparation” while insulating them from the freedoms and the trials of real life. But the only true preparation for the freedoms and trials of real life is to gradually, but as quickly as possible, face those freedoms and trials yourself.

By being subjected to school, young people are cotton-balled and stifled in a series of safe spaces, and their spirit of self-reliance and self-exertion is atrophied from being “carried” and held fast by parents and teachers for far too long. For most, college is merely the final stage in a long sequence of imposed stunting situations.

14-year-olds are old enough to walk themselves to bed. In fact, they’re **old enough to work**. If they were allowed to do so, by the time they reached “college graduation age,” they could very well be capable, experienced, and connected enough to achieve lift-off in their lives: even to fully support themselves. They would also enjoy more self-confidence and self-efficacy, and would thus be free of many of the anxieties that plague so many young people today.

Parents take heed: beyond a certain point, carrying is not caring.

So, You're Thinking About Homeschooling

Kerry McDonald

I have been getting emails like the one below more frequently lately, so I thought I would share my general response.

Dear, Kerry: I ran across your website while doing research on homeschooling. I am a mother of 3 children ages 6,4 and 2. We moved to the suburbs when my children were smaller to take advantage of the top-rated public schools in our town. We had a wonderful pre-school experience due to the choice of school focused on play, outdoor exploration and emotional development.

However, as my 6 year old embarks on her education in the public school system, I find myself becoming more and more disappointed. More importantly, I find her becoming bored and disinterested in learning as a 1st grader.

All of this said, I am contacting you because I am thinking of homeschooling and I'm scared to death! What are the resources? What curriculum should I use? Where do I begin? So many questions! Help!

Hello!

Welcome to the exciting world of learning without schooling! You have already taken the important first step in redefining your child's education by acknowledging the limitations of mass schooling, recognizing the ways it can dull a child's curiosity and exuberance, and seeking alternatives to school. Now it's time to take a deep breath, exhale, and explore.

1. First things first: Connect with your local homeschooling network.

This network could be a message board through a Yahoo or MeetUp group, or a Facebook group, or a state homeschooling advocacy group (like [AHM](#) for Massachusetts homeschoolers). Maybe you have already joined the [Alliance for Self-Directed Education](#) and have connected with the local SDE groups that may be forming in your area. Tapping into your local homeschooling community, posting your questions and introducing yourself, can be incredibly valuable. You may be surprised at just how many homeschooling families are nearby and the many activities and resources available to you. You may also find families on a similar path as yours. This can alleviate much of the anxiety you are experiencing as you take a peek into this new world of learning. These local networks can help you to navigate your local homeschooling regulations and guide you through the process of pulling your child from school.

2. Second: start reading!

Obviously, you are already doing this or you wouldn't have found my blog, but there is much more to learn. Homeschooling and education blogs and websites are great resources. Here is my short list of favorite books/articles/films to get you started:

- [Free To Learn](#), by Peter Gray
- [Teach Your Own](#), by John Holt (Anything by John Holt is worth reading. Here is the [Holt/Growing Without Schooling](#) website.)
- [Life Learning Magazine](#), by Wendy Priesnitz (editor)
- [Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling](#), by John Taylor Gatto
- [Free-Range Learning](#), by Laura Grace Weldon
- [Home Grown](#), by Ben Hewitt

- *The Teenage Liberation Handbook*, by Grace Llewellyn
- *The Unschooling Handbook*, by Mary Griffith
- *The Unschooling Unmanual*, by Jan Hunt
- *Deschooling Society*, by Ivan Illich
- *Free To Live*, by Pam Laricchia
- *Class Dismissed* documentary
- *Schooling the World* documentary

3. Third: What about curriculum?

Personally, I am an advocate for **Self-Directed Education** (SDE). Sometimes referred to as “unschooling,” SDE shifts our view of education from schooling (something someone does to someone else, often by force) toward learning (something humans naturally do). With Self-Directed Education, young people are in charge of their own learning and doing, following their own interests and passions, with grown-ups available to help connect them to the vast resources of both real and digital communities. Children direct their education, adults facilitate.

I am a realist though. (Or at least I try to be!) So I know that it is often challenging for families to go directly from a schooled mindset to an unschooled one. Whenever parents ask me what curriculum they should choose, I say if you are going to use a curriculum, I recommend **Oak Meadow**. A Vermont-based company that incorporates a lot of Waldorf-inspired educational ideas, Oak Meadow is a gentle, rich curriculum with a stellar reputation.

4. Next: think about your family values, needs, and rhythms.

Shifting from schooling to learning may involve some big changes to your family life, your routines, and your schedules. It may lead to reassessing priorities and to carefully juggling multiple work and family

responsibilities. It also means you need some help to avoid burning out! Consider your support network of family, friends, and community and get the help you need to make this work for the long-term. If there is a self-directed learning center or homeschooling co-op near you, these resources can also be incredibly helpful in enabling you to find balance and connection.

5. Finally: talk with your kids!

Learning without schooling is a collaborative endeavor that is mostly focused on your child's distinct interests, learning styles, and needs. Talk with your child and find out what she wants to do. If you are coming directly out of a school environment, you may need some time to “deschool” — to fully embrace living and learning without being tied to the expectations and accouterments of a schooled lifestyle. Go to the library, the museum, the park, or the beach. Take a walk in the woods. Spend long, slow mornings reading books together on the couch. Bake cookies. Ride bikes. Write a letter to a friend. Watch a movie. Play Scrabble. Go to the grocery store, the bank, the post office. Live life. Soon you will see that living and learning are the same thing.

Best wishes to you as you embark on this exciting life journey! Remember: schooling is a relatively recent societal construct; learning is a natural condition of being human. Happy learning!

Additional Books and Resources

Books

- *Free to Learn* by Peter Gray
- *How Children Learn* by John Holt
- *How Children Fail* by John Holt
- *Dumbing Us Down* by John Taylor Gatto
- *Weapons of Mass Instruction* by John Taylor Gatto
- *FEE's Essential Guide to Crushing it at Your First Job*
- *Advice for Young, Unemployed Workers* by Jeffrey Tucker

Organizations and Websites

- [The Alliance for Self-Directed Education \(self-directed.org\)](http://self-directed.org)
- [Freedom to Learn \(Peter Gray's blog at Psychology Today\)](#)
- [Whole Family Learning](#)
- [FEE](#)
- [Praxis](#): a self-directed education and apprenticeship program for young professionals
- [The Libertarian Homeschooler](#) on Facebook

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The Foundation for Economic Education

1819 Peachtree Road NE, Suite 300

Atlanta, GA 30309

Telephone: (404) 554-9980

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