

*TheHomestead.Guru Presents ...*

# UNSCHOOLING: FREEDOM-BASED EDUCATION

Learn how you can educate your children at home,  
truly enjoy your time with them,  
and raise happy, functional adults.





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# ABOUT THIS BOOK

**Congratulations!** If you've purchased this ebook, you're probably thinking about how the current educational system isn't serving you and your family well.

Whether your children are still babies or already teenagers - this in-depth look at freedom-based education will support you in raising confident, caring, and clever individuals.

We've been unschooling for a long time, and there's as many ways to do it "correctly" as there are families doing it.

**Read on to learn more!**

# ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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**Krystal Trammell** is a [website and biz strategist](#) , essential oil educator, childbirth professional, and mother of five unschooled kids.

She often writes about unschooling, holistic wellness, and authentic relationships.

[Click here to find her on Instagram.](#)

**Hailey Adams** is a [certified yoga instructor](#) as well as an artist, art instructor, and certified skydiver from Houston. She lives full time on the road in a 5th wheel with her fiancé. Follow their journey [by clicking here!](#)

She is also an activist and [vegan](#). She has a passion for nature, living creatures, art, and food.

[Click here to visit her website .](#)

**Elizabeth Klebart** is a (single)mother, attachment educator, and feminine leader.

She believes that staying home with one's children and/or homeschooling should be accessible to all families.

She uses attachment theory, personal strategies, and spiritual practices to empower mothers to align their work /life on their own terms.

**Check out her website at** [SovereignMotherhood.com](http://SovereignMotherhood.com)

**Cat Bleish** is the owner and editor of TheHomestead.Guru. She's a hippie mama of two unschooled children; a rebel by nature, world traveller--and uniquely herself. She blogs about all things natural health, bitcoin, raising sovereign children, and living a detox lifestyle.

[www.TheHomestead.Guru](http://www.TheHomestead.Guru)



# WANT CUSTOMISED SUPPORT?

Request a private 1-hour session with one of our Gurus  
on how to get started unschooling in your family!

[Learn More](#)



## CHAPTER 1

# WHY UNSCHOOL?

Here's where we'll talk about why conventional school is failing our children--and our society.

# WANT TO LIBERATE THE NEXT GENERATION? UNSCHOOL YOUR KIDS.

**by Krystal Trammell**

If you care about freedom, consider unschooling your kids.

Unschooling is an educational approach that's legal in all 50 states.

It's not to be confused with how to pleasantly coerce your child to do schoolwork, how to get your kids to do schoolwork on their own, or how to make doing schoolwork more fun.

Unschooling is about unpacking our beliefs around how learning happens, what's good for kids and adults, and what's really important in our lives as parents who want to raise happy, functional adults.

If you're new to the concept of unschooling, expect it to challenge your current beliefs – perhaps a lot. Perhaps for a long time. Read about it, take the pressure off your kids for now, and settle in to observe what happens for awhile.

Unschooling is not something you learn and implement in the course of one day or week or month. It takes years to really “get it”, and it'll be a continual exercise in expanding your trust and confidence in your child's abilities and wisdom.

Kids often do things that make parents nervous. Instead of reacting out of fear or worry – unschooling gives you a different set of tools to approach parenting. It's about mutual respect, collaboration, and cooperation, instead of a top-down authoritarian approach.

Modern schooling is an institution that has much more to do with teaching obedience, and dissuading questions, than actual learning or logic.

[Read John Taylor Gatto's essay \*The Seven-Lesson Schoolteacher\*](#) to see what an award-winning New York teacher of the year has to say—and see if you agree.

## Unschool Your Kids

Unschooling invites you to look at your child from a different perspective – to assume that your child is not an empty vessel, but that his interests and tendencies are worthwhile and educational.





Unschooling considers everything to be educational. They know that learning happens as effortlessly as breathing, without carrots and sticks, without gold stars or threats.

Learning happens best when the learner is free of arbitrary coercion.

Unschooling is not new—if you look around, you’ll find grown unschoolers who are now parents themselves. Check out the blog [I’m Unschooling. Yes, I Can Write](#) to read about one adult unschooler’s experiences.

Unschoolers tend to spend more time, not less, with their children – although that time may look very different from a traditional homeschool family’s time spent together.

Unschooling is neither parent-led nor child-led – rather, it’s cooperative, collaborative, and dynamic, ever-changing as the needs of both parent, child, and/or siblings shift.

Everyone’s needs, desires, and preferences are taken seriously – instead of the parent’s (or the children’s!) always taking precedence.

Unschooling can be a life-changer, a massive paradigm shift, and an invitation to have closer, more authentic relationships within your family. It’s challenging, intense, fun, exasperating – and SO worth the effort.

Just like in the garden, you’ll see—growth and change don’t happen overnight, but they do happen.

*Editor’s Note: Check out these great resources.....*

[Unschooling is to Trust Your Children](#) by Katherine Meager

[Let Go and Let Learn – One Parent’s Reminder to Let Her Children Slice the Strawberries](#) by Catherine Bleish



# UNSCHOOLING AND “CHILD-LED LEARNING” DEFINED

**by Krystal Trammell**

The majority of people have no idea what unschooling is, so I'm here to define it for you.

A lot of people think they have unschooling all figured out, but are actually stuck in varying states of misinformation.

Unschooling is not a clever or fun way to get your kid to like doing schoolwork, and it's also [not quite “child-led learning”](#).

Even among homeschoolers, there's a lot of confusion about what the aim of unschooling is, and what it looks like on a daily basis.

Unschooling, defined? How we're different:

Unschoolers tend to believe similar broad concepts about the nature of children and of learning, that set us slightly apart from other people.

There are plenty of unschoolers who may disagree on some of the finer points, but the core beliefs are, in my opinion, fairly common ground:

Unschoolers believe strongly in the innate capabilities and curiosity of the human spirit from birth.

Firstly, we do not see children as inferior to adults ([that's adultism, FYI](#)).

We strive to treat people of all ages as primarily competent, well-intentioned individuals who possess sufficient internal motivation and drive to learn and grow throughout life.

In short, we believe positive, life-affirming things about human nature, and we have (or cultivate) [a large amount of trust in our children as people](#).

We respect and honor our children's feelings, needs, and capabilities as much as is feasible (note that I didn't say convenient, here). We strive to balance our kids' legitimate needs and wants with the needs and desires of everyone in the family.



This cooperative living approach is subtly different from being “child-led”—but it’s crucial to grasp. I’ve been unschooling since 2004, and our style has evolved as we (and our kids) have grown.

Personally, I believe child-led parenting and education can, over time, create an environment in which the parents experience burnout and resentment.

This happens when parent(s) are so zealous in their efforts to [honor and respect their child’s autonomy](#) and preferences, that they sometimes go too far the other way and forget to tend to their own needs.

They may forget that they too deserve enjoyment and breaks, and need compassion when they make mistakes.

[We do not use punishment to try to control our children](#), and we strive to create an atmosphere of cooperation and mutual respect in our homes and families.

Of course we’re human, and [sometimes we yell, or lose our tempers. So do our kids.](#)

But when we’ve overreacted or are wrong, we apologize and make amends.

Everyone in the family is deserving of mutual respect, and we work daily on facilitating cooperation, understanding, and empathy between ALL family members.

Unschoolers believe that absolutely everything—every interest and experience—has some inherent value.

We don’t have to artificially try to make things “educational”, and it’s kind of annoying to see other homeschoolers rushing around to [dress up everything as a “learning opportunity”](#).

We know that learning happens best when it’s not confined to a classroom or a book. We recognize that it’s impossible to refrain from learning, even when we try!

We recognize that the desire to learn is nearly insatiable, inherent in a child’s being, and if left to develop naturally (without the use of coercion, punishments, bribery, grades, gold stars, and the like), it will flourish and continue throughout one’s life.

Unschoolers believe that [grades and rewards dampen one’s internal motivation to learn](#) for the sake of wanting or needing to know.





We believe that dividing life up into subjects – and then labeling some of those subjects as universally important to know, and others as trivial or irrelevant – is a terrible disruption and hindrance to the natural flow of learning. [The Finns already know this, by the way.](#)

The end goal of unschooling is to raise adult humans who are “successful” in the sense that they have the tools necessary to make their way in the world, of course. But there’s a deeper meaning of success that’s also applied here, versus what’s applied to society in general.

**Unschoolers are more likely to measure success in non-quantifiable terms.**

We strive to give our kids the tools and the opportunities to be freethinkers. To carve out their own destinies instead of being bound by expectations or someone else’s life plans for them.

Unschoolers can and do “schoolwork”, and [they can and do go to college and beyond—if they desire to.](#)

Unschoolers have also experienced trust often enough, that trusting themselves comes naturally. They have been able to experiment and follow the threads of their interests without coercion, manipulation or grades. Those interests are more likely to lead to consuming passions and an expertise with a unique and marketable skill set.

[By young adulthood, many unschoolers are](#) in the uncommon position of being able to create abundance by following the natural flow of their passions, having boundless enthusiasm to learn new skills, and honing skills they already possess.

So when we talk about unschooling, we’re not talking about ignoring our kids. Quite the opposite actually—unschooling requires a deep commitment and consistency of interaction with our kids in order to work well and feel functional for both parents and children.

We’re also not going for Lord of the Flies-style role reversal, where kids are the tyrannical authorities and parents helplessly follow in their wake.

Unschooling is about prioritizing [cooperation, connection, and empathy within families.](#) Learning how to read, write, and do math are all simply bonus results that occur in the process.



# 3 STEPS FOR ANYONE TO START UNSCHOOLING (EVEN IF YOU THINK YOU CAN'T)

by **Elizabeth Klebart**

Do you wish you could homeschool or unschool your kids? Well, good news—you CAN!

I can't tell you how many times I've heard the phrase "If I didn't xyz, I would homeschool".

The majority of these statements come from working or single parent families.

What if I told you that you CAN educate your child at home?

Do people picture home education as kids sitting at a desk for 7 hours and needing to parents needing to come up with a curriculum plan?

What if I told you it's as easy as [following your child's interests](#), learning together, and using simple tools that create a learning environment throughout your day.

That is the joy of unschooling.

Unschooling is defined as "an educational method and philosophy that advocates learner-chosen activities as a primary means for learning.

"While often considered a subset of homeschooling, unschoolers may be as philosophically separate from other homeschoolers as they are from advocates of conventional schooling," according to Wikipedia.

I would not consider our learning environment as "radical unschooling"; I prefer to call myself an "eclectic unschooler", because I do use monthly themes and we follow a daily rhythm and structure that is flexible to our needs.





I like to use themes each month: I structure some activities around the theme, and simply follow the state guidelines so my child is up to grade level, should he choose to go to school someday. (What can I say? The habits of a former teacher die hard!)

Our learning environment is filled with field trips, sports, time with friends, cooking together, and learning through life.

Are you interested in homeschooling, but don't believe that you have the time or skills to teach your children? Then unschooling might be the perfect solution!

Here's 3 Ways that unschooling makes homeschooling accessible for everyone:

First, unschooling is accessible to all families, regardless of whether the parent has teaching experience.

Unschooling follows your child's interests.

You are essentially learning together and can come up with a plan that meets both of your needs.

You don't need to be a teacher to educate your child. Children naturally learn what they are interested in learning when they are ready.

Did you ever feel like your child was at risk of not being able to walk or talk? No. You trusted that they were capable of learning whatever they were ready to learn, on their own time table.

My son taught himself how to ride a bike and swim. I merely offered access to these experiences, modeled the skills in my own life, and scaffolded our environment to create opportunities to learn these skills.

Second, unschooling doesn't require expensive curriculum or private school tuition. Unschooling can be as inexpensive as you need it to be.

If it's accessible to a self-employed single mom, then it's accessible to most families!

All unschooling requires is access to free resources, such as libraries, museums, parks, nature, etc. It can be as simple as taking a monthly trip to the library and checking out books that are in alignment with your child's current interests.



You can strew books around the house so that they happen upon them and explore them. You can also set up activities that are based on their interests and go on field trips that explore those interests.

Finally, unschooling is still possible even if you work outside of the home as a single parent.

There are many families that work outside of the home and still find ways to successfully educate their children at home.

You can trade childcare with another unschooling family, find ways to work with your child present, or have split-shift childcare with your partner or another unschooling family.

Are you curious about unschooling and interested in seeing how to structure your day to learn through life?



## CHAPTER 2

# ALTERNATIVES

Unschooling can look very different for each family...



# ROAD SCHOOLING: DITCH THE CLASSROOM AND LEARN FROM THE WORLD

**by Hailey Adams**

Road schooling or world schooling, emphasises the idea that most of the learning in life takes place outside of a traditional classroom. While the amount of formal school work done will vary depending on the family, the uniqueness of world schooling is that it provides a learning resource from the environment and societal interactions a travelling child is exposed to.

If you choose to road school your children there are many learning opportunities while out on the road such as:

**Geocaching.** “Geocaching” is a high-tech outdoor scavenger hunt that involves math and direction finding. “Caches” of trinkets are hidden all over the U.S. and it’s up to you to find them; when you do, you take a trinket and leave another. It is fun for the whole family and costs nothing more than a GPS unit and the travel to get there.

**Letterboxing.** “Letterboxing” is another activity that can be shared and enjoyed by people of all ages. “Letterboxers” as they are called, hide small, weatherproof boxes in publicly-accessible places (like parks and public squares) and post clues to finding the box online on one of several websites. However, clues to finding some of the most highly-sought boxes are passed around by word of mouth.

There are about 90,000 active letterboxes hidden in North America alone. Individual letterboxes usually contain a log-book, an often hand-carved rubber stamp and occasionally contain an ink pad. Finders make an imprint of the letterbox’s stamp on their personal log book, and leave an imprint of their personal stamp on the letterbox’s logbook. This teaches all kinds of skill including critical thinking and careful direction following.



**National Parks Programs.** If you have children 13 years or younger, the NPS Junior Ranger Program is an activity based program conducted in almost all national parks, and some Junior Ranger programs are national. Interested youth complete a series of activities during a park visit, share their answers with a park ranger, and receive an official Junior Ranger patch and Junior Ranger certificate.

A sister program is the Passport To Your National Parks program. This travelogue includes color-coded maps, pre-visit information, illustrations and photographs. It includes a list of every national park area in the United States. Which is stamped after you visit and learn about a park. And if you are planning to visit more than a couple of national parks, be sure to buy a National Parks Pass that will only cost you \$80 annually. It gives you free admission to the parks as well as discounts on park amenities.

**WWOOFing:** WWOOF is a worldwide movement linking volunteers with organic farmers and growers to promote cultural and educational experiences based on trust and non-monetary exchange, thereby helping to build a sustainable, global community. Children can WWOOF with their parents and learn where their food comes from and the importance of the work that is required in farming to reap a harvest.

**Other Learning Opportunities:** There are thousands of museums of all kinds in every city, many of them are free of charge or have days that are free for patrons. The kids and the families can take on internships in fields of interest or study and learn hands on. There are many online groups for road schooling families to meet up and engage in all kinds of activities. Even making time to take the kids with you to the bank, to the store, etc., and all the other things that every adult typically does, but you don't learn hands on about in school.

Another benefit to road schooling is kids gaining the ability to interact with unfamiliar adults. As many believe most people are out to cause harm, we have forgotten as a society what valuable information we can learn from those we have just met. Everyone has different skills and certainly different stories, allowing our children to socialize with strangers gives them the opportunity to learn unconventional or even life saving skills! Road schooling gives children a sense of adventure while instilling courage, boosting their curiosity and giving them the opportunity to learn at their own pace.



# GROWING UP WILD

**by Cat Bleish**

Most children in our society spend their days in a classroom with children of the same age, forced to sit for hours on end, often bored out of their minds.

Those of us who grew up in these assembly line classrooms know how backward this teaching philosophy is. We wanted nothing more than to be outside, learning from nature through play.

There is a new movement in response to this highly regimented lifestyle for our youth. It is called unschooling, or child-led learning. The principles of [unschooling](#) ask parents to facilitate learning through life experiences as opposed to strict daily schedules and forced education.

One little girl was able to experience this unschooled life in a very big way. Meet Tippi Degre, a French girl who grew up learning from wild animals in the African wilderness. Her parents are wildlife photographers, and instead of sending her off to be taught by strangers, she was given one of the most unique childhoods on this planet.

Tippi spent years interacting with snakes, cheetahs, lions, giraffes, crocodiles, zebras, elephants, and mongoose. She spent the first ten years of her life living in the total wild.

[Recent studies](#) show how important recess and play is for children. Are your children getting enough play?

Imagine the level of education we all would have if we learned about animals by interacting with them? How would we treat our planet and fellow living creatures if we were raised in this manner?

Would ADD and ADHD even exist if children were allowed to run until they were tired? Would we be a more happy society?

These are the questions we should be asking as parents, educators, and activist liberators.



There once was the viewpoint that Western society was “better” or “above” so called “third world” countries, but the truth is our education system is [failing our youth](#).

We may not all be able to spend each day outside in the wilderness, but we certainly can provide our children with a garden to grow and learn about food.

I think if there is one message I take from this little girl’s journey, it is to allow your children to be like Tippi. To explore, to touch, to play, to learn, to grow. Through unschooling, through travel, and through hands on learning we can begin to free the minds of our children, and hopefully create a more joyful planet.

Photos here: [Page 2](#)

Visit her website here: [tippi.org](http://tippi.org)





# NEW STUDY: CHILDREN WHO SPEND MORE TIME IN NATURE ARE HEALTHIER AND HAPPIER

by **Cat Bleish**

Can you believe that children in Great Britain watch more than 17 hours of television per week? When you break that down, it averages over 2 hours a day, every single day of the year, comprising a minimum of 15% of their waking lives (assuming 8 hours of sleep per night).

## Children and Technology

Then you take the social media consumption – Great Britain's children spend over 20 hours per week on the internet, mostly using social media.

By the age range of 11-15, British children spend over 50% of their waking lives in front of a screen, averaging 7.5 hours per day.

'For a new generation, nature is more abstraction than reality.  
Increasingly, nature is something to watch, to consume,  
to wear – to ignore.'

[Richard Louv, Last Child in the Woods.](#)

This obsessive screen time has resulted in staggering health ramifications including vitamin D deficiency, nearsightedness (I have this problem, and I think it's from looking at screen so much in my adult life!), and a decline in their ability to engage in physical activities like push-ups or sit-ups.

This has also resulted in an increase in problems with cardio-respiratory systems (heart and lung).

Research believe these issues are directly connected with a reduction in time spent outside.

## Children in Nature



In contrast, a 2009 study conducted by researchers at the University of Essex concluded that children who were allowed to “free-range” and spend time in nature actually lived longer. Additionally, children who had a greater exposure to nature had reduced symptoms of ADHD by THREEFOLD.

Childhood psychologist Aric Sigman calls this health/nature correlation the “Countryside effect”, and states that it is a considerable impact on one’s health. Not only are children who spend more time outside physically healthier, they scored higher on “concentration and self-discipline; improved their awareness, reasoning and observational skills; did better in reading, writing, maths, science and social studies; were better at working in teams; and showed improved behaviour overall.”

Do your children spend enough time in nature?

There was definitely a time period where we became a very technology-centric family. I noticed we fought more, our children were constantly agitated and became frustrated over the simplest things. As we transitioned back to an outdoor-centric lifestyle, they began to “level out” emotionally and the mood in our home became incredibly more joyful.

We have found the combination of children and technology only works if it is in balance with time spent in nature!

Sources:

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# KNIVES AND FIRES AT PRESCHOOL? YES, IT'S A GOOD THING.

**by Krystal Trammell**

Do you let your kids play with fire?

For most Americans, child safety means keeping kids far away from anything sharper than a nerf ball.

However, you might be surprised to learn that not all countries treat their children like delicate flowers if they're under the age of ten [\(or twenty\)](#).

For example, the children who attend this “forest kindergarten” in Germany, spend the entire day outside in all types of weather conditions—even during snow.

They are encouraged to explore the forest, and they use real tools like rope, fire, knives and saws to build and create whatever their imaginations can come up with.

[Forest schools are not a new concept in Sweden](#) and other parts of Europe, but they're just now gaining interest in other parts of the world, including America.

In forest schools, there's an emphasis on free play, minimal adult guidance, and unstructured time in nature. If it's cold or wet outside, kids wear extra layers and some galoshes, and they just keep playing (err, I mean learning).

[They are supervised, but not “hoverparented”](#). Kids in forest schools are encouraged to solve problems on their own, or in collaboration with other children. Adults are there to provide guidance and safety, but they do not aim to intervene or direct the children's activities.

Children are not given kid-safe (read: useless) tools; instead, they learn to use and respect things like knives and saws, while simply doing the things they are interested in. The forest is an excellent setting for this type of unfettered exploration of the natural world. A growing body of child development [experts agree that it's beneficial to let kids have more opportunities to do things that seem “dangerous”](#).



[Gever Tulley, founder of The Tinkering School](#), says that playing with so-called dangerous things “enables young kids to become more adept, resourceful, creative and even safer while doing what kids naturally like to do: explore the world around them.” He says that when young children are trusted to work with real adult tools, it helps them improve their critical thinking skills, problem solving skills, and fine motor skills. For example, if children are never given the opportunity to use a sharp knife, they will not develop a proper sense of caution, nor the awareness of what a sharp knife can do.

When my children express curiosity about fire, I let them experiment with it in a safe environment (in my presence). I offer them information and guidance, and while I’m ready to intervene if necessary—it’s usually not needed. Kids quickly learn the finer points of fire safety while they are keen to immerse themselves in the experience!

Personally, I think that today’s children will be better served if we as parents can keep our own fears in check, and let them explore the world around them more fully. Guidance doesn’t have to be oppressive or structured—and [the increasing success of forest schools](#) is proof positive of that.

What do you think? Would you send your kids to a forest school that lets them use fire and knives?



## CHAPTER 3

# PARENTING

When you unschool, chances are you'll need to  
rethink your style of parenting.

We're raising *adults*, after all.



# PAVLOV, ROLLER SKATES, AND WHY WE DON'T PUNISH OUR KIDS – UNSCHOOLING

**by Krystal Trammell**

I originally wrote this in 2012, when my children were much younger.

Gentle discipline. That sounds pretty progressive, right?

Not spanking or [hitting children IS still a pretty progressive concept](#) in our society (unfortunately). In my opinion, it's disheartening that we're still not collectively as a culture at the place where hitting kids is just accepted as absurd, archaic, and wrong for any reason...

But I digress. This article isn't about discipline. It's about the ways in which we are moving forward...slowly.

I'm obviously not the perfect parent (as if there is such a thing)—but I am willing to admit there's still plenty of room for positive change.

One of the things—tools, if you will—that parents often turn to, or use more heavily, when they are working toward a more gentle way of relating to their kids, is using rewards and consequences.

“Hey, the kids did what I told them to, there was no yelling, hitting or spanking, and everything is great!”

Well, yes. But no.

There is much more going on with rewards and consequences than just the immediate behavior changes that are effected.

For many parents, the question of whether rewards and consequences “work” is rather a moot point.

We don't care whether they “work”, because we are more concerned with the long-term behavioral and psychological consequences of using such techniques.



Incidentally, of course rewards “work”. Pavlov proved that with dogs in the 1890s.

Yet I deeply question the integrity of behaviorism when it’s applied to human beings.

Even very small children are beings who are intrinsically motivated to think critically and to make decisions based on internal judgments, not external carrots and sticks.

For more on this, please check out the book [Unconditional Parenting, by Alfie Kohn](#).

The first chapter goes directly into behaviorism and why it’s not appropriate for parenting.

The thing is, the concepts of rewards and punishment are so ingrained in our culture and our thinking, that it’s hard to see how it might be damaging.

Think of it this way: We are putting out little fires again and again, instead of investing a lot of time and money to create a fire-resistant structure.

And we’re neglecting to notice all the little scorched spots adding up...

I am not merely interested in changing the day-to-day behavior of my kids—

—and I believe that that’s all rewards and punishments really do.

Behavior is really just a symptom of the way that the child is currently perceiving the world to operate.

Behavior is like a mushroom (incidental), while the essential substance of belief/worldview (which manifests behaviors of all sorts) is the mycelium—invisible, yet vast and essential.

Just stamping out the mushroom won’t get rid of the mycelium from which it sprung.

Punishing “bad” behavior might get rid of the behavior, but punishment does not help the child to internalize why the behavior is being labeled as “bad”—WHY he shouldn’t do it.



When a kid is punished, he is learning that the adults around him don't like when he does X, so he learns to avoid doing x when they're around.

Or—perhaps just as bad—he learns that pleasing the people in his external world is what's important in life, so he learns to dissociate from and subvert those parts of himself that are labeled as “bad” by the people around him.

He never learns to question why X is “bad” is the first place; what circumstances make X “bad;” or whether X is indeed “bad” at all.

Punishments create a worldview in which the child learns to look to others for what's right and wrong, and critically thinking about WHY things are the way they are is not emphasized.

Even the laws of the land, ideally, are followed because they make sense, because there is (ostensibly) a rhyme and reason to them that the public generally agrees with.

We don't all drive on the right side of the road solely because we're afraid we'll get a traffic fine or go to jail if we don't.

Is this a stretch for you? It was for me, too, in the beginning.

There are plenty of things in life with natural negative consequences—we don't need to arbitrarily create more of them to teach kids about actions having consequences.

If your child leaves his roller skates out in the rain, and they get mildewed, he will learn something from that without any additional negativity imposed by you.

He'll have to scrub the mildew off, or the skates will need to be thrown out; he'll have to save his money, or wait until you can buy another pair for him. He might miss out on skating with his friends for awhile, and so on.

Incidentally, this is not the same thing as you purposely cleaning up the rest of the yard but leaving his skates there to “teach him a lesson”.

There's a line between natural consequences and on-purpose consequences—and you also don't want to miss an opportunity to be nice to your child for the sake of niceness.



The world may be a cruel place, but you don't have to be the one to reinforce that reality. The easiest way to teach your child kindness is by being kind to him.

Next time he might remember his roller skates, and choose to also bring your garden tools in along with his skates, just for the sake of niceness.

Think the best of your child—giving him the benefit of the doubt will teach him to do the same with others...eventually.





# FOOD FREEDOM? DO UNSCHOOLING KIDS EAT WHATEVER THEY WANT?

**by Krystal Trammell**

Unschooling goes beyond education and learning—it bleeds over into every area of your life, eventually. So what does it look like to be unschooling food?

For many unschoolers, this means what you think it means—kids are given the freedom to eat whatever they want.

Many of you may now be picturing ice cream for every meal and nary a vegetable in sight—but the reality of food freedom doesn't stay that way, even if it might begin like that!

Kids, like people of all ages, tend to be drawn to what's forbidden, especially if there's a fair amount of emotional energy surrounding those taboos.

For example, when I was a kid, my parents were health nuts of the low-fat, low-salt variety. However, sugar was not yet seen as [the villain many now know it to be](#).

Unsurprisingly, I craved exactly what I was forbidden—things like bacon and potato chips! Never mind how many popsicles I ate on a daily basis...

Are we supposed to be this smiley at dinner? Maybe if nobody's forcing you to finish your green beans...

Food freedom can actually work very well. If you think about it, [freedom around food is basically how adults eat](#).

I personally know many kids whose parents have successfully removed food restrictions, and their children naturally select what amounts to a typical diet. [It's been studied before, and the results will surprise you!](#)

Especially when you consider how much [emotional shame and dysfunctional behaviors are tied to food](#)—it's really worth it to kill off the “Clean Your Plate” mentality.

Sometimes, my kids' friends are used to much more rigid expectations about food from their parents, so they are confused when they eat at our place.



I have no desire to force them to finish their plate or carefully monitor what they are eating—and my kids are surprised that that kind of treatment is normal to them.

However, you might be surprised to learn that as much as I am a fierce advocate of freedom for kids, that I actually don't give mine complete food freedom.

Why not?? Well, for starters, over half of my family is severely allergic to wheat gluten. By “severely allergic,” I mean gluten can't be cooked in our pots, and we can't have wheat crumbs on our counter-tops.

Wheat is a major illness trigger for us—and while we don't have any official diagnoses, [we do have our theories as to why](#).

As I've said before on this blog, [health care is, to a large degree, self-care](#).

Furthermore, we believe that what now passes for “food” in this country has become so loosely defined, that it's become unsafe to just eat anything and everything.

I know that's a controversial belief, especially in the unschooling community. However, my kids are healthy and strong, and I don't think that's coincidence. They're not suffering from a deficiency of white sugar or food dye.

Now, they DO eat those things occasionally. But that's the keyword—occasionally.

Beyond severe allergies, no food is completely off-limits for any of us.

However, you also won't find many “typical” packaged and processed food items in our pantry or fridge. We buy in bulk, and make a lot of things from scratch. There's almost nothing in our house that is “open-it-and-eat-it”—which sounds like heresy for the [typical American diet](#).

This is admittedly difficult, when the world is positively laden with so-called “foods” and “treats” that function like heavy hits of dopamine on kids' impressionable brains.

It's especially hard when we see the rest of the world eating “staples” that are in fact treats for us—things like bread and pasta, for example.



There are seven in our family, which means we are also not usually up for doing the short-order-cook thing.

“This is dinner, and no, you can’t eat up something else in the fridge instead—because then you’re taking away ingredients for what I’d planned to cook tomorrow.”

Do I buy my kids “fun” snacks of their own choosing? Absolutely. Do we have snacks on hand constantly? Not at all. There is little room for picky eaters in our budget or our schedule.

We feel that our avoidance of most processed foods strongly correlates to our family’s health and wellness, both short-term and long-term.

This won’t work...except maybe if you use liquid chlorophyll.

In the absence of guidance and “soft limits” (practical things, like limiting the amount of foods you buy that are not health-promoting), I think it’s unwise to blindly surrender to [the consumer-driven food industry’s whims](#).

Even for adults, it’s nearly impossible to make food choices that aren’t influenced by corporate bottom-lines, advertisements, and [“informative” double-speak that’s designed to obfuscate the facts](#).

It’s a known fact that [modern “food products” are explicitly created to promote addiction](#), with no regard to health (or perhaps even safety, as [many American foods are banned in other countries](#)).

Personally, I’m keenly interested in avoiding the chronic and debilitating health issues that are becoming ever more common in America.

There’s also no dearth of [studies showing how damaging it is for kids to be controlled and coerced around food](#), for any reason—so I’m keen to avoid that, too.

To be clear, complete food freedom is unequivocally healthier than being the food police to your kids, even if they don’t always make the healthiest choices.



Unschooling is about removing rigid and arbitrary control, first and foremost—and that naturally extends to the food we eat. The dinner table shouldn't turn into a battlefield for any reason—it's simply not worth it.

So, quit forcing your kids to clean their plates, and start unschooling food!





## CHAPTER 4

# LIVING IS LEARNING

From raising geniuses to rethinking grades, living a freedom-based life is full of opportunities to learn and grow from!

# STUDY REVEALS THE EDUCATION INSTITUTION STRIPPING CREATIVE GENIUS

**by Hailey Adams**

In a talk at TEDX Tucson, [Dr. George Land](#) reveals [shocking results](#) of a creativity test that was initially developed for NASA, but lead to the testing of school children.

After proving successful on the NASA engineers, researchers decided to turn the test on children, so [they tested 1,600 four and five year old children](#). The test looks at the ability to come up with new and innovative ideas to problems. Researchers were shocked to discover that a whopping 98% of children proved that they had the ability to be creative geniuses.

After their findings they extended the study and tested the children 5 years later at the age of 10, a mere 30% retained the ability to fall into the category of creative genius.

By the final testing, results show that by the age of fifteen, the number of children who pass as a 'creative genius' falls to just 12%.

How many people retain creative genius potential into adulthood? A miniscule 2% of adults have the potential to be a creative genius.

Dr. Land points out that this is due to the failings of the school system. He says that there are two different types of thinking – **convergent thinking and divergent thinking**.

“Convergent thinking is the ability to think critically and to judge ideas, this happens in your conscious thinking. Divergent thinking is the ability to imagine new ideas out of nothing, the ability to be creative, this happens in your unconscious thinking.”

Dr. Land states that the two types of thinking cannot be used in unison with each other, but that the school system teaches that you must – this confuses children and makes one type of thinking overrule the other.



If this NASA study isn't telling enough, [these results](#) have actually been replicated time and time again.

## **We are being systematically dumbed down**

“The implications of this profound study are rather self evident, I would say. We are innately born with the potential of a creative genius, but the moment we enter the school system, we get dramatically dumbed down. The reasoning for this is not too difficult to apprehend; school, as we plainly call it, is an institution that has historically been put in place to ultimately serve the wants of the ruling class, not the common people.”

“In order for the so called elite to maintain their lavish lifestyles of overt luxury — where they contribute the least but enjoy the most — they understand that children must be dumbed down and brainwashed to accept (and even serve) their rapacious system of artificial scarcity, unending exploitation, and incessant war.”

Dr. Land's suggestion to take your creativity back, as an adult, is to find your inner child and exercise your creativity with crafts and stimulating activities.

## **Road Schooling Revolution**

In light of these results, a solution for the future generations and something to consider for your children is [roadschooling or worldschooling](#), which emphasizes the idea that most of the learning in life takes place outside of a traditional classroom.

Both have been gaining in popularity in recent years, as it's proving to be even more appealing to parents. Road schooling nourishes a child's creative potential, without educational restrictions and forced learning material.

Alternatives are on the rise and creativity is creeping back in, embrace your creative potential and nourish the future generations. Our society has a serious lack of creative solutions and it's up to you and I to do something about it!

# HOMESCHOOLING MOM TURNS HOMEMADE PRODUCT INTO MILLION DOLLAR INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS

**by Cat Bleish**

Have you heard of [My Magic Mud](#)? This amazing tooth whitening powder was developed by a homeschooling mom of four in her kitchen. She has since turned it into an international million dollar business and you can find her products in stores across the globe.

This entrepreneurial mother was simply looking for a solution to help her children with their oral hygiene. After months of internet research and trying a variety of ingredients, Jessica stumbled upon a magical combination – charcoal and [bentonite clay](#). The results were so profound that she began to share her concoction with friends and family. I was one of the blessed beta testers who got to try her product in 2013 – I believe it was hand delivered in a zip lock bag.

The results were astounding – my teeth became more white with the first brush and my teeth felt super smooth, like I had just left the dentist after a cleaning. Its the only product I use on my teeth now, and it has done more than just whiten them, I have lost all sensitivity to cold.

For over 10 years I could not have ice in my drinks or really enjoy ice-cream without excruciating tooth pain. My Magic Mud has reversed those symptom for me, and I have zero interested in putting any other product in my mouth.

## It all Started With a Facebook Post!

Once she and her family realized they were onto something truly remarkable, her daughter made a Facebook post showing the world the results of using the charcoal based powder.

Immediately her friends began to ask where they could buy it. Jessica and her husband Justin jumped into action. Within two weeks they had begun to bottle and label their magical product, a website was created, and the products went for sale online.

## DIY Grassroots Business



Jessica began filling orders and creating her product in bulk.

They designed their first label, and began sourcing the finest and nonabrasive charcoal on the planet.

As orders began to pour in, she realized the demand for natural tooth whitening powder was beyond what she could service online, so she took her product to the people of Central Texas by working farmer's market booths in New Braunsfels, San Marcos, and all around Central Texas.

Their first trade show was in Irving, TX in early 2014, it was a small regional show where they learned about NPA Expo East.

They had a booth at Expo East in September of 2014 which served as their first major launch into stores. From that point forward things began to move very quickly for the Arman family!

Today this phenomenal product can be purchased in stores across the globe. You can support The Homestead Guru by shopping on our sister site for [My Magic Mud](#).

Congratulations, Jessica. I love watching you soar!





# GETTING GOOD GRADES IS MEANINGLESS

**by Krystal Trammell**

Hold on—I'm about to disappoint all you high-achievers...but [good grades are no measure of intelligence](#).

More importantly, [good grades also don't actually have any bearing on one's success](#).

School does influence one's real-world success—but not in the ways that one would hope.

I grew up being driven to succeed in school by both my parents. It was extremely important to them that I was intelligent and successful.

Even before I was old enough for school, my parents pushed me to learn to read, learn fractions, and study history.

Once I started school, I learned that it was pretty darn simple to get the coveted “all As” that everyone held in such high esteem.

However, graded work creates an environment where the grade itself becomes more important than the process of learning or effort that's necessary to achieve it.

So rather than take risks and try something interesting, [research shows that today's A-students are more likely to play it safe to achieve a higher grade](#).

This effectively curtails any expansive, challenging work undertaken by students on their own, beyond what is assigned to them.

Kids learn to aim low in order to ensure they always win.

As far as excelling at “grade level”—the very idea of “grade level” is bogus. Who decided that multiplication was a 3rd grade skill, for example?

100 years ago what constituted 5th grade level work would stump a good deal of college freshmen today!



If a kid today is getting “good grades”, what it really means is that they are good at jumping through the hoops of public schooling.

They might know how to write an A+ book report, but he might not be aware of how to think critically about the content of that book as it applies to situations outside of graded academia.

For the “smart kids” (however we’re arbitrarily choosing to define that), getting straight A’s might translate into never taking risks or challenges, because that might threaten their GPA.

Even in college—how many students choose the easy, “safe” topic for their term papers instead of choosing what lights their passion—but might be controversial, or harder to prove their point with existing research?

In my opinion, this has the danger (or perhaps, the socially engineered result) of turning out people who are more likely to uphold the status quo than challenge it; more likely to submit to authority or seek “expert” advice without question; more likely to passively wait for instruction than figure something out on their own.

In our society we speak admirably of the self-starter, the visionary, the go-getter—but these sorts are becoming more and more rare every day.

Those who truly seek knowledge will not be concerned with letter-grades or a culturally defined version of “success”—they’ll be out there taking risks—and most likely failing multiple times—to better their understanding and improve their results.

School does not teach people to succeed in these terms—only in terms of A+ and “good job!”

As any entrepreneur or visionary will tell you, [you have to be willing to fail—a LOT—in order to truly push the boundaries of what you’re capable of.](#)



# A GOOD EDUCATION IS NOT FOUND IN SCHOOLS

**by Krystal Trammell**

More and more people are coming to the realization that conventional, compulsory public school is a travesty of “education” and ideas like unschooling are taking off.

Modern public schooling closely resembles the mechanized system of an industrial factory setup. It’s not even remotely in line with the current gold standards of research into human learning and cognitive function.

Most systems of education treat the human mind as a commodity—to be controlled and molded. Predictable responses to common inputs are valued over thinking outside the box—but why?

Because our economy is built to thrive on the export of a steady stream of minds trained to placidly obey the advertising messages they’re served with.

Former New York Schoolteacher of the Year John Taylor Gatto famously said that modern schooling “doesn’t work, because its fundamental premises are mechanical, anti-human, and hostile to family life.”

So really, it’s not surprising that the average American is not particularly talented at thinking for oneself, or coming up with new and useful ideas.

We know the US [ranks embarrassingly low in international measures of education](#), and [American culture seems more and more to be glorifying stupidity](#).

Many families who are serious about changing this narrative are keeping their kids out of the compulsory education system.

Outside of the logistical trappings and top-down control of school, kids have access to the tools and freedom to learn anything they want, unfettered by [the limitations and absurdities of so-called public “education”](#).

An unschooled child’s educational path will not look too similar to what we’ve been trained to recognize as a “good education”.

However, they’ll be much better prepared for living in the fast-paced and ever-changing world the last few generations have created.



Thanks to technology and the miracle of the internet ([as we know it](#)), we live in an era of unprecedented information, knowledge, awareness, and access to learning.

Even 30 years ago, if we wanted to learn about anything beyond the reach of traditional school, we were woefully limited in our access to free information.

Physical copies of books might have been pricey to order, or unavailable—and these were printed by elite publishers who controlled the flow of what they considered “worthy” (i.e. profitable) information.

With the rise of YouTube alone, we can now learn more in a month than our parents had access to in a lifetime.

Even better, so much of it is realistic, useful information that can positively impact our lives—[like this mom who built herself and her kids a HOUSE by watching YouTube tutorials](#).

Calculus and Latin might be traditional hallmarks of a “good education”, but they simply don’t pack that sort of punch.

People are noticing that while the under-30 crowd might be able to pass tests with ease, [they are missing out on all sorts of practical knowledge that’s still relevant and important](#).

If you spend too much time accumulating knowledge and theories without actually applying that knowledge in the real world, you’re wasting everyone’s time.

Who cares what grade you got in Latin, if you’re unlikely to ever be faced with a problem which requires speaking Latin as the solution?

It’s high time for us to reevaluate what “being educated” really means. Let’s start prioritizing actual life skills over theoretical concepts and rote memorization of dead facts.

We need to make sure our children are learning things that actually matter, like where our food comes from, how to stay healthy, how to build and repair things, and how government and society operates (for a start).

Unschooling allows families to redefine “a good education” as something relevant and practical in our unpredictable world.





For more on the background of schooling in America, please check out this compelling book. It might make you mad.

To learn about how to “do unschooling” with your family, just stop “doing school” and see what happens ([yes, it's legal in all 50 states](#)).

It's a process, and it's not quick or easy to understand. In the words of unschooling advocate Sandra Dodd, “[read a little, try a little, wait a while, and watch.](#)”



# IS UNSCHOOLING RIGHT FOR MY FAMILY?

Get personalized support + insight when you book a session with one of our Gurus.

[Request a Session Now](#)

