

Question Everything, Not Just the Alternatives

If you want to go to college and still be accepted by your family/friends, you don't need a good reason for attending. The world will gladly accept your decision and praise you for it without the slightest bit of scrutiny.

If you want to pursue an alternative, however, get ready for the most intense interrogation of your life because people will finally begin to care about all sorts of questions they'd never dare pose to a college student or college administrator.

I work with lots of college opt-outs and I love when their family and friends ask me questions about every imaginable scenario for a life without a college degree. It's the most fun part of my job because I can never predict what the questions will be. I always learn something new about what people really want, what they're afraid of, and where their concerns come from. It's an enriching and enlightening experience every time.

But then I cry when the conversations are over because I know that those same questions will not be asked about thousands of people who choose college without having any ability whatsoever to rationally defend their decision against the kinds of counter-arguments that opt-outs have to deal with. And to be quite honest, I like that opt-outs get challenged from every possible angle by parents, professors, and peers. They don't need to be sheltered from the tough realities that come with making unconventional decisions. It's good for them.

But when it's all said and done, education isn't going to change because of the arguments people make for alternatives. It will change when people start asking the same questions about the status quo that they instinctively ask when confronted with the stuff they don't know.

Keep challenging the opt-outs. Keep challenging the people who don't believe that college is right for them. Keep challenging those who believe the times are changing and that education is bigger (and sometimes better) than traditional schooling. Don't ask less questions, ask more questions. And when you're ready to get really philosophical, turn those questions around and pose them to yourself, your friends, and all the people in your life who don't make you uncomfortable with their career choices. Because that's when the revolution will truly get started.