

Chapter 4 – Radical Unschooling

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As shown in the previous chapter, schooling is an extremely poor practice for building a culture of liberty. Parents who've begun building that culture at home through attachment and peaceful discipline will find schooling to be a major counter-productive step in the socialization and enculturation of their children toward liberty.(30) Instead, such parents should educate themselves on the philosophy known as radical unschooling.(31) Not only does it meet the psychological and intellectual needs of children better than schooling, but it's also the best way to continue building a culture of liberty.(32)

Interest-led Learning

Unschooling is the philosophy that says that children learn best when they are focused on what interests them most.(33) Rather than following someone else's plan for learning, unschoolers are given the freedom to explore the world around them in their own way and on their own timescale. Both knowledge and wisdom are obtained as a matter of living joyfully alongside the necessary resources, which includes people, beginning but not ending with mom and dad, and things.(34) Unschoolers usually have unlimited access to the resources around them, which allows them to spend sufficient time learning or doing the things they find interesting. Because unschooled children are in complete control of their lives and their focus, they are naturally socialized into expecting such liberties in the future.(35) My own children show remarkable assertiveness when the liberties they've been granted are being encroached.

Rules vs. Principles

What separates radical unschooling from unschooling is the former's focus on principles over rules. Rules are arbitrary and dictated, and may or may not be based on wisdom, but principles are a matter of reason and discovered through respectful dialogue and negotiation.(36) Going to bed at a certain time and place, eating all of one's food, doing chores on certain days, *et cetera*, are rules usually imposed on children by their parents. Contrary to rules like this, radical unschooling parents would discuss each of these things with their children, respectfully explaining why one should or shouldn't do this or that as it concerns each, and then let the child choose his own course of action.

For example, with bed times, mom and dad wouldn't assign a time for their kids to go to bed, but instead discuss with them any plans they have the next day, and what each

person's needs are in keeping them.(37) Dad might have to work early, and so needs to retire sooner than the rest of the family. And because dad needs a quiet house in order to get the sleep he needs to wake up on time for work (which finances everyone's lives and interests at the moment), he would appreciate it if everyone staying up could refrain from making too much noise. So long as this is all talked about respectfully, with willing consideration of everyone's needs, the family is likely to find an acceptable solution for all. Because radical unschoolers focus on principles rather than rules, children learn wisdom, negotiation, and respectful communication.(38) They also learn that their opinion matters and that they have a legitimate choice in the actions they take.

Natural Authority

When children have choice, have control, they learn something different about authority. Rather than authority being the person or persons who makes the rules that others must follow – or else! – authority is the person that can help others learn what they want to learn. Natural authority, in other words. Unschoolers discover all sorts of natural authorities throughout life as they explore and do interesting things. Nobody's born knowing everything, and so we must learn, and quite a bit of learning comes through the help of others. When others help us with our interests, our passions, they earn our respect and admiration as authorities in their field. Rather than being an arbitrary master, those who are considered "authority figures" are in actuality, servants. And any attempt at mastery over others is more likely seen as morally outrageous by those who've been socialized to view authorities in this way. Mom and dad included.(39)

Intellectual Freedom

Unlike those who are forced to go to school, unschoolers enjoy intellectual freedom, ie. freedom of the mind; the right to choose one's intellectual pursuits. Curiosity is one of humanity's greatest traits. It's unfortunately curtailed and often abolished through schooling, ie. educational compulsion. Anyone who's ever had kids will tell you how curious and fascinated about new things young children are.(40) This isn't something that's supposed to disappear as children get older. It only seems that way because schooling is the norm and people lose that natural drive to be curious and desire to learn new things when so much of their time and mental content is being forcefully prescribed by others. Those who maintain or re-discover their curiosity become the saviors of the world, those who invent new things and embark on new entrepreneurial ventures. The more people retain their natural curiosity, the harder it is to take away their liberties. And any attempt is more likely to be thwarted in creative ways.(41)

Respect

All of the above has the effect of creating genuine respect between adults and children.

Respect is earned as a matter of the bonding that occurs between individuals. Bonding requires the commitment to allow each other to be and control themselves however they choose. Children who feel respected are socialized and enculturated into expecting that respect is earned on this basis. They are more interested in earning the respect of those they encounter in life. As they understand the requirements for genuine respect, they are less likely to be interested in domination-based relationships. This bodes well for building a culture of liberty.

Many homeschoolers practice aspects of unschooling, but unfortunately homeschooling can be just as incompatible toward building a culture of liberty as is schooling. All compulsory means of education should be abandoned if the goal is liberty.(42) Children won't grow up understanding and demanding freedom if they don't experience it in their formative years. A radical unschooling home – and to a lesser extent attending a Sudbury Valley-modeled democratic school – is the best environment to building and maintaining a culture of liberty.(43)

(30) Read “The Trouble with Traditional Schooling” by Gregory Diehl at <http://skyler.link/evctrouble>

(31) Read “A Primer on Radical Unschooling” compiled by the author at <http://skyler.link/evcunschooling>

(32) Read *Free to Learn* by Peter Gray, available in several formats at <http://skyler.link/amznfree2learn>

(33) Read “The Unschooling Philosophy” by Pam Sorooshian at <http://skyler.link/joyphilosophy>

(34) Read “Living Joyfully: Unschooling” by Pam Laricchia at <http://skyler.link/ljunschooling>

(35) Read “Whatever They Want” by the author at <http://skyler.link/evcwhatever>

(36) Read “Living by Principles instead of by Rules” compiled by Sandra Dodd at <http://skyler.link/doddrules>

(37) Read “Sleeping” compiled by Sandra Dodd at <http://skyler.link/doddsleeping>

(38) Read “Living by Principles” compiled by Sandra Dodd at <http://skyler.link/doddprinciples>

(39) Read “Parental Authority” compiled by Sandra Dodd at <http://skyler.link/doddauthority>

(40) Read “Born to Explore” by Missy Willis at <http://skyler.link/evcexplore>

(41) Read “Fifty Ways to Leave Leviathan” by Jeffrey Tucker and Max Borders at <http://skyler.link/fee50lev>

(42) Read “The Right to Control One’s Learning” by John Holt at <http://skyler.link/evclearning>

(43) Read “Children Educate Themselves” by Peter Gray at <http://skyler.link/ptpgcet4>

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