

Why I Had to Become My Own Father



Send him mail.

"Insight for the Young and Unrestrained" is an original weekly column appearing every Thursday at Everything-Voluntary.com, by Gregory V. Diehl. Gregory is a writer, musician, educator, and coach for young people at EnabledYouth.com. Archived columns can be found [here](#). IYU-only RSS feed available [here](#).

My journey toward the voluntarist philosophy of a non-coercive existence began much younger than I can remember. My entire life I have had questions which seemed unanswerable by those who held domain over my microcosmic window upon reality. I have always been a quick learner. I mentally adopted new systems of knowledge much faster than most of my peers. Conversely, other children seemed a lot more capable than I of unquestioningly doing what they were told to and blindly following the majority consensus.

I remember in my freshman year of high school that a school psychologist was certain, upon hearing about some of my problems falling in line on campus, that I had something called ODD. I thought she had been making a cheap joke in saying that my "odd" personality was a mental disease, until she told me it was an acronym for Oppositional Defiant Disorder. Neither my parents nor any reigning adult authority figure in my life seemed to consider that my outgoing and often rebellious actions were just a natural human desire to challenge arbitrarily established boundaries. It never became apparent to the prevailing leadership that I was simply the kind of person who needed a reason, not orders, to support his actions.

Through my own exploration and self-education, I came to see that I had a natural affinity for logic and the sciences. Learning about the process of discovery with the scientific method and all the knowledge that had come from it gave me an appreciation for proper epistemology. It instilled in me an unceasing questioning process which applied to all things in my life. "How do I know what I know?" and "why do I believe what I believe?" became the major driving inquiries for my existence. It boggled me to no end how it could be that so few people seemed to share this same drive with me for unrelenting truth and accuracy in all things.

In my work as an educator now, I get to meet more parents than ever who are embracing a peaceful and proactive approach to how they nurture their children along to adulthood. I

am privileged to spend a lot of time in the homes of my students, where I get glimpses into the usually private and candid environment they exist in away from their public personas. Many of my students' parents do everything they can to encourage intellectual and emotional growth in their kids. I see many mothers and fathers who have taken the time to get to know the individual strengths and values of their children. Most of them recognize the extremely limiting nature of the bureaucracy-run public schooling system. Often they choose to send their exceptionally bright children to more capable private schools or to homeschool them.

Experiencing these families, if only for brief times, strikes deep emotional tones within me. It's heartwarming and reassuring to see that there are so many young people out there who are getting the attention and support they need. Growing up as the person I was in the kind of world we live left me afflicted and in the solitary turmoil of wondering why I felt so out of place and misunderstood in my surroundings. I could not have had the perspective to know then that it was not I who was broken, unhealthy, or disordered. It was the coercive fabric of our society which required correction. I didn't have the guidance and support I needed to make sense of the pain I felt or the mess I inherited.

Embracing the voluntarist philosophy ultimately means living a life of total self-responsibility. The bold profundity of that statement might be lost on even many of the self-proclaimed voluntarists. I fear that this is a journey of self-discovery that is mostly absent among young people in the world today.

In the years immediately following the completion of my mandatory public school indoctrination, I had to learn to make the choice to become the kind of person I wished my parents had raised me to be. I had to grow brave enough to work through the artificial shortcomings bred into me. I had to forgive both my parents and society at large for not knowing any better. I had to kick my own butt into shape through a constant stretching of my own comfortable limitations and a never-ending series of questions about who I was and why I thought the way I did. In lacking what I needed, I had to become a father and mentor to myself.

What resources exist for the young man or woman who lacks peaceful parents? What can be done for those rare champions struggling to develop and embrace their highest potentials by following some deep inner motivation toward greatness? Who raises the many lost young souls left abandoned by their older influences to try to sort method out from the madness of a world built upon fraud and violence?

We often hear that children are our future, and as such should be treated with great inherent value. I speak earnestly to the teenagers and other young adults of the world when I say that we are the most pivotal pieces in the construction of the world of tomorrow. We are the living present of today. We are still young enough to dream big and

reach beyond conventional standards of action. Yet, we are old and wise enough to know ourselves and the practical limitations of our actions and the natural laws which govern reality. We have the potential within us to be among the most important rainmakers and warriors in the field.

Our greatest detriment is that most of us lacked guidance. Our parents and role models were weak, and so we seem predestined to become weak parents and role models to the next generation. To break this terrible cycle, some young heroes must become bold enough to shatter equilibrium and rise above the invisible ceiling set forth for him by those who came before us. A true champion of personal freedom must totally disregard those who unconsciously strive to limit the progress of others for fear of acknowledging their own personal failings.

It is largely idle to continue to blame the school system, how our parents or sibling mistreated us, childhood trauma, or any other external social force for our present personal inabilities to do what we know we ought to be able to do. The awareness that we could be more than we are is enough to set in motion the series of causality which enables us to become more.

Hope for the future of humanity rests with the defiant ones who dare to challenge the status quo. We simply cannot afford to wait for everyone to learn the mechanics of non-coercive child-rearing and education. The onus rests on every individual to become the very person he wishes his parents had been... or the son or daughter he hopes to raise. The pursuit of personal excellence is the goal most worthy of struggle, and its rewards are more permanent than those of any other quest.