

# Did it Really Work For You?

“Send those kids to school so they can become good citizens and responsible grownups who are prepared for the real world.”

I hear adults speak this way all the time. They go on and on with their fear-mongering about how you'll end up with a job you hate and a life you loathe if you diverge from the status quo by unschooling your children or opting out of college.

“Do what we did,” they advise. “Then you'll turn out to be a respectable adult.”

Just like you guys, right? Cynical grumps who complain about your lives, hate your jobs, stress out over money, and constantly freak out about politicians while you fantasize about the next holiday so you can possibly get a brief break from your miserable life.

Yes, send those kids to school so they can be just like you. We wouldn't want them to miss out on the enviable dream you guys are living.

Does that sound a little harsh?

Well, I shared the above thoughts on my Facebook page recently and here's the response I got from one of my friends:

*I turned out pretty entrepreneurial after public K-12 and college, though obviously one anecdote doesn't prove much.*

*But more broadly, I think it might be easy for people like us who live unusual lives to assume that people who don't live like us are unhappy, because we would be unhappy in their shoes. But I don't think that's necessarily a fair assumption.*

*Or to put it another way: do you have evidence that most people are as unhappy as your post suggests?*

Here's what I wrote back to him:

*No assumptions. No comparisons. Simply mocking the BS of those who argue for a path on the grounds that “it worked out for me” when*

*those same people carry themselves as if they're miserable.*

*Evidence? Let people speak for themselves and just pay attention to what they say when they talk about the world, their possibilities, their jobs, their love life, their finances, their problems, etc.*

*The matrix is all around you. Look in any direction. Keep it simple and start right here on Facebook. Behold the multitude of those who complain about their lives, who sulk in sorrow and self-pity, who constantly freak out over politics, who continually speak of stress, who rarely express cheerfulness and gratitude. The adult world is filled with dysfunctional, distressed, and discouraged souls. What you really need evidence for is the presence of human beings who will talk about their lives with a sense of passion, pride, and personal power.*

Who am I talking to? Unhappy people? People who love school? People who aren't entrepreneurs? People who aren't lucky enough to live successful lives? None of the above.

I'm talking to all the people who go around prescribing a particular path as the optimal or necessary way to get an education based on anecdotal evidence regarding what worked for them. And here's my message to you: Don't say "it worked for me" if you spend a bunch of time complaining about how your life doesn't work. You are free to be as miserable as you can possibly be and you will receive no condemnation from me, but **you shouldn't vouch for the path you took unless you're willing to represent the life that path led you to with pride.**

Imagine some guy saying everyone should get married because marriage worked for him. And imagine the same guy warning single people about how they'll end up stressed and unhappy if they don't have anyone to share their struggles with. But then whenever you hang out with this guy, he constantly goes on about how stressed out and unhappy his wife makes him. We'd all recognize a problem in this scenario. But we fail to see this same inconsistency when it comes to people who constantly go on about the necessity of college or compulsory schooling. If you're going to advise people to do a certain thing in order to avoid becoming a dysfunctional and depressed adult, you can't be a dysfunctional and depressed adult **while also** holding your life up as evidence for the advice you're offering.

You don't have to be happy, but you probably shouldn't be the person who talks about how important a product is for people's happiness if your life looks like a glaring counterexample. If you're going to fight for a particular point of view, then you should at

least try to look satisfied with the life it gave you. And if you can't do that, maybe it's time to ask yourself the following question:

Did it really work for you or are you just afraid of something new?