Chapter 23 – Grown Without Schooling

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Grown Without Schooling

by Jason Hunt
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This interview was given to five unschoolers for a feature story in the Spring 2010 issue of German magazine Unerzogen.

What are your current interests and plans for the future (that's what interests most people – will they be able to make a career)? Are you going to study something and get an official degree? So far, I've developed and maintained our website at naturalchild.org, edited and laid out books, and have my own business fixing computers and giving technical support, all things I've learned on my own, and continue to develop. As for what else I might do in the future, I don't know. I don't see why I couldn't study something "officially" if I felt I would benefit from it. Then again, as I find time to try new things, I think I'm personally inclined to explore more creative endeavors, like writing or graphic art, that I can learn in my own way, at my own pace, and on my own terms.

What's your greatest passion? Do you live it, or are there any obstacles you have yet to overcome? I have many interests – computers and technology, graphic art, exploring nature, I'm a movie buff… I don't really have a "great passion." I see life as more of an adventure than a preset path to one particular goal.

What does the term "unschooling" mean to you? (I know there are some people out there who would consider themselves unschoolers who aren't half as "radical" as we are, hence the question). It means rejecting everything the school system tells us about learning. Not creating a classroom at home. Not using grades, assignments, or tests. It means answering questions, making information available. It means trusting children to learn, and throwing out the absurd notion that we have to force them to learn – a notion that actually does more harm to the learning process than anything. We've evolved to have an instinctual drive to learn what we need to know to be a part of our society. No one is more curious than a child before they go to school. They want to know everything – until school convinces them that learning must not be fun – otherwise, why would they have to be forced to do it?

Was it your decision to leave school at some point, or did you unschool from the start (i.e. were your parents already weirdos)? Oh yeah, they're weirdos… but that had nothing to do

with it! I think they were just fortunate to read the right things, like John Holt's books and *Growing Without Schooling*, and found support from other families. I unschooled from the beginning.

Do you feel you are lacking anything compared to former schooled kids? No.

Can you do math? Math has always been one of my favorite topics. I have just about every book by Martin Gardner – he presents serious math in a fun and interesting way – often in the form of puzzles, games and experiments, that really make you understand the underlying concepts. Another similar, great book is *Mathematics: A Human Endeavor* by Harold Jacobs. The tag line of that one is "A book for those who think they don't like the subject." It's full of humor, and explains everything in plain, friendly English.

Do you feel your life as a kid has been better than the lives of the school kids you knew? If so, how? I'm very grateful for the childhood I was able to have. My time has been my own. Being in charge of my own life, what I learn about, how, and when… I can't imagine it any other way.

Do you feel your life now is better than the lives of many former school kids around you? If so, how? It's difficult to know what's due to unschooling or not, since I've never known any other way, but I feel like I still have that same curiosity and wonder as when I was a child. I still love learning new things, and always will. I feel like my attitudes and ideals are completely self-developed, and I think I've been able to avoid, to some extent, some of the silly things in our culture – materialism, conformity, predefined notions of success (things that I think may be largely created by, and propagated by, school). Maybe this is just who I am, but I've always been allowed to be exactly who I am.

If you have or want to have children – are they/will they be unschoolers? They would definitely be unschooled – no question. Of course they would have a choice – but who would choose to go to school?

And here comes another classic: Do you feel that you and your parents are too close so that it hinders you (or them) in your personal development? On the contrary, it's been a source of strength. I've always had a great relationship with my parents. We're friends, and equals. We live together, work together, and have fun together. But we have our own lives too.

Are your parents key figures of the unschooling scene, and how did that influence you? My mother (Jan Hunt) has been writing about parenting and unschooling… well, for as long as I can remember. The way it influenced me was to make me want to do all I could to help – by creating her website, editing articles and books – we recently published a collection of unschooling stories and articles called *The Unschooling Unmanual* – all of which I learned to do by doing it. I just want to do whatever I can to help get the word out, so as many

children as possible can have what I had.

Is your world view very similar or rather different from your parents' world views? Our philosophy is pretty similar – in broad terms, valuing all people, and believing we should all help each other. In terms of how we think, I'm the most scientifically-minded one. I believe in logic, skepticism, and reason. I think this way all the time, but it comes in quite handy when fixing computers – I enjoy the detective-work element of it; whatever's going on, there's a cause – it's a matter of theory, experiment, trial and error. Just like how learning works.

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