

Prisms & Paradoxes

Written by Chase (in Florida).

Unschooling for me conjures up prisms, paradoxes, and unlimited travel. Time well spent and freedom. The “un” in life. Have you ever stood at a window and looked at something happening on the other side? Have you ever thought that it looked inviting and fun? And yet at the same time, you know you cannot enter. You cannot get to the other side.

That is school. A place where you are shut up and can only see the world through a dark, twisted, distorted, and foggy window. And your world, your life, is being caged within four walls where it is desperately cold. And you wish you could get outside.

When you were little, perhaps you dreamed of being with fairies or witches, or with leprechauns and finding gold at the end of the rainbow. And you believed that it was possible to dance and sing with them—you just weren’t ever at the right place or time. Or perhaps you were, perhaps you were lucky and you did get to dance and sing, and you did get a taste of that life.

But now you are still desperately trying to look out that twisted window to watch the comings and goings of the world outside. Maybe someday you decide to follow a new passage, and maybe you haven’t lost all your curiosity about the world. You steer off the chosen path, a different hallway, a light at the end of the tunnel, a way out. But the journey there is not easy. The land beyond may be fruitful and ripe for the picking, but getting there is not easy. You discover that, unlike when you were in that confined world, here you must journey, and it is the journey that matters, not so much the end result. Before, you just went from one place to another without really thinking about where you were going or why. It was easier not to think and just to follow.

But you have chosen this new path, and though it is hard at first, it does get better, and you know somewhere within you that tomorrow will be better than today. You have started on a path that will take you to endless possibilities, and who knows where you will end up? As you travel, you meet countless people—some like yourself who are free and some who are still standing behind that invisible glass. For that is all the warped and twisted window was; it never really existed.

You were just told that it was there. You believed that it was there and never questioned otherwise. And to you, the people standing in the invisible boxes, behind those invisible, non-existent windows seem terribly silly. And yet you remember how easy it is to believe, how it was not so long ago that you were just like them, and you feel sorry that they haven’t found the light.

But you have chosen a better path, a path for the picking. Though it will not always be the easiest, smoothest path, it is the path you chose; no one else chose it for you. Ahead of you lie countless hills, bends and turns in the road, paradoxes and possibilities. You are one of those they call unschoolers, and you are free!

Excerpted from *The Unschooling Handbook* by Mary Griffith.