

Why I Love Being An Adult Unschooler

“There is no difference between living and learning... it is impossible and misleading and harmful to think of them as being separate.” - John Holt

If you already know the term “unschooling” it is likely you (just like me) associate that term with children, adolescents, and teens. School aged people. We typically don’t think of adults as unschoolers, but sort of recently I was looking at my life and how I live it and had a realization...

I am an unschooler, too!

Yes, at 30 years old I absolutely fall into the category of someone who lives their life by an unschooling philosophy. It wasn’t something I set out to do, it just makes sense for me. When I chose to start living my life for me about seven years ago, I had to start from the ground up. Since I was 23, I have been, for the first time in my entire life, pursuing exactly and only what interests me. You see, I grew up in the public school system. That was literally all I knew until I was in my early 20’s and on my fifth year of college trying to make something work that I wasn’t enjoying, because that’s just what you do...*right?*

When I made the courageous (and yes it felt very scary and courageous at the time, which seems silly to me now) decision to drop out of college at 23 and just pursue something that was of interest to me with no plan in place, my whole life changed. As a matter of fact, I have been living my life that way ever since, and I haven’t looked back.

I mean, if you knew me growing up then you know I was never one to conform, so this all kind of makes perfect sense. My refusal to just do it because-I-said-so and comply without question got me into some trouble growing up. It’s actually not very surprising that as an adult I chose a path where I am not obligated to conform in any area of my life, not to mention live an entire lifestyle that is essentially a protest to many systems that most people just take for given.

So...You might have some questions like:

“Really? That’s all you do is pursue what you find interesting/fun?”

“What about money?”

“Do you have a job?”

I will get to all that, but first I should probably break down what exactly unschooling is for those who are thinking right now, “what the heck is unschooling?!”

- Unschooling is the understanding that life and learning are not separate. Unschoolers don't see learning as something that only happens at school or a designated place, but something that happens as a part of life and by living life.
- Unschoolers see that true learning can only happen if the learner has a desire to learn it, not by force. Forced learning isn't learning, but simply memorizing and regurgitating information that will likely be forgotten later.
- Unschooling is child-led (or led by the person who wants to learn, but in this case I am using children because we typically think of children when we think of unschooling). As parents, we allow our children to learn what they want and when they want. We don't force certain subjects or assume they want to learn about or need the information on particular topics. We don't place an arbitrary age onto when they should be doing things like reading, writing, etc. We trust that these are things people want to learn how to do, and everyone will want to and need to at different times. As a parent, my job is to provide the resources for learning. Take my child to the library to get dinosaur books if he wants to learn about dinosaurs. Sign him up for dance classes if he wants to dance. Take him to the planetarium if he wants to learn about outer space. My job is to support his learning, not force it.
- It's the belief that the most important thing one should be learning is that which they desire to learn. Unlike public education, unschooling education is not one size fits all. It's custom to the individual.
- Living a life outside the school system means that you get to...well, live life. It's a rejection of the ideals that make up the public education model. You are free to do what you want with your time and don't have to follow the schedule and calendar that someone else made up for you. The public school system has made us fall for the idea that from 5-22 years old (and even longer for some people if they get a job with set hours) our time is not always ours.

This blog post from Happiness is Here is another resource on what exactly unschooling is. Please read for a thorough and thought-provoking breakdown!

With all that being said, here are a few reasons why I choose to live my adult life in alignment with the unschooling philosophy...and why I mostly love it.

1. I don't feel pressure to choose one career path (like, ever).

I think most adults believe that by the time we hit a certain age, we had better figure out what we wanna do with our life. To the point that we even look down on folks who don't "settle down" or like to job hop. In my opinion, this can be a very misleading idea, one that says we are to do one thing for the rest of our lives (or until retirement). Don't get me wrong, some people find one thing that makes them come alive and they truly want to spend their life doing that (which is great). For many people, though, our interests evolve

and change over time, especially if you allow yourself the freedom to explore your interests and keep learning as an adult.

I don't subscribe to the belief that we are supposed to settle down with one career or job and just do that forever. I see life as something to be explored, and my main goal is to do what I enjoy and what is fulfilling to me, and remain open to the fact that what I am interested in can (and likely will) shift and change over time. As I grow and evolve, so will the work I do, naturally.

I am interested and passionate about so many things, I would hate to not be able to explore all of them. This doesn't mean that I don't have goals. It just means that I structure my life so that I don't feel trapped or obligated to one (or two) things. Which brings me to my next point.

2. My time is my own.

I learned really early on that I just can't live on someone else's watch. Maybe other people think that's entitlement, but I think it's normal. Feeling like I *had* to do something or *had* to be somewhere I didn't really want to be always sucked the life out of me, especially if I was doing it on a regular basis. I have never kept a job where someone else was my boss for longer than 9 months, maybe. And it isn't because the jobs are "bad" or even hard. It just completely takes away my freedom. My freedom to travel, my freedom to go do something fun with friends, my freedom to learn something new. If I was doing something really fun, but then realize I had to be at work in a couple hours, it would totally kill my mood.

I don't adhere to the common belief that whoever busts the most ass and sacrifices the most time is more deserving of resources.

Most of us create our lives around the schedules that are already mapped out for us. For example, we wait until July to go on vacation when the kids are out of school. Or we wait until Christmas to take that class we want when we can use our sick days from work.

I aim to do the opposite. I look at what I want to do, and I schedule things that need to be done, around that. For example, I want to go to an herbal conference in May. So I will spend the weeks before I go doing whatever I need to do to bring in income for the month (whatever that is at the time, only the future will tell!).

Basically, I am not happy working for someone else when I wanted to be creating something of my own. Speaking of...

3. I get to be creative.

Being an adult unschooler doesn't take away from the fact that I still have to do adult things, like...pay my bills. So how does one pay the bills by having as much fun as possible? This is where my creativity comes in. I have multiple streams of income and I am always thinking of ways to make money. To some people, this might sound a little frightening or even irresponsible, (and I won't lie, I have had more difficult months in the past) but for me it's a challenge that forces me to stretch and grow my business and entrepreneurial skills. Right now I make some money blogging, coaching, teaching gynecology at colleges on contract work (1-4 days a month), and selling courses online. I was recently working 1-2 shifts a week at a local health drink/food shop (because I am totally into that stuff) but I quickly remembered how I simply can't be someone who clocks in when I am told to, even if it's only once or twice a week. I am now using that time I spent working those shifts focusing on making money through things that inspire me and that I enjoy (what I was already doing..just more of it).

I love that I get to choose the hours I "work" (which often doesn't feel like work because I like what I do). I get to take time off when I want and I can even travel because most of my work can be done remotely. I have purposely freed up my life to look this way because things like travel, exploration, and leisure time with friends and family is important to me. AND I get paid to talk and write about things I having been talking and writing about for years. Things that I would be talking about anyway because I am so passionate about it. I believe the world needs more people doing exactly what they want with their time. I think that type of world would be much more fun and interesting.

I know some people think that is wishful thinking and I understand why, but I will say that adopting that philosophy that I mentioned above does require a lot of trust on your end. Trust that what the world needs most are people who love what they do.

4. My learning never ends.

I love learning. I have realized that I have always loved learning, I just didn't always like what school was trying to teach me. Like now, I would never care to learn about math or computers (but hey I am glad there are people who do!), but I love learning about women's health and physiological child birth. I love learning about the menstrual cycle and how ancient groups of people lived. I love learning about food and what food's support health. I love learning about child development and how a child's brain works. I love learning about natural living and how to cure our own bodies. I am fascinated by our society that is based around a lot of trauma and the effects some of our cultural ideals and practices has on our society as a whole. I love using my own body and my own life as one big experiment to discover what works for me and what doesn't. As of late I have been interested in learning more about gardening, herbalism, homesteading, researching my ancestry and re-humanizing death. And to be honest, so much of my learning is actually unlearning and deschooling myself from things I was taught and shown growing up.

Even living life as an unschooler has required me to let go many of my ideas about what one's life "should" look like. Everyone's journey is so different from one another and that is what makes it so interesting to me. What I want to learn about might not look anything at all what you want to learn about and pursue, but that's the beauty of unschooling.

From there we can use one another as teachers and resources for things we aren't as privy to.

Speaking of learning, I love that my sources never come from one place! As a life learner, I don't get all my information on a topic from one textbook and one person. I have the internet, I have books (oh so many books), I have videos, I can seek out multiple teachers until I find one that is a good fit for me...you get the idea.

5. I get to live life with the people who mean the most to me.



This isn't meant to offend anyone, but I do feel sad for people who have to leave their kids all day, nearly every day to work, and miss out on so much cool stuff that their kids are doing, or just simply not being a significant role in the learning portion of their life.

I feel bad for everyone who has to worry about school shootings and bullying. That is no way to live and I refuse to have it be a part of my reality. And yes, I have made a lot of changes and shifted my lifestyle dramatically to have it be this way.

I love watching my son learn new things and how his face lights up when he does something new. I love to discover who he is becoming and I want to be there for that. I want to be the one influencing him, not someone(s) I don't know.

I want to be with him (most of the time) and so I do things that allow for that. I would way rather spend time with my family and friends than co-workers (except some of my friends and I even work together now, so that's fun). I love that family day is just about every day (or whenever I want), not one day on the weekend or one week during the holiday. I love that I can go over to a friends house at 11am on a Tuesday. We only live this life once (as far as I know) so spend it with those who mean the most.

*“When I’m asked why we unschool, it’s hard to explain without generalisations. It’s hard to capture the reasons because there’s no short answer. It’s the little things, it’s the big things, it’s the things we inadvertently take for granted. It’s the sleep ins, the days unfolding naturally and slowly. It’s **freedom**. Freedom to play, explore, make mistakes, take risks.” - Racheous*

Of course, life isn’t always perfect and it never promised to be. Obviously, I find myself as an adult sometimes waiting forever in line at the post office, or in a bureaucratic mix up. With a child there has been sleepless nights. I am not claiming it’s all bliss and happiness, but rather, I have given myself the freedom where I have the power to, and try to use the rest as opportunities for growth. As much control as I have taken over my life, life isn’t about always being in control, and sometimes the best thing to learn is how to surrender. It’s a dance...

Do you unschool? Have you ever thought of yourself as an adult unschooler? Do you now after reading this? Share your thoughts down below!