

I was educationally neglected because of my parents' religious beliefs. I was homeschooled in Washington State from ages 5-8 and again from ages 9-15. My mother homeschooled me for religious reasons specific to my parents' fundamentalist Christian faith.

My mother told me as an adult that once I had learned to read, write, and do basic math, she thought that was "enough" for me. It wasn't "enough" for my brother – he was sent to school for middle school, but I was kept home to do chores and cook meals. He got to have teachers, while I was given religiously biased textbooks to work through on my own. As a “smart girl” I was expected to teach myself while my parents were both away at work, but my parents didn't seem to care whether I was learning anything - they cared whether the chores were done.

My parents overestimated the value of household work for me as a girl, and they greatly undervalued my academic education. I was deprived of basic instruction in multiple subjects for many years. I don't recall ever writing an essay or book report and having it graded until my junior year of high school, when I was finally sent to a small Christian school. I also had little to no opportunity to play sports or do PE until that time. My science textbooks stated that the earth was 6,000 years old and that the theory of evolution was not just incorrect, but a Satanic lie intended to lead the faithful astray, among other falsehoods. Of course there was no way for me to do the usual science class experiments on my own, or field trips, or any other kind of hands-on learning. And I was so socially isolated that for years on end I had no friends at all.

Being held back, neglected, and isolated during my childhood and teenage years still affects me today, more than 25 years later. I still have difficulty in social situations and with forming and maintaining friendships. I still run across gaps in my knowledge from time to time, things that “everyone knows” that I was simply never taught. With a lot of effort and a fair bit of luck as well, I've gotten to a place where my life is fairly stable and comfortable - but I'll always wonder how much farther I might have been able to go with proper education and socialization.

Signed,
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