

"I don't know how to read." Those words usually earn an affectionate "aww" when spoken by a young child. But when I said them, there was no charm or innocence. The last time I said these words was when I was 12 years old. For most of my childhood, I was homeschooled. My education wasn't focused on academics or becoming a well-rounded person. My mother's only reason was to keep me away from the public school system, which she believed encouraged children to reject God. This wasn't my choice, but it became the most detrimental decision of my life. One that would have lasting consequences.

While becoming a good Christian man was my mother's goal, being able to read and critically think was not a part of her vision. Basic subjects like math, science, and writing were either neglected or taught through a narrow religious lens. Most science lessons came from my mother ranting that evolution was as fictional as Pokémon "evolving" or that God had given humans everything they needed to stay healthy, which made vaccines obsolete.

When I eventually entered public high school at 14, I was blindsided by how unprepared I was. I found out the hard way that I was behind in every subject. I remember how embarrassed I was when I had to confess in front of my Algebra 1 class that I didn't know how to multiply two-digit numbers. During my first Parent-Teacher Conference, my English teacher accused me of not paying attention in class, claiming I wasn't doing any classwork and was just fooling around with my friends. The truth was, I couldn't follow the readings because my reading level was at that of a first grader. I also had no understanding of the material, and without the skills to complete the assignments, I couldn't engage in class the way my teacher expected.

Homeschooling didn't just leave me behind academically, it left me socially isolated. Unable to learn how to navigate basic friendships and group dynamics, my interactions were limited to the occasional church events. When I finally entered high school, the social awkwardness I felt was overwhelming. I struggled to engage with my peers, often feeling out of place and unsure of how to connect. Almost every lunch break I spent alone with one of my teachers in their classroom. Even as I made progress academically, I carried the emotional weight of feeling isolated and different. A feeling that lingered long after high school ended.

I want to emphasize that I do not resent my mother for the struggles I faced. I understand that her decision to homeschool came from a place of love and genuine concern for my well-being. However, good intentions do not prevent harm. Despite her best efforts, the lack of oversight, structure, and accountability in our homeschooling led to severe educational neglect and social isolation. Today, as an adult, I've achieved more than I could have ever imagined as a teenager. I graduated from a top public university, I'm pursuing a career in medicine, and I've developed long-lasting friendships that I never thought possible. While the challenges I faced were significant, they've shaped me into someone who now knows the value of education, social connection, and resilience.

Signed,
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