

I was homeschooled in Ohio from ages 6-7 and 12-18. I was raised in a cult in which my narcissistic father's word was dogma, even when he was in direct conflict with the faith we claimed, Catholicism. I was taught that women and children were property, and my sole purpose in life was to be a wife and mother regardless of what I wanted. Dad lost his third consecutive job right before I started homeschooling again, so mom had to work full time and I was stuck home every day with him.

In addition to suffering intense physical and emotional abuse, my education was skewed through the lens of religion. I was taught science through that lens, and it did not provide me with the skills to examine evidence and reach a conclusion. Specifically, because of my gender, I was denied opportunities to engage with science in the same way my brother did. The chemistry set was off limits, even with supervision.

I distinctly remember a time when my parents scrambled to show documentation that they were meeting the state's requirements, and I am relatively certain they falsified some of this documentation. When I graduated at 18, I had not taken my state's required graduation exam. I also had not completed the necessary credits. My diploma was just a piece of paper my mom printed. I had to work three times as hard as my peers to make up for the lost time. I finally did earn my diploma at 19 through a local non-profit, but I never felt like I caught up on academic concepts until I was over 30 years old.

When I tell people I was homeschooled, they often say that I “turned out fine,” but this is not my understanding of my experience. It took me over a decade to make up for what my parents did to me. It was abuse, and it was incredibly damaging to every area of my life. If I am fine, it is not because of this upbringing but despite it. I put the work in, and I overcame my circumstances. Not every kid has the strength to overcome circumstances like mine. Moreover, they shouldn't have to.

Signed,  
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