

I WAS HOME EDUCATED



Edited by Beverley Paine

Always Learning Books

ISBN 978-1-876651-63-3

I was Home Educated

**Adults sharing
their thoughts about being
homeschooled and unschooled
during childhood**

Compiled and edited by
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© April, 2014

Published and distributed by

www.alwayslearningbooks.com.au

ISBN 978-1-876651-63-3

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When parents find out my children are adults they want to know what they thought about being home educated. They ask, “Will your children home educate their children?” and other questions. At first I found these questions frustrating. Home education was a lifestyle choice for our family and something my children more or less took for granted and didn’t give much thought to: they simply got on with life and education was an integral, not separated, aspect of it. As they grew into young adults they seldom shared their thoughts on how they’d been educated. I think that by then they probably were a little weary of the scrutiny and questions: we began home educating at a time when it was still relatively unknown and a novelty. I don’t assume that they will want to home educate their children, although obviously it’s my preference. It is important for me to let my children work out for themselves what they need and want to do regarding parenting and educating their families.

In addition, for a long time I wanted to protect my children from the pressure of needing to be ‘poster children’ for the home education movement, concerned that their thoughts and choices now as adults might be seen in the minds of others as judgment on the efficacy and value of home education. In the same way I didn’t like answering the question, “What do your children do?” as in, are they employed, did they go to university, are they happy – questions eagerly and frequently asked. I felt that these questions were also trying to gauge the success of home education based on my children’s experiences. And I was reluctant to answer because home education is experienced differently by every family and child: what works for one person might not work for another. This diversity is the keystone of home education, the fundamental reason why it is successful for so many children and what sets it apart from a schooled education. Don’t base your decision to home educate on the experiences of others: build your decision around what will meet your children’s educational and developmental needs.

The questions answered in this document come directly (as asked) from parents, members of the Unschool Australia Facebook support group. I was reluctant to edit them in any way because these are the questions to which people want to know the answers. Left in their original form they lack any subtle and

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unintentional bias my extensive experience as a home education advocate and support person might inadvertently inject, thus potentially losing important information and value that might be obtained by respondents' answers. Some of the parents asking the questions were relatively new to home education and others had been doing it for some time. I felt the need to leave out two questions, "What do you do?" and "Are you happy?" because for the adult answering the questions many years have elapsed since childhood and life experiences as an adult would bring as much to bear on those answers as the nature and structure of their education during childhood.

The answers in this document come from adults who were fully or substantially partially home educated, either homeschooled or unschooled. I am exceptionally grateful to everyone that participated and answered the questionnaire. THANK YOU!

If you were substantially home educated and wish to answer the questions and contribute to this document, please email contact@beverleypaine.com. This document will be updated accordingly.

My intention is to eventually ask a similar set of questions of schooled adults and then compare the responses, but for now, my aim is to give families interested in home educating the insight and answers they seek from people who've been there and done that, lived the home educating life and survived!

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1. What are your passions in life, and what age did these passions develop?

“Health, environment and education. The house I grew up in had bush-land and creek behind so caring for the environment was something that started from a very young age (3-4yrs old). When my mum started home schooling me at 8yrs old we created an organic vegetable garden, planted native trees, participated in bush regeneration, stream-watch bug counting in the creek, cooking healthy meals from our home grown veggies amongst many other activities. I found the hands on approach to learning much more enjoyable than reading books and loved how it opened my eyes to how easy it was to create a learning experience out of anything.”

“Creating things. Designing things. Building things. Fixing things. Sustainability (repair reuse recycle). These passions have been developing since I was very young, as an adult I am recognizing better my passions.”

“My passions in life have always revolved around creativity, things like writing, crafting, acting. I can’t remember a specific age that it developed, it was just a part of me.”

“I have a passion to travel Australia and see the different scenery this country has to offer. I developed this in my late teens. I also have a passion to travel and see different countries and this passion was developed during my relationship with my wife. I have a passion to preserve the planet and make as little footprint as possible on it; this has been a long-term passion from childhood. I have a passion for pushing my off-road driving skills, developed after getting my first car. I have a passion for teaching and informing; I believe this was developed around middle adolescence. I have a passion for building things such as homes, tools, inventions, toys, furniture, etc; I guess I’ve always had this passion. My latest passion is creating art, and although I have trouble using the word “art” or “artist” when it comes to describing what I do, I find it is the word people understand most.”

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“A tricky one for me! I have creative passions in knitting and sewing from about 10 years on; radio from 14; cooking and eating well from 14 onward which has progressed to less processed and more local goods free from additives for ongoing health benefits; grasping a simpler life and less need or desire for superficial and trinket things, habits and motives, formed early on but developed around 24 years; the desire to learn from every situation and person in my life, whether good lessons, wisdom and mentoring to the other end of considering what not to do and how not to treat others, starting in teens and has continued since.”

“Gardening/Permaculture; Art/Crafting; Photography; Nature/Native Animals”

“Childhood psychology, birth and mother’s health during pregnancy and birth, (around 15 years of age) photography (12 years), traditional foods (in my 20s).”

“My passions lay in the music and teaching fields. I started learning piano at 5 years old and continued solidly through to 18. Despite thinking that I would not enjoy teaching piano nor have the patience for it, my mother encouraged me to try at 15 years old and I soon realised I loved it and had knack for it. I particularly love teaching young children and the elderly.”

“Human health & medicine; Education; Science and nature; Music – piano; Ethical and environmentally sustainable living. Some of these passions have developed over recent years, but all had their origins in early childhood.”

“My passions ... I'm not overly sure ... still finding them, though I really have a love of the elderly, and they make my heart smile. During my early high school years, perhaps grade 8, I realised I had a desire to work with the elderly and set out to make this happen. I went on after Grade 10 homeschooled to do Certificate IV in Community Services Diversional Therapy by distance education. Normally I would have had to finish grade 12 but because I was homeschooled the course principal allowed me to enter it at end of Grade 10. This enabled me to get my first job as a 17 year old Diversional Therapist responsible for 40 high care residents in a nursing home, organising a recreational program that met all their needs. My

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mother also encouraged me to try working with the elderly, providing opportunities while I was still homeschooling to help an elderly friend with some housework such as vacuuming or just being her friend.”

“Reading: from a very young age. Sewing and IT: in my 20s. And my children in my 30s.”

“My passions in life are: writing, reading, nurturing my children, keeping house, socializing, being a Birth Attendant. I have five siblings, all younger than me. From a very early age, probably before school age, I use to make made up stories for my sisters and brother. This continued for all my primary years. I was home educated for most of my primary school years. It was all about teaching yourself. Free learning. I didn't learn how to read or write until I was 14. I remember one day I just picked up a novel and read it and loved it so I read another one.”

“I have a wide array of passions, but the one thing I always come back to is my passion for languages and linguistics. I first developed a love for foreign languages when I started learning Italian around the age of 10 (the local Italian Club ran some lessons for children). Later on, aged maybe 11 or 12, I got a lovely new English dictionary and became fascinated by the phonetic symbols used to describe pronunciation. Around the same time, I discovered a great website (through Otherways home schooling magazine, no less!) dedicated to writing conlangs (fictional languages), and this introduced me to the world of phonology (sound systems). Despite dabbling in other fields like politics and social science, I went back to linguistics at university. Now I work as a research assistant at the University of Queensland, specialising in the phonology of Indigenous languages. It's very cool:my 12-year-old self would be thrilled!”

“Music, teaching, helping others, and working with animals. These all developed very early and I used to set up a school for my dolls/teddies and run mock concerts for them.”

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2. What do remember most about being home educated?

“The amount of quality time I had with my mum (deceased) and sisters and going to excursions with other home schoolers.”

“Having the freedom to learn freely while going about our day, living real life, learning through play and real experiences.”

“We used the ACE curriculum: that being said, after that work was out the way, my mother encouraged us to follow our interests and went out of her way to pursue those things. She spent vast amounts of time and energy helping us to learn about the things we were interested in and provide us with opportunities to do things. We were forever off on various excursions and visiting our homeschooling friends.”

“Hours upon hours of building with Lego, followed by watching and/or helping build the house. Being able to spend day after day outside climbing trees, making cubbies, and playing in the fields of sour sobs. On top of that, endless questioning from people in public “Why are you not at school?””

“Freedom.”

“Having the freedom to learn at my own pace, in my case it was not being hindered by other students posing as distractions or lagging behind. And not being punished as a group for the actions of a few. To this day, I vehemently dislike being put in a box. Everyone should be respected and treated based on merit and who they are, and take responsibility for what they do.”

“Freedom and flexibility: we used a curriculum, but there was still flexibility to work at our own pace and choose our own daily schedule. I remember schooling most mornings and then having the afternoon off, playing outside in the sunshine. I remember the feeling of freedom and of family bonding. I also took out of it a sense of independence and of self-determination. I am a reasonably self motivated person, I’m sure my brother struggled with this a bit.”

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“Using the ACE (Accelerated Christian Education) curriculum and hating it! Having time to have fun. Helping out with my younger siblings. Being different from mainstream kids and not having many friends due to isolation of where we lived at the time.”

“Being encouraged to be self motivated. If you didn't do the work today, you would have today's and tomorrow's work to do tomorrow. You learned what methods worked best for you to stay motivated and focused.”

“I remember the family relationships, doing projects on things going on in life around us, and spending a lot of time camping, bushwalking, and enjoying local nature.”

“I was homeschooled from Grade 6 – 10. I remember the times when I got up early to do my schoolwork and being finished before lunchtime so I could play with my two younger siblings (also being homeschooled). We lived on a farm so had many happy times running around using our imaginations after finishing work for the day. I also remember struggling very badly with learning algebra and crying with mum because I just couldn't ‘get it’.”

“I remember our ‘school house’, and one particular governess who was heaps of fun and we are still friends. The isolation and the landscapes.”

“I remember this sense of never ending time. Having nowhere to be at any given time: it felt like the days and years were long and free... I spent my days running around the hills with my siblings and sometimes the neighbours. They were home educated as well. It was quite a walk to their place. We would ride bikes to the dairy and the herb farm. I remember dad taking us all up the paddock, the neighbour's kids as well, and showing us how to skin and prepare a sheep for eating. Dad pointing out each organ and naming it and then giving it to one of us kids to put in the hole (dug to bury the parts we didn't need...) I remember the exact moment I learnt the days of the week and the months of the year. Mum had made up little rhymes and we all sat down and went through it together. Mostly I remember having time and space to just imagine. We made up all sorts of

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imaginary games. I spent lots of time on my own too, just wondering around looking at nature and humming tunes to myself.”

“Home school camps: I think they stand out the most. I think I spent most of my life aged 7 to 17 living for the next home school camp. Some of my favourite and most formative memories come from those camps. The (sometimes hard) lessons learned at camp stand out as well –I think I learned more about human relationships in those places than anywhere else.”

“Organising my own study schedule, which I loved having some say in. Having the freedom to do bookwork when and where I wanted (like at 5am, up on our garage roof!)”

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3. What aspects did you enjoy or appreciate the most about being home educated?

“It was more relaxed not having to stick to the timetable especially when something we were doing/learning about was really interesting, such as when studying ancient Incas we could spend the day researching and creating a fantastic project together.”

“Unstructured day.”

“The excursions! I’ve always loved going to museums and we went to so many! So often! We had season passes to Taronga Zoo! We did pottery, elocution, drama, gemmology, archery, painting, candle-making to name just a very small number of the experiences I enjoyed. By far the best part was the complete lack of negativity between the children that I associated with. I had been bullied at school, but that was never an issue within our group.”

“Freedom to do and learn what I wanted when I wanted. Being left to my own devices to learn instead of having to follow schedules.”

“Freedom.”

“I learned that I could do the day’s school work and then have time to do whatever I wanted after. So I enjoyed starting my lesson work at 8am and was often finished by lunchtime.”

“Again, freedom, flexibility, family time. We lived overseas in a developing country while my parents worked for a NGO. We were interacting with another culture, in the culture! I appreciated that the years I homeschooled made me less caught up in peer group pressure or conformity. It allowed me to be secure enough to find my own voice and form my own opinions, while respecting the opinion and journey of others. I preferred to work at my own pace, neither being pushed beyond my understanding too quickly nor being slowed down by the learning pace of others. 1:1 time was fantastic for learning.”

“Time for fun and play! Not having to do algebra.”

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“The calibre of people that we got to associate with in the homeschooling circles, and knowing that what we were learning at a faster pace than regular school students as our curriculums was tailored to our specific needs. This was how I skipped a year of schooling.”

“I loved being able to learn about things as they came up in life, and the fact that this made it so easy to see how what we were learning applied to the real world. I loved being able to spend more time on things that interested me. For example, I spent much more time on maths, creative writing, music and science than on English or Social Studies.”

“I really enjoyed the close relationships I had with my mother and my two younger siblings, it was a real blessing and I have many happy memories. I appreciated the fact that I wasn't bullied like I was at school. I appreciate the freedom we had to be children and not spend most of the day doing schoolwork.”

“Freedom to focus on what we wanted to do: I loved to read.”

“I enjoyed not having to be anywhere at a certain time. All the free time to do whatever I pleased. I enjoyed being with my mum. Being able to help her around the house and with my siblings. To have time to be lost in my imagination... We went on a few homeschool camps. They were amazing and mind blowing! So many kids to play with! I made wonderful memories and friendships.”

“I enjoyed the freedom to set my own agenda and pursue my own (rather unique) interests. I especially appreciated being able to do university courses through OUA; I did my first unit when I was 15 and several more a couple of years later. I wouldn't have been able to do that if I had school full time and I found it to be a more enjoyable and interesting alternative to doing Year 12 (it also gave me a huge head start on my degree which enabled me to finish earlier than I would have otherwise). I ended up doing year 12 Italian and psychology at the local high school as well as participating in school sport, and while obviously that's a school experience, not a home schooling one, I appreciated the flexibility home

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education afforded me to make that kind of arrangement. I felt I really got the best of both worlds.”

“The freedom of how I studied, not so much what I studied. I appreciated my mum's trust in me getting work done.”

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4. *What aspects didn't you enjoy, what was the hardest part for you being home educated? And what could have been done differently to fix that?*

"The hardest part was access to science equipment. We were able to attend excursions to CSIRO and traveling science shows but home lessons were mainly theory based as we were not able to have access to some chemicals."

"Living so far from friends, not catching up with friends often enough."

"Oddly enough, I wanted to spend more time with other children. However, I was at that time insatiable for the company of my peers, it would never have been enough (even if I had a friend around 24/7!) That was it."

"The constant disapproval from relatives and strangers. The questions seem endless and even now when I mention I was homeschooled/unschooled the question inundate the conversation. Honestly, we're the minority and we will always be asked to explain ourselves. Coming up with prepared phrases helps, but you cannot stop the people from doing their thing!"

"Time waiting between visits to or from friends, see friends more often."

"I don't think there was anything specifically about completing education at home that is directly related to it. We had an additional dysfunctional family situation that limited our social opportunities, but that was nothing to do with being out of mainstream classroom."

"I returned to mainstream schooling for Year 10, 11 and 12. I found some aspects of practical lab work in chemistry difficult as I obviously didn't have a chemistry lab at home. Sometimes it is nice to have time away from your family as a teenager. I felt as though I needed my own space. I probably should have been more involved with clubs/activities away from home."

"The curriculum we used. I'm not so academically minded but I could've been if I'd been able to pursue academia in the areas in which I was interested."

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“At the time I did not appreciate the lack of 'social life' that homeschooling entailed, but now I can appreciate that this was not actually a negative. At the time I didn't really understand that being a in a class of 30 children did not necessarily mean that you had a great friend base, and that with homeschooling we would do regular swimming lessons and such with our close friends so we really weren't lacking.”

“As I got to late primary school and early high school, I felt more of a need to know whether I was at an ‘adequate’ level compared to age-matched peers. I had done things like the NSW schools competitions (maths, English, science) and done very well, so I probably should have had more confidence than I did. I’m not sure what could have been done to fix it. As I say, I already had evidence that I was doing very well compared to others the same age. I think it was more a personality issue and a fairly low self-esteem, and I probably would have doubted myself regardless of how much ‘evidence’ I had.”

“I hated math (though hated it at school also). I couldn't ‘get’ algebra, also when it came to later grades I didn't enjoy crying with mum trying and her being frustrated and not being able to help me because she couldn't explain it to me either. I didn't like feeling different to the other girls at church, when they were talking about high school ‘stuff’ and I felt left out.”

“The isolation was hard, not sure much could have been done about that.”

“I've never really thought about what I didn't like about homeschooling. I just accepted that it was my life. I can't really pin-point events or things I would have changed.”

“Having almost all my closest friends live so far away was tough, particularly in my later teen years. I remember a sense of missing out because I wouldn't be able to do things with my home ed friends who live closer to the city, yet also feel like I didn't quite belong in my school-attending crowd at home. Obviously this may be different for city-dwelling home schoolers but I do feel it's a common theme in the home ed community to have a wider variety of friends spread all over the

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place (which is a blessing as well as a curse!) What helps, I think, is just really dedicating oneself to some local pursuit. For me that was sports and part-time study at regular school. For others it might be TAFE, music, youth politics or whatever else. Just something that gives you a long-term engagement with a certain community. It takes a long time and a lot of hard work (especially for us introverts) but it's worth it."

"I didn't enjoy our first year of homeschooling as my mum was trying to recreate school at home (set times/schedules, strict ways of sitting at our desks, holding our pencils, etc), but all this loosened up after a year or so). I didn't find homeschooling particularly hard and we had enough to do with others that I wasn't lonely. I would have had a more relaxed beginning, but my mum was simply doing what she thought was right at the time."

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5. Do you wish you'd been schooled differently?

“No, I am very thankful for my home schooling as I felt it prepared me better for the real world, allowed me to develop my own interests, encouraged a desire to learn, ask questions and research.”

“Yes: there were times when we would do structured bookwork and I would feel lost and confused, I remember feeling stupid because I didn't understand algebra, and was extremely relieved when we put the book away and never got it out again!”

“Knowing what I know now, how being homeschooled has influenced who I am today, I would not change it for the world.”

“I'm quite content with my 'schooling'.”

“No, but I wasn't 'schooled' much.”

“By the age of eight I was already fed up with primary school. It wasn't until second semester of year 4 that we started homeschooling. In hindsight I accept and appreciate that my mainstream school experience has helped me know what I do and don't like about the system and the many opportunities available at home.”

“No. I loved homeschooling.”

“I would love to have been unschooled or schooled according to Charlotte Mason or Steiner or Montessori methods... Anything that allowed me to concentrate on my interests.”

“No, not really. As my mother was one of the pioneer homeschoolers in our area, there weren't as many facilities as there are now. Some of the subjects my younger siblings have been privy to were not an option when I was young. But I don't really regret anything.”

“No. I was homeschooled until grade 9, when I chose to go to school. In retrospect, I wonder whether I should have stayed at home until Uni. However,

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it's impossible to know how that would have turned out and it's easy to imagine the grass being greener."

"No, I'm thankful I was homeschooled and wish I was for my whole schooling."

"Primary school, no. High school, I went to a single sex boarding school, a long way from home: I do wish that was different sometimes."

"No I don't wish I'd been schooled differently. I just took my schooling situation for granted. As I've gotten older I've come to really appreciate how special an opportunity it was to not go to school. It has become quiet precious to me and I'm very grateful."

"Short answer, no. Long answer... Still no. Yeah actually I don't know how to expand on that. Just no."

"I wish I had been pushed a bit more to achieve some particular music exams or get into uni earlier, but looking back, I probably would have reacted badly if I had been pushed and not given the freedom to do what I felt I needed to."

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6. *Will you home educate your children? Why/why not?*

“Yes, I believe children have different ways and stages of learning and that by being in a group of 25 with one educator it’s easy for a child to be left behind or bored if the ‘work’ is not at their level. I believe home education helps children to learn freely and seek answers themselves rather than being spoon-fed information. A child will naturally want to learn more when one of their interests is incorporated to any subject.”

“Most likely. Apart from there being too much structure in educational format, I disapprove of how structured all parts of schooling are, even dictating what a parent can send in a child’s lunch box, and what the child can eat at particular times! Seeing my peers’ children starting school over the last couple of years on social media, and the various complaints has completely put me off sending my children to school!”

“I won’t unschool my daughter. She enjoyed school, and since she plans to return when we move interstate, it is best for her studies to be comparable to the national curriculum. That being said, if she was interested in homeschooling, I would definitely look into unschooling or, more appropriately, hack-schooling for her.”

“I have discussed this with my wife. We are planning to unschool them when that time comes. But I will continue to always give them options so they can decide what they want.”

“Fairly certain.”

“I have kept the not-so-positive memories of my early primary school experience as well as the altogether positive experience of being schooled at home in order to fuel the drive to educate our children at home. My personal experience and reasons for this cover many areas from social interaction, values and morals learned, ability to focus on the knowledge and lessons to be learned, building strong action and consequence /work-ethic / time management, flexibility when

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unwell and freedom to engage in various other hobbies and interests with less limitations.”

“We are beginning home schooling this year with our prep-aged son. Whilst I am very much against NAPLAN and mainstream education as it has evolved now, I am not against Steiner/Waldorf schooling, as it is play based in the early years and no emphasis on standardized testing in later years. However, I think home schooling will offer my son a warm, secure family environment in the foundation years. We will review our home school decision yearly to ensure that we are meeting his needs and he is thriving.”

“Yes. Because of my interest in early education and childhood psychology.”

“Yes, I will if I am able. I believe that, particularly in the younger years, parents are the best teachers for their children (obviously with some exceptions). I am personally not comfortable in sending my children to school for so many hours a day at such a young age when I feel the best place for them is with me at home. Parents understand their children the best and so people who are serious about their children’s education will almost always be able to cater to the children’s needs better than a teacher who has a class of 20-30 to look after. More attention is paid to each individual child, the curriculum can be completely tailored to each individual, and children can learn at their own pace without fear of being compared to other children.”

“I home educate my children in a relatively similar way to that in which I was home educated. My experience was Distance Education initially, and then an eclectic approach including some Montessori philosophies, some graded workbooks, and lots of project based and natural learning. With my own children I am using a Montessori curriculum as the core, and combining this with some elements of Charlotte Mason and lots of natural learning. The reason we have chosen to home educate is that we feel it will give our children the most enjoyable education possible and leave them with a love of learning. I particularly hope that learning will be a normal part of life, and not something separate that happens at prescribed times. I think that home education can give as good an

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academic education as the best schools. We love to spend time with our children, and increased family time is an obvious benefit of home education. We will also be able to provide a larger influence in terms of spiritual and emotional/mental health compared with traditional schooling. We hope to provide them not only with an academic education, but to be prepared for life in terms of emotional/mental self-care, personal financial management, competent citizens in terms of decisions in voting, ethical assessment of how they live their lives, and other practicalities of living in society.”

“Yes, I am homeschooling my children. Because I want them home to form close relationships with parents and siblings: I feel it's better for them and their wellbeing and there are many benefits for the whole family.”

“Not sure, my children are not school age yet. My partner is opposed to it. My feeling is we will give school a go but be open to changing.”

“My oldest is 15 now and I had planned to keep him at home for his education. As I had more children in close succession and life started to become complicated, I decided to send him to school. We moved to a small town that had a Steiner School and it seemed like an okay option to send him to school... I now homeschool my daughter who is 13 and plan to homeschool my youngest for his first year of high school. I'd be homeschooling him now if I didn't co-parent with my ex, his father, who is against homeschooling. He is a high school Maths teacher. It was quite a struggle to homeschool my daughter. I feel like home education would be the best education for my youngest two children and will keep working towards that.”

“I would if: a) I ever have children; and b) career circumstances allow. Both my partner and I are pursuing pretty demanding careers, so unless one of us settles for something less time-intensive, the chances of us even having kids to start with are pretty low –let alone having enough time to stay home and educate them! In general, it’s something I’d definitely recommend and given the chance, would consider doing myself. Though I must add that I think it depends a huge amount on the nature of the individual child as to whether home education is a good

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option. It suited me perfectly and fingers crossed the same can be said for any kids of my own, but I'm aware it doesn't suit everyone."

"We are already and I love having the freedoms that we do. The children have never been to school and we will continue homeschooling them for as long as it works for us all."

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7. Do you think you missed out on anything at all compared with schooled peers/friends?

“Sometimes I would feel that I was missing out on some things such as seeing friends daily, but would see them weekly. Thinking about it as an adult we actually had more to talk about when we did catch up and probably made more effort to see friends. I completely missed out on the cliquy grouping that happens with most girls and didn’t follow ‘fashion’ so at 13 when a friend (schooled) told me I had to get Vans shoes ‘because everyone has them, you have to get a pair’, I was confident enough to say they looked just like my dad’s Dunlop volleys and I would rather spend \$80 on something better. Our friendship continued even though I never bought a pair.”

“I attended school part-time on and off, so this question is not relevant.”

“I missed out on school discos. Having boyfriends. Umm.... Yeah. Not a big loss.”

“I had a few close friends, just like most kids. I had access to all the social activities; however being who I am I choose not to do most of them. If I were more of an extravert perhaps things would be different, but I am not to know that.”

“Not much.”

“I don’t think I missed out on anything vital. My schooled friends aged within a year to five years above me went through the exam stress, planned excursions and formal events, school leaver’s antics... and none of that makes me feel inferior for not having experienced it through the system.”

“I was schooled from prep to year 6; homeschooled from year 7 to year 9; then returned to school Year 10,11,12. I had the best of both worlds. I didn’t miss out and I wouldn’t change homeschooling in the middle school years, in fact I would have preferred to homeschool in my foundation years as I had a difficult time with bullying in Prep/ Year 1 and Year 2.”

“Friends!”

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“Definitely not, as so many of my schooled friends will willingly admit to me that they did not get the quality of education that I received at home.”

“Nothing that I see as important. I was not interested in playing games/working the system which sometimes worked to my disadvantage, and I possibly would have learnt to do this more had I been within a school system for longer. I soon discovered that by sucking up to teachers, etc, you could get better results, but I generally chose not to do this, to my detriment.”

“Sometimes, I occasionally felt lonely and that I didn't have a ‘best’ friend close by who homeschooled and understood it (though I did have a pen-pal a long way away who homeschooled and that helped).”

“Not from home schooling as such, but the isolation and lack of TV.”

“Maybe some basic English grammar? Though as an adult I've learnt the essentials and am not bothered or hindered by my lack of grammar. I am also terrible at Maths. But that is because it doesn't interest me. I do fine with where I'm at and with what I know... It was my life, homeschooling, and I wouldn't change my life. I have the memories that I have. I would have missed out on all that if it were different, if I went to school. Sure I'd like to be up on my history, but I can learn that now if I want. It hasn't held me back in life. I live the life I want.”

“I feel like I missed out on a lot of bureaucracy and silly rules. I missed out on being bullied or maybe even bullying people myself. I missed out on having excursions/tours/camps/interesting classes ruined by obnoxious, loud class pests. Oh yeah, and I really missed out on getting the ‘chronic overcrowding and poor student-teacher ratio’ experience. But seriously: Not at all. When I was little I might have said riding the school bus looks like fun (lol!) but that’s about it. I may have missed school sports and debating, except I did both school sports and debating, so...”

“I feel I missed out on having more to do with academic people in an academic environment, but going to school doesn't guarantee the best opportunities to mix

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with people who can inspire you academically. There is just more focus on finishing year 12 and getting into uni, which I never felt pressured to do.”

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8. *As an adult, do you have strong friendships?*

“Yes, close friends I can count on one hand who I would trust with anything and quite a few ‘general’ friends. I never felt the need to ‘fit in’ with any groups just to make friends so am happy to talk to anyone, which leads me to make friends with many different backgrounds, ages and interests.”

“I have very strong close friendships, a large circle of reliable friends, and even more less frequently seen friends.”

“I have an introverted personality, very different from myself as a child who was almost psychotically extroverted... that’s a joke! I have a lot of friends, more than I want. I have some very close friends that are a great source of support to me, and whom I support in return. I make friends easily, I am very good in social situations: my partner calls me his ‘social lubricant’ and always wants me to come to work functions because he thinks I’m very charming. When I was working in hospitality, I won prizes for excellent customer service. I left that job three years ago and I am still in contact and occasionally visit with at least ten of the people I met while working there.”

“I have friends from both my childhood and adulthood. I’ve found I must work hard to make new friends, but that is not related to schooling.”

“Yes.”

“Yes. I have schooled friends from teen years, friends from my hobby/volunteer work from the age of 16 and friends met through my husband’s school ‘group’ as a young adult. They are all important people in my life, even if distance separates us as we’ve pursued various interests.”

“I do, but I would say I’m reasonably independent. I have a circle of friends who are like family, and many more casual acquaintances. I have a wonderful close relationship with my family.”

“Yes. I’ve got some lovely friends, some that have been around since my home educating days too (I wasn’t completely isolated...just mostly).”

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“Yes, I have very good and close friendships.”

“Yes. Many strong friendships.”

“Yes, a few.”

“Yes.”

“I have very strong friendships. My friendships mean everything to me. My friends are very important to me and take great priority in my life. I have lasting friendships and remain close to the friends I've made along the way.”

“Huh, what? Is the implication seriously that maybe home-schooled adults have no strong friendships at all? That perhaps school is the one, single thing in this world that allows strong friendships to form? This is a stupid (and somewhat offensive) question. We're social creatures. 'Strong friendships' have existed since before the age of modern schooling and will continue to exist in places where access to modern schooling does not. It goes without saying that *of course* I have strong friendships, as any healthy human does (I actually can't believe I even have to explain this). I have a beautiful and loving partner who is my best friend; I have strong relationships with all my family members. I have good friends who I've known since I was a small child, and good friends who I've made since moving to Brisbane only 18 months ago. I have friends in every state and overseas, friendships with my colleagues and professors at uni, friendships with peers in organisations I work with –and I consider myself introverted! Funnily enough the old friends I stay in touch with least are the ones I made during my brief time at the local school...”

“Some, yes, I have had some really strong friendships over the years since finishing formal schooling. Some of my closest friends have been fellow homeschoolers who I have known for about 20 years now.”

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9. *Did you ever feel that you missed out in the school/friends dynamic, and being able to belong somewhere and have friends they've known forever?*

“No, I had a friend from 3-4yrs old who then went to the same primary school as me until I was home schooled. We then would catch up on weekends, holidays and gymnastic lessons and later Scouts. We are still friends. I also made other friends in dance class and girl guides that I’m still friends with. I also had a range of home schooling friends I would see weekly at tennis, band, choir or Spanish lessons.”

“I did attend high school, but the friends I’ve made since school are far more valuable to me than the ones I made then.”

“I’ve come to discover that very few people retain childhood friends. Very few. I never fit in at school, I was shunned and an outcast because I was ‘different’ (and this was prior to homeschooling). When I went to TAFE at 17 to get my high school equivalence certificate, that difference (that made me such a liability in school) was celebrated. People wanted to be friends with me because I was unique and interesting, it was liberating!”

“I have friends I’ve known for 19 years. I belong right where I am.”

“No.”

“No, but I established a community in my early schooling years.”

“I feel it is more important to be yourself and be confident in the crowd than be swept along with it and be part of something that doesn’t really exist or have any actual importance. Not everyone can learn this surrounded by peers and move on from the schoolyard/teenage politics when they finish year 10/12 and enter the world where adults are. I was able to interact with other kids older and younger than me, and most importantly, adults too.”

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“A little but it hasn’t affected my ability to make friends. However my closest friend is one I have never met from my homeschooling pen pal days. She was a homeschooler too and plans to unschool her own children. It’s been 20 years of writing but we’ve never actually met in person!”

“When I was young, yes I did. Now, however, I have maintained the friendships I started as a homeschooler. We also had similar backgrounds and so we have more in common now than many people who start friendships in a regular school. All of us are now homeschooling or planning to homeschool our children.”

“No. Most of my current friends were made during high school years, at University, and as an adult through my church. I don’t have a lot of friends remaining from my homeschooling years, although this is mostly due to geographical relocation, or because we turned out as very different people and I wouldn’t generally choose to spend time with them.”

“Yes occasionally. But at the same time I was bullied at primary school so I also didn't miss that bit.”

“Sometimes. But we moved around a lot so going to school wouldn’t have necessarily changed this.”

“Yes, maybe when I think about it. I had homeschool friends though. This for me doesn't outweigh the experiences I did have being homeschooled.”

“If I’m being honest, there were times where I wondered whether I was missing out on the social dynamic at school, particularly in my teenage years where I think insecurity about one’s social life is fairly standard. In particular, it could be a bit isolating at times when, for example, most of the other kids in my athletics squad were all from the same school. In that particular instance, it took a long time but I did feel well and truly ‘part of the gang’ after a while. I think these feelings were fuelled to a large extent by the ‘grass is greener’ phenomenon, and also the fact I was in a small country town while most of my home schooling friends were nearer to the city. Looking back now, I feel very lucky and don’t feel like I missed out on anything. I don’t understand the second part of the question at all. I have

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a network of old home schooling friends who I feel like I will always belong with and have known forever. If anything, I suspect the sense of belonging and knowing people forever is stronger amongst the home ed community than at school.”

“No. I didn't enjoy the relationships I had when I did go to school (from prep to grade 4) and felt ostracised and left out most of the time, which was one of the reasons my parents took me out of school. I made many homeschooling friends along the way so didn't feel I was missing out.”

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10. What aspect about your childhood/education do you feel best prepared you for adult life?

“The excursions and home school meet ups gave me an opportunity to talk to (and play with) children of all different ages and adults. This ability to converse with any age has been one of the main things that helped prepare me for TAFE and working in the real world.”

“Real life.”

“The absolute certainty that I can learn anything I want to learn, any time I want to learn it. The ability to think ‘outside the box’.”

“Being brought up knowing I can attempt anything I wish too. Being able to watch my parents doing real life activities and learning from it.”

“Learning from my parents.”

“Being able to know the benefit of work first, play later; a basic time management thing. I also got to do a counseling/psychology unit which helped me understand different types of people, their personalities and step back to see viewpoints and reasons behind actions in situations. I initially was quite perfectionist and would’ve wound up very obnoxious had I not had the opportunity to work on my weaknesses to complement the strengths. Like anyone, to this day it is still a work in progress!”

“Learning resilience. We moved overseas and only had our family to rely on. We knew no one, did not speak the language and were ‘thrown in the deep end’. We learned resilience, self-reliance and the importance of having those in your life to turn to for help. We learned how to adapt and thrive and learn in new situations. We learnt that contentment doesn’t come from ‘stuff’ but from the inner self.”

“Getting married and having my own children.”

“Being homeschooled and seeing the pathways that it opened for me has given me a great confidence in doing things the way I see as best rather than the way

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things are 'normally done'. We were constantly seen by our critics as not being given the opportunities of regularly schooled children. In actual fact, it worked the opposite. Another thing is that I do not feel pressured by peers to do things that I don't agree with and I don't succumb to media or social hype just because everyone else thinks it is a good idea. I will always question and look into topics before forming an opinion.”

“My love of learning and a curiosity about the world that was fostered by our parents.”

“The strong faith foundation my parents passed on to me, as well as the morals my parents taught me.”

“Adaptability: I feel like growing up in a non-mainstream situation gives me a different perspective on life and I do feel like I can adapt to any situation.”

“My answer to that would be life skills and the ability to be able to communicate with all ages and walks of life. I also value my attitude towards authority and I feel this is due to my home education. My sense of self and that I don't feel the need or pressure to conform. I feel content to be who I am.”

“Being free to jump right in and start studying university subjects (through OUA) was awesome. Having that experience put me a huge step ahead when I eventually went to study at university full time. Having the opportunity to socialize, work with and build relationships with people of all ages and backgrounds was also of immeasurable benefit. By the time I reached adulthood, I already had a wealth of experience working with everyone in the community, from the very young to the very old. I think this gave me a certain degree of wisdom that I may not have enjoyed if I had spent every day with people the same age (and likely also social background) as me in the schoolyard. That’s not to say there aren’t real-world experiences for school kids who seek them out also, nor is it to say I’m particularly wise! But I do think home education gave a bit of an edge –perhaps a slightly finer understanding of working/socialising with

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different kinds of people and also perhaps a more nuanced and open-minded appreciation of the power structures at play in our everyday society.”

“Learning to be organised, learning to self-regulate my own education, learning to structure time, my room and my mind, learning to teach.”

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11. Is there anything you feel you lacked or any way in which you feel you were at a disadvantage?

“The only thing I felt disadvantaged about was not being able to do some science and chemistry experiments. One small one was that I didn’t have a student ID card at 15 to be able to see a MA 15+ movie so mum had to stand at the counter with me and my twin sister to buy the tickets, she later gave us a copy of our birth certificate to take so we could buy them ourselves and then at 16 we got our learners license.”

“Only in distance from other homeschooling families. Living in a small country town you needed to be into sports or similar to make friends, and then there were inevitable questions. Our local school only had one class per year, so there wasn’t the anonymity that comes with living in a suburban area.”

“At the time I may have felt I missed out on a few things, but looking back I feel I had far more in the way of advantages.”

“Over a schooled child? I honestly don’t have firsthand experience with school so I can only take guesses. After studying at TAFE and becoming a lecturer there I can honestly say I don’t feel that I missed out on anything from the school system.”

“No.”

“The only thing that lacked was the side issue of a family member which impaired some of our own emotional freedom and ability to have guests over. As stated earlier, that had nothing to do with the fact we were at home completing education.”

“Sometimes it is nice to have time away from your family as a teenager. I felt as though I needed my own space. I probably should have been more involved with clubs/activities away from home.”

“No!”

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“Social skills and friends. I also felt very overwhelmed by the focus on academia that I never did well at all. Due to family circumstances and illness, I had to quit whatever social life I had so that I could take care of my younger siblings for a good portion of my high school career. Also, we didn’t have much money so there was never anything like music lessons or dance lesson or photography lessons... all of which I would’ve loved and thrived on.”

“No.”

“No.”

“Sometimes, I felt a bit left out of things, like at church with the other ‘schooled’ friends. I was sometimes naive of things they'd learned at high school and didn't understand occasionally: they'd have a lot of inside jokes.”

“We didn’t have TV or telephone – but that’s nothing to do with school!”

“I did not feel disadvantaged. As a child I remember feeling proud of the fact that I didn't go to school.”

“No, none.”

“The only thing I feel like I lacked was access to professional people or adults actively studying/continuing to learn and being passionate about learning. I had a lot to do with people within Christian circles and who studied such things passionately, but I feel that my education was biased and not as open minded or broad as I would like our family to be. There are disadvantages to being in a social bubble that you are comfortable within and I have had to unlearn various things in later life and realise that the circles we mixed with were a minority in society.”

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12. Did you ever have doubts about the whole idea of being home educated?

“No, my dad did, but after we (my twin and I) won first prize in the Sydney Morning Herald Gould League environmental competition for the third year in a row he changed his tune and would brag.”

“No. I chose part-time and then full-time school, but not because I doubted home education.”

“Nope. I didn’t want to go to school because of the bullying. It never occurred to me to doubt the quality of my education because I was so clearly learning so much.”

“No.”

“No.”

“Not really, our mum had seen how some of our friends at the time who lived in a rural area outside the city really enjoyed home education so we joined in (even though we lived in the metro part). I enjoyed being able to learn without others messing about, and my brother (two years younger and had been left behind in his classes) was able to quickly ‘catch up’ and excel too.”

“No, I preferred it to mainstream schooling.”

“No!”

“As a 10-12 year old I did not think that I would be accepted by society.”

“No. In general I felt a sense of pride in being home educated – I loved it!”

“Not really, apart from losing my best friend at school.”

“No.”

“I was young when I was being home educated: my primary years. So I never stopped to think about it. I never felt that I wanted to go to school and didn't ask

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my mum if I could or talk to her about school. It just was what it was and I loved it!”

“Never. Of course, from time to time I would hold minor insecurities and question certain aspects of my educational approach (this kind of thing is normal in any aspect of life, right?). But never did I come close to questioning the entire concept of home education itself. Probably the biggest moments of doubt came later on, as you might predict, around the time I looked at wrapping up my ‘secondary’ schooling and getting into university. Rather than complete year 12, I completed a number of first year uni courses through Open Universities Australia and used the academic credit to get into a full degree program. Working all this out and making sure it would work to get me into my preferred degree was nerve-wracking and occasionally I wondered whether it would have just been easier to do year 12 at school. In the end, everything worked out just perfectly and I’m glad I did it the way I did.”

“No. It worked well for me and I generally enjoyed it. It's not the best thing for every child/family, but each parent has to work that out for themselves. It's working for my family now and I don't have doubts about it being the right thing for us at the moment. If the situation changes, then we will have to re-evaluate things.”

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13. Did you ever think that being home educated was holding you back in anyway? What, if anything, reassured you that it wasn't when you had thoughts like this?

"No, being able to focus on a project for as long as needed such as the Gould League projects and be creative with them was great. I know when we did it the first year we did it for fun and didn't have any expectation of getting any placement or recognition it was just something fun as we loved anything to do with the environment. We were so shocked that we had got a first prize so made more effort with the next and after four straight years of first place decided to not enter anymore as we felt we should give someone else a chance."

"I never felt like that."

"I didn't feel like it was holding me back in any way."

"I may have had a few thoughts during later adolescence that maybe it would be easier to find a girlfriend if I had gone to school. But then I realised, school has nothing to do with that."

"No."

"Not really. I enjoyed learning other things in the afternoons while other kids would be stuck at school and then held up for hours after with added homework or extra-curricular activities. Practical stuff like going shopping and living within your means, cooking, gardening, etc, as well as creative activities such as music, crafts and later on my hobby of radio. Those advantages and opportunities kept any thoughts of being held back at bay."

"No I don't remember thinking this."

"A little but only because of my family's circumstances at the time. Also, my sister attended the local high school for a while and so I saw the garbage that went on: that is, teasing her body image, etc. I sure was happy to miss that stuff!"

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“I was well liked at school and so I thought that I was being held back socially, but I did not appreciate that having over 15 cousins and many more friends that were being homeschooled was in fact a better friendship base as all of these people are still heavily a part of my life and our children are now friends.”

“I have always had a propensity to doubt myself, and looking at my heritage it is clearly genetic-related rather than homeschooling-related. We participated in some state/nation-wide competitions, and I always performed well, sometimes being a state or national winner. But although I objectively knew I was doing well, I found myself continuing to doubt myself and wonder if I was really up to the expected level.”

“Not really, maybe a little bit when I was the last to get a first job out of my peer group at church: all of the others being ‘schooled’, though I did get a job not that long after them.”

“No.”

“I never had a sense that I was missing out or not doing the things I wanted or that I was being held back in any way... It was a pretty magical time. Lots was going on! I was part of a big family and we had friends that were homeschooling as well. I'm sure my mum had these thoughts and concerns though I wasn't aware of it.”

“No, never. If I ever felt like maybe I was missing out on something, the thing that reassured me was a bit of calm reflection and logic. Without fail, it would wind up being a ‘grass is greener’ situation –remembering all the countless advantages and benefits I enjoyed (and at times, took for granted) soon rectified this! I certainly never felt like I was ever being ‘held back’ in any way.”

“I didn't feel held back, although I did feel uncomfortable around more liberally-minded people or non-religious people, which I suppose was holding me back from learning from the vast variety of people out there in the world.”

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14. In hindsight, is there anything you wish your parents had forced your to learn at a certain age (for example: music, maths, drawing, etc)

“In hindsight I think I needed more time on maths and was a bad girl and would look up the answers to algebra in the back of the book so didn’t actually learn it till I was about 15.”

“No, I wish they’d trusted more, and not felt the pressure to force when it occasionally happened.”

“No, I feel I was thoroughly educated.”

“My parents honoured all my wishes for learning. I learnt what I wanted and needed when I wanted and needed too.”

“No.”

“No. I had the opportunity to learn cello in year 3 at school, which I then did for a bit privately in years 5-7. Nothing else comes to mind as the core subject areas were covered by the curriculum we used and it seemed logical to learn these areas.”

“My parents did force me to learn piano, and while I felt annoyed at the time, I’m incredibly grateful to them now that I have skill in music.”

“Many things but we couldn’t because we didn’t have the money.”

“No, my parents were very encouraging of trying new things. In hindsight I would have liked to learn ballroom dancing but I think I recall turning my nose up at this when I was young!”

“No. I would have liked to learn more history, but the reality was that I had so many interests that it’s not surprising there was an area which I didn’t end up focusing on so much.”

“No not really.”

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“No.”

“I liked the freedom of self-guided learning. Not being forced to learn anything I wasn't particularly interested in helped me have a close relationship with my parents, and I think made my childhood more enjoyable.”

“While we did have some textbooks and formal lessons now and then, Mum was a pretty big follower of the ‘natural learning’ approach. Sometimes I do wonder how things would be different if I was pressed with just a little more structure in my schooling. Specifically, I wonder whether maybe I could have been a maths/science wiz, if only I was given more structure in this area. I hated maths as a kid, and as a result focused on other areas, but maybe I could have been really good at it if I was pushed a bit more to persist. I love that home schooling gives children the freedom to focus on their passions and tailor their program to suit, but I also think it’s worth keeping in mind that kids aren’t so good at appreciating long-term gain for short-term pain. Maths-science areas can be really, really cool but often you have to work through some really dry basics to get to the good stuff. It’s hard to show a child the benefit of doing something they hate, but maybe it’s worth persisting with some of the basics to give them a full breadth of cool options later on. *Note: this is a very minor complaint! Really, it’s just any old ‘what if?’ hypothetical. It’s not something that bothers me greatly.*”

“I wish I had had more qualifications earlier on, but that is only because I'm trying to work towards them now, as an adult, as a mother, and as a homeschooling parent, and I'm realising how much time I had before kids! I wouldn't have taken kindly to being forced to learn anything anyway. I had the usual struggles of not wanting to be disciplined every now and then, but was not resentful at what I was required to do most of the time.”

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15. Did you enjoy your childhood?

“I loved my childhood.”

“Very much so.”

“Very much. It was pretty danged fun.”

“Absolutely. This isn’t to say there were no undesirable times. Life comes with ups and downs, don’t expect you can make any childhood perfect.”

“Yes.”

“In hindsight, yes. Having parents that divorced and a step-parent was a trial but others have had it far worse. The lessons learned over the years help us to try our very best to make life better and more nurturing for our relationship and our children.”

“Very, very much so. I had a magical childhood, and I am incredibly grateful for that gift.”

“Yes.”

“Yes, I had a very blessed childhood.”

“Yes. Very much. There were some not-so-desirable aspects of my childhood, but these had nothing to do with home education.”

“Yes mostly.”

“Yes.”

“I enjoyed my childhood. It was a magical time full of imaginative play and a sense of freedom and light-heartedness. We lived on 40 acres of bush on a mountain. We didn't have a TV. There were always plenty of things to do. We were never bored. I have fond memories of my childhood.”

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“Of course... I’m someone who was home educated, not a victim of child abuse. Hope I don’t have to explain the difference.”

“For the most part, yes. I had a stable home, freedom to learn and freedom to be alone doing what I wanted (e.g. craft, music practice, letter writing, reading) for extended periods of time which would not have been possible had I gone to school the whole way through.”

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16. What do you think you got out of this lifestyle, that wasn't available to schooled children?

"The ability to think outside the box, be accepting of anyone, research your own answers instead of relying on information from others, pursue your interests, life should be enjoyed, the best things in life really are free."

"Freedom! A sense of self. Assertiveness."

"Being able to pursue whatever interested me. Having access to so many more activities and excursions. Being taught thoroughly rather than lost in a crowd of other students, with a teacher who doesn't have time to make sure that you are grasping the subject."

"Longer periods of access to my parents. More freedom to do spurts of the moment activities."

"Freedom."

"Freedom to pursue other interests and learning from adults. Learning both what to do and what not to do!"

"The experience of living overseas. The incredibly close bond to family. The knowledge that I was safe, loved and secure and appreciated for who I was, not superficial things. The lack of peer group pressure, and never feeling as though I had to behave in a certain way to fit in."

"Time and the spirit of entrepreneurship. Also the ability to ask well thought out questions as well as being able to think for myself and work independently."

"I learned to work with my family more and was given the opportunity to spend more time with my cousins. We are all now best friends."

"We had the opportunity to spend a lot of time away – camping, bushwalking, living away for short periods of time when Dad worked locums, and travelling around New Zealand. These all gave us wonderful opportunities to experience new things, and inspired us to learn a lot. We had a lot of opportunity to learn

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from our surroundings, rather than from dry text books. For example: fishing, collecting plankton, looking after injured wildlife. We were able to learn subjects when interested, rather than being forced to do subjects when they appeared on a timetable. We were able to participate in community activities: for example, Junior Landcare Group, lectures with the University of the Third Age, Waterwatch programs, Tasmanian Field Naturalists, studying Orange Bellied Parrots in the South West of Tasmania.”

“A real closeness with my parents and siblings; freedom to have lots of time on the farm being a kid.”

“Freedom to focus on individual interests.”

“A different sense of freedom. A feeling of a longer and more relaxed carefree day... A better relationship with my parents, my mother especially. More time to do the things I wanted to. I didn't have to follow school rules, like asking to go to the toilet.”

“I got a much more rounded, whole-life education. I came out with experience of all kinds with people of all ages, from birth (literally –helping with the delivery of a sibling!) to death (again, quite literally) and everywhere in between. I know how to take care of infants and work with young children. This is in contrast to say my partner, who got a fine education at a very fancy private school, but doesn’t know the first thing about how to interact with children. I know how to manage my finances –in contrast, my partner regularly complains that she has no idea about finances because she wasn’t taught anything practical about it at school. I’m an academic type, not so good with the hands-on stuff, but I can still cook healthy food, fix a bike, change a washer on a tap, grow a garden, heck, even milk a cow if I need to. I do think I got a bit more training in the all-purpose life-skills/general wisdom department than I see in many of my regular-schooled peers.

Academically, the lifestyle gave me a big step up and greatly aided the transition to university. The freedom to tailor my academic pursuits and zoom ahead in areas I was good at/passionate about gave me a big boost. My chosen academic

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areas are linguistics and Indigenous studies – neither of these subjects are offered at any high school at all (to my knowledge). This meant that in contrast to my peers who had no knowledge at all in these areas, I went into freshman year with several years of interest in those fields under my belt. At the end of the day, I even had prior experience writing academic papers and doing university-level study because I had done external university courses since the age of 15 at home.

I also think the home education lifestyle greatly fosters a sense of taking initiative, personal responsibility in terms of self-organisation, as well as creative/academic thinking and thinking outside the box. All these things prepared me greatly for the university lifestyle. In contrast, I felt my peers who entered uni from school had a harder time adjusting as they had received so much more strict guidance at school, and then were suddenly left to their own devices.”

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17. Do you feel you missed anything by not going to school?

“No, I can’t think of anything that I would have missed.”

“Not applicable.”

“This is very like an earlier question, but I do see the distinction being made... Maybe I missed out on opportunities to be involved in subjects that require more resources like metalwork, agriculture or so forth, but I doubt I would have done those things anyway.”

“No.”

“Yes, but only things I would want to miss.”

“I would say I missed a lot of unnecessary trends, negative attitudes, politics, possible-to-very-likely exposure to harmful life choices and overall resentment.”

“No, not really. I was very social and lived next door to my previous school, so I could play with kids when their school bell rang. So I was still able to maintain social relationship. I perhaps may have felt lonely if I wasn’t given so many opportunities to see other children. I’m only speculating though.”

“Opportunities like music and art lessons.”

“No.”

“No.”

“Missed out on the experience of high school, but I'm not really worried I missed it.”

“No.”

“I missed learning basic Maths and English. I always felt a little jealous of my friends’ graduation dances and other school celebrated milestones, though I wouldn't swap homeschooling to have had them.”

“*See question 7. Also, see question 9 for the social aspect of this question.*”

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18. Do you think home education enabled you to do everything you want and / or need to do as an adult?

“Yes, I believe it prepared me better for further education (TAFE, university), keeping a job, managing finances, running a household, decision making, awareness of others and society in general, maintaining relationships (friends and family).”

“Yes.”

“Absolutely, I went to university to study a Bachelor of Psychology and was making distinctions and high distinctions in every subject. More importantly, being homeschooled has taught me that *anything* I want to do in future, I will be able to find a way to do it.”

“Absolutely. Since being completely home educated I went on to do a Cert I in Mechanical Engineering at TAFE, then changed directions and did a Cert III and IV in IT Networking and ended up being given a job lecturing Cert I, II and III students. Since then I have tried my hand at sculpting with recycled metals and hope to create a business from it. I married the person I fell in love with and we have plans for traveling, children and some flexible long term goals. What more does one need to do as an adult?”

“Yes.”

“Yes.”

“Yes absolutely. It hasn’t held me back at all, in fact I think it provided me with a notion that I could do whatever I wanted, if I really applied myself to learning it.”

“I think it could have but because of the path and curriculum we were following, no it didn’t.”

“Yes.”

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“Yes. I feel I had a broad education, while being able to focus on my particular areas of interest. I have been able to study what I wanted to, and to get the career I wanted. I felt well-prepared to run a household, be a wife and mother. I was encouraged and supported to follow my own path and follow my passions.”

“Yes, I think so.”

“Yes.”

“It could be argued that my lack of work ethic stems from being home educated. I don't think so though. I am who I was destined to be. I'm a mother and always wanted to be. My drive and passion is keeping house and raising my children. Making sure they have the love, support and opportunities they need to be who they want to be.”

“Yes, definitely -much better than a standard school education ever would have. *See 16 for more.*”

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19. What, if anything, would have made your home educating experience better for you?

“I think money and access to equipment. I know for some things like scholastic book club mum could get a discount but most things she couldn’t get a discount. We had base 10 blocks and wooden scales, a neighbour gave us a microscope and a box of slides but we didn’t have many other items. There were a lot more items or books she wanted but just couldn’t afford and often had to choose between things because of cost.”

“Better access to other home educators.”

“Less doubt coming from other people.”

“I can’t think of anything at all.”

“Just hanging out with friends more.”

“Perhaps starting sooner. But then I would not have experienced some vital things to steer away from the school system. And if the additional family dynamic as mentioned before was not there.”

“Homeschool camps!”

“Not following the curricula (ACE) that we were following! And a little more money perhaps.”

“I had a particularly difficult mother who, although could recognise academic and social needs, was not very good at understanding different personalities and their needs. It made for a very intense home life.”

“I think probably the input from Distance Education in our early years was mostly irrelevant and didn’t gain us much. But it wasn’t particularly bad either – just indifferent!”

“Maybe having more homeschoolers around, in my peer group, to not feel so ‘different’.”

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“Looking at the technology available now and what is possible: that would have made a big difference. We had two-way radio.”

“Maybe more writing and reading... I've never thought about it. I have always felt my time being home educated was an asset. I wouldn't change anything about it really.”

“I honestly can't think of anything. Of course, nothing is perfect and you make mistakes/learn lessons along the course of your own, unique journey. But I really couldn't ask for anything more. I'm very lucky.”

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20. Do you think being home educated has made any difference to your life now as an adult?

“I look for any opportunity to turn something in to a fun learning experience for my kids. I love to research and find answers or have discussions about things with others and am always interested in learning something new.”

“Yes, I have an ability to go against the crowd, and to stand up for what I believe in the face of criticism.”

“Absolutely, in very positive ways. I like that I can be unconventional in the way I approach situations because I have been taught to ‘think’ rather than to just remember things.”

“Absolutely. Life would be very different.”

“Yes, for the better.”

“I think it definitely has made me into a different (stronger, more positive) person than the one I would have become had I gone through the system.”

“Yes I think I’ve touched on these things – resilience, self motivation, organisation skills, learning skills, trust in my own abilities etc.”

“Many! I see the world so differently from most of my friends!”

“I feel very self confident that I am able to make decisions that are not influenced by hype or media or by the current fad.”

“Yes. I think I am more passionate about childhood learning and education, and have a love of learning that most of my peers don’t have. This is helpful for the ongoing education requirements of my career. I think my parents’ example has led us to value childhood life and experience more highly than finances and other ‘benefits’ of having two working parents. We are happy to sacrifice many things for the sake of giving our children a wonderful life.”

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“Yes, it gives me a different perspective on things, perhaps a broader view and more open-minded.”

“I am very comfortable with my own company.”

“Sure it has! I have a healthy attitude towards authority. Great critical thinking skills. It was being home educated and living the lifestyle we were living that really shaped me as an adult. The experience has been positive and left me with memories and experiences I cherish now as an adult.”

“I think it’s definitely shaped who I am now as an adult. I’d like to think I’m a bit more open-minded and compassionate than I would have had the opportunity to be if I were schooled all my life. I know that’s vague... I guess what I’m trying to say is that, in thinking about the political views/ideologies/value systems I hold today, I can trace back a lot (if not most or even all) of them to experiences from my home educated upbringing in some way. I felt more prepared for uni from being home educated than I think I would have otherwise (see q. 16) and now as I enter further phases in my life – moving out of home, managing housing/finances, managing a long-term relationship and so forth – I feel more prepared again.”

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21. Did you ever feel weird, or too different from everyone else, because you were home educated?

“I was a twin so already felt weird and different so home schooling had no effect on that, if anything it made me more interesting to others and they would want to ask questions home schooling.”

“I was made to feel weird by my peers both in high school and in my 20s. In more recent years I am able to let go of others’ judgments.”

“Honestly, yes. Very often as a child when with children that went to school. Sometimes as an adult, but that is not a negative thing, I celebrate my difference and quirkiness, I see that homeschooling let me be the person that I am and should be: in school I would have had to have the oddness squished out of me to fit in. I like me the way I am.”

“Does anyone not feel weird at some point in life? We’re all different from each other, there is nothing wrong with it.”

“No.”

“I had some feelings of weirdness as a teenager but I feel most of us go through a phase of sorts. I feel I was just different, but not in a bad way, by being home educated.”

“No. I did have a counter-culture shock coming back to Australia after living in the Philippines. I found the girls I grew up with were very shallow and self-obsessed and obsessed with what the boys thought of them! I was glad to continue homeschooling for a few years back in Australia as I felt it was hard to relate to them. I think we were at different maturity levels. When I did return to mainstream schooling in Year 10, I didn’t have any trouble relating to new people.”

“When I was a teenager, but what teenager does feel normal?!”

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“No, but then again, the majority of my friends and relatives ended up homeschooling with us, so we were all weird together.”

“No. I think some people treated me as a little weird purely because I was homeschooled, and not due to behavior or anything else. But on the whole I didn’t feel very different. And now, as an adult, people think I am very ‘normal’ and are surprised to hear I was homeschooled.”

“Occasionally I did.”

“No.”

“I was sometimes aware of feeling different as a result of being homeschooled but I was proud of that. It made me feel good about myself.”

“Did you ever feel normal, or like you fit in a little too well with everyone else, because you went to mainstream school? Of course I felt different from everyone else. In the same way everyone in the world has something unique or different about them! Luckily, being home educated gave me a lot more freedom to explore and develop my own identity. In mainstream school I would have faced the immense pressure to conform, be ‘normal’ and act a certain way, which would have made me feel weirder/more excluded.”

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22. Do you have any regrets about the way you were educated?

“No, I really loved it especially now that I don’t have my mum I really appreciate the amount of time I was able to spend with her and all I was able to learn from her.”

“Only when I didn’t allow myself to be assertive in a school setting, and let teachers bully me.”

“The only regrets I have are the times when I chose to try school and ended up being hurt by other students.”

“No.”

“No.”

“No, some elements of the curriculum we used needed working around but I would do the same for our children. It’s no big issue and having the internet and other resources more readily available these days is a huge help.”

“No, although I would have preferred to be homeschooled in the early years. I was bullied (for being little of all things!) quite badly in the early schooling years and that stuck with me for many years.”

“See before mentioned dislike of curriculum (ACE).”

“No.”

“No.”

“Not really, apart from losing my best friend at day school, not keeping in contact with her.”

“No.”

“No I don't have any regrets. I own my education experience. I am attached to it. It is sacred to me.”

“No. See questions 19 and 5.”

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23. Is there anything you wish you had done more of? Or less of?

“No I feel it was very balanced.”

“More excursions with friends, more play-dates.”

“Nope, my experiences were great.”

“Being brave enough to follow some of my dreams such as go kart racing. That had nothing to do with schooling.”

“More sport.”

“Nothing comes to mind. Perhaps follow through a bit more on the second language that my parents speak as their mother tongue.”

“No.”

“Art, music, photography, travel, social.”

“No.”

“No.”

“Perhaps more extra curricula things, but I didn't really miss them at the time.”

“More travelling.”

“Not really. I really got everything I wanted to out of my homeschooling experience and I really didn't do the things I didn't want to!”

“See question 14.”

24. Do you think home education equipped you adequately socially?

“I feel it helped prepare me better socially and as a teenager would often have adults remark about how mature I seemed and how easy it was to talk to me compared with others my age.”

“Absolutely, I am the person I am because of the personality I was born with, and who I choose to be.”

“Absolutely. There is no doubt in my mind.”

“Completely. I feel I am more equipped than many people I know who went to school. And also less equipped than many of them. I feel I am in a reasonable middle ground to ‘adequately’ socialise.”

“Yes.”

“Yes. Sure I got some weird looks when I was out in the big world through volunteer work and then employed but I learned quickly and got respect based on who I am and how I performed, often greater than my peers.”

“Yes. I touched on this before in earlier questions.”

“Sort of.”

“Yes. We were taught good manners and importance was placed on us learning to socialise with all age groups. I am as comfortable having a conversation with a 4 year old as I am with someone my age or decades older.”

“Yes. I get along with a wide range of people, and am seen as quite ‘normal’. I learnt to interact well with adults as well as children from a young age. I found it a little strange when I went to high school and had to call the teachers by their surname and having such a strong hierarchy – I was used to feeling like more of an equal when interacting with adults.”

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“Yes, we had church every week and other events we went to. Occasionally I do feel a bit awkward socially or intimidated by other people, but I'm not sure whether it's due to bullying at school as a child.”

“My social development was somewhat delayed because of the extreme isolation of where we lived, not necessarily because of home schooling. I do not enjoy large crowds or talking to large numbers of people but I think this is a personality trait, I don't think early exposure would have made a difference.”

“Hmm.... Maybe not! Society would want me to be a quiet and pliable conformist. That, I am definitely not!”

“It equipped me much better socially.”

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25. Do you think you should have had more direction and guidance from your parents?

“Only with math as mum left me to work from a book while she focused on my younger sister so when it was too hard for me I looked up the answers when she wasn’t looking so would have been better if she double checked that I understood what I wrote.”

“Whenever they tried we fought it. Maybe they needed to change tactic? Or maybe just let it be.”

“No, not at all.”

“No. They did a fine job at directing and guiding.”

“No.”

“Perhaps, but I don’t know how I’ll be rated from our children in 20 years with this question. We were pretty secure and grounded from our mother.”

“No.”

“Not really. I just wanted more flexibility.”

“My mother was our primary educator and she lacked the ability to see things from other people's perspectives. Learning to have an understanding of other people's situations is something I had to learn later in life.”

“No. I think my parents had a good balance of letting us explore and learn on our own, and providing assistance and direction as needed.”

“Not really, my parents gave me lots of guidance.”

“No.”

“The best part about being educated at home and not having to go to school was that I had power and control over what I wanted to do and learn. I loved being essentially left to my own devices.”

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“No. I’m very lucky to have much more personal direction and guidance than I ever would have received in chronically overcrowded classrooms. I couldn’t ask for more or better direction and guidance. *See q.14 also.*”

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26. Did, or do, you ever feel discriminated against because you were home educated?

“No, most kids found it interesting and because I was able to talk so well about it any adult who questioned it negatively was met with a 5 minute speech about how great home schooling is.”

“I did, but not anymore. I choose to surround myself with people who aren’t like that.”

“Yes, when I was growing up and in my late teens and early twenties. People did not understand it at all and thought you must have had a poor education, or been hippy-dippy or super-Christians. That stigma is definitely disappearing though, which is fantastic.”

“No. I’ve found that employers either make mention of it in a positive light or don’t mention it at all. People will question it, because they’re not understanding of what education is, but they haven’t ever discriminated that I know of.”

“No.”

“Oh, the same old questions from new friends and strangers that aren’t in my life for very long! I don’t recall being discriminated against. It’s hard to get that bombarded or favoured against when you get to do activities outside of the peak times when schooled kids can attend... the place is either empty or you have a group of other homeschoolers there with you! I guess sometimes staff at shops or other places usually assumed you were ill as to why you weren’t at school.”

“No.”

“Of course! Ha-ha!”

“No.”

“Not discriminated against, but judged. I think people make many assumptions about me when they hear I was home educated, and tend to blame any of my shortcomings on my education rather than on personality or anything else. Luckily

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I didn't really notice this judgment until I was in my high school years and attending school."

"No."

"No."

"I have been discriminated against because of being home educated though only in attitudes from others, not in getting equal opportunities for work. I did not let these discriminations affect me."

"Do I now? No, of course not. The day you step on the uni campus for the first time or step into your workplace, where you went to school becomes practically irrelevant. I can count on one hand the times my home education has come up in any serious context since my 18th birthday.

The most discrimination I felt related to student cards and student concessions. This isn't an issue when you're young and obviously school-aged but can become a hassle later on. As someone receiving a perfectly legal form of secondary education, of course you should be perfectly entitled to receive a concession card and enjoy any benefit any other secondary student enjoys. There are various ways around it, but it's a pain to have to deal with. Occasionally, when you're filling out paperwork, trying to attend youth events, dealing with government departments and stuff like that, it'll prove a bit of an inconvenience to have to deal with – people are generally pretty reasonable and accommodating when you talk to them, but it can get annoying.

Very, very occasionally there would be the odd incident where some concerned member of the public or some over-zealous shopkeeper or something would give you a funny look when they assume you're some child delinquent up to no good. This is very rare, and I certainly wouldn't compare it to any genuine experience of discrimination by genuinely oppressed sections of our community, but I remember it happening just every now and then. When it happens, it is generally hilarious – I'd either play it up by acting as shady as possible (just for lols), or

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blow their mind (hopefully making them feel bad for being judgmental) with some random act of kindness.”

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27. Did you feel you had to protect your parents' decision to home educate you, or to defend how your parents were home educating you?

“Yes, often, especially from adults, and the funny thing was that most of the time they used the social argument and I would have to remind them that we do a lot of activities outside of school hours like **insert current activity here** (as it was often while at one of these activities that an adult asked that question!) If it was a band practice I would also mention that three other home schooling families were there.”

“Yes, all the time! Both as a kid and since.”

“Yes, at times I felt that I needed to defend it. Less so as people have moved from the attitude of ‘eww homeschooling’ towards ‘cool! Homeschooling!’”

“I’ve never felt I had to protect my parents: they are quite capable of doing that themselves. I do feel I’ve had to defend my choice to be home educated and my choice to home educate my future children though.”

“No.”

“At times, yes. Our dad was initially very against it and did remain critical of it for years when we saw him. Just one of the hard things a child has to deal with between parental houses and their different viewpoints.”

“No.”

“Often.”

“Only because we started out doing it outside of a recognised system, so it was originally very hush-hush. But I never felt the need to defend their decision to homeschool.”

“No. When dealing directly with me most people were very positive about home educating. As for what was said behind my back, I hate to think!”

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“I can't remember really, I don't think so.”

“No.”

“No. I'm not aware of that having happened ever. My mother's view on that might be different though.”

“I was brought up to be open-minded and approach things critically. I was encouraged to reach my own positions on everything through logic, evidence and reason. I didn't *have* to form any particular position on my parents' decision. It's important to point out that home schooling was never something that was forced on me by my parents anyway – I've never met anyone who was forced to be home schooled against their will. The decision to home school wasn't one made unilaterally by my parents but rather a joint decision following family discussion. If I decided I didn't like the way I was being educated, I was free to go to school at any time.

Of course, every now and then, I had to defend or justify the method of my education in the face of highly critical or even rude questions. Already, *in this very questionnaire*, I've had to defend myself from the implication that maybe I don't have any friends (a couple of times too – I mean just think for two seconds about how ridiculous that assertion actually is!), maybe home education actually ruined my entire childhood, maybe I was left alone, left without guidance and ultimately left unprepared for adult life (again, all plainly ridiculous). Of course you have to defend yourself when you're faced with that kind of extreme nonsense.

Thankfully the overwhelming majority of people you talk to are pretty friendly, reasonable types and most people take a genuine interest when you talk about your education. Incidents of people being judgmental and rude are very rare (some people suck – it's just part of life unfortunately).”

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28. Did you ever feel that you were 'behind' your peers, and if so, did that bother you?

"No I never felt behind them unless it was a subject they had a big interest in and in which I had no interest, but I didn't care that they knew more than me about it as I knew more than them about other things."

"No."

"I felt I was ahead of my peers, in fact I was."

"I was behind my peers with reading and mathematics until mid-adolescence. This only bothered me slightly as it sometimes ended up being embarrassing. But I trusted that when I needed the skills (if I ever did) I would gain them. As it ended up, by 17 years of age I ran my own automotive website writing many articles to help other enthusiasts and by 21 I passed my math exam at TAFE with the highest score they had seen."

"No."

"I didn't feel behind report-card / grades-wise. There was a confusing time where those doing the exams would gain a result whereas I wouldn't have one, but for me tertiary study was not something I wanted to pursue so it wasn't an issue. My experience in radio would now lead me to have a diploma gained almost entirely RPL'd or contacts within the industry if I wished to. I have a certificate for training in broadcasting and enough other experience to gain secure employment locally if I had the time to."

"No. I think I was about the same, or more advanced than my peers."

"No and yes. Academically yes: I felt behind in everything except English. But that was because we had a strong focus on academia but in all areas that were of no interest to me whatsoever and I could not grasp the concepts the way they were being presented."

"No. I always felt ahead."

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“I had insecurities that I might be ‘behind’ my peers, and that did bother me at times. But the reality was that I had plenty of evidence to the contrary. It certainly wasn’t a big feature of my life, and it wasn’t often that I thought to compare myself to others.”

“No, I don't think I felt that way apart from when I was last to get a first job in high school.”

“No.”

“Not when I was being homeschooled. When I went to school eventually, yes I was aware of being ‘behind’ in areas. It never bothered me. I always had heaps of friends. I was busy being a socialite and I was really ‘ahead’ in that.”

“I generally felt as though I was far ahead, actually. This is the usual case for home ed kids in my experience. It’s the natural result of being able to pursue areas you’re passionate about at your own pace, rather than being tied to the average pace of a class full of people who have different passions and therefore aren’t necessarily as interested and engaged as you.”

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29. Did you ever feel that you were missing out because you didn't go to school?

"No."

"No."

"This is very like an earlier question. Yes I felt I was missing out at the time. Looking back, I realise that the experiences I missed out on were negligible."

"No."

"No."

"I wasn't missing out on anything drastically important that happens at a school."

"No."

"Only the extra curricula activities."

"Only socially, and that was when I was younger (under 12)."

"I think I probably didn't feel as 'cool' as some other kids – not as fashionable, not as into boys, not as aware of popular fads. But that had as much to do with the way my parents chose to raise me as whether or not I attended school. If I had attended school I imagine the peer pressure may have been higher, I probably would have pushed the issue more, and my parents may have given in."

"Not really."

"No."

"No. I felt sorry for the kids that went to school. Oh, how horrible to have to go to school, I thought. I remember playing at another homeschool friend's house. They lived right next door to a school! At break time us homeschooled kids were waiting at the fence in the back yard watching all the school kids come out to play. Some came over to the fence and talked to us. I remember them being blown away that we didn't have to go to school and they were really mean kids. I

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thought that school kids were really mean kids after that and I was really chuffed that I didn't have to go to school.”

“No, I didn’t. *Refer to 13, 7 and 9.*”

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30. Did you feel lonely as a child?

“Sometimes I did but I don’t think it had anything to do with being in school or not as I had those feelings when I was younger and in school, not when I was home schooled.”

“Yes. I often felt left out when attending part-time school, because of what happened when I wasn’t there, I was only a part of half of what went on. When not attending school I missed seeing friends regularly.”

“Yes, often, but that was a personality trait, not any lack of socialisation. We were with other homeschooling families upwards of twice a week.”

“No.”

“No.”

“Due to my personality, yes a little. I would’ve been just as lonely at a school in a crowd as at home, so I feel it doesn’t pose an issue in the school versus home education.”

“Ironically, at school when I was bullied in Prep/Year 1 and 2 I felt lonely.”

“Yes.”

“Yes, but I think that was more due to the medication I was on for ADD (which I can now say I definitely did not have.)”

“No. I had siblings, home educated friends, and friends who attended school. We also saw other children at things like sporting lessons, ballet, and community choir. I didn’t feel a need to spend a lot of time around other children.”

“Yes, occasionally I did and longed for a best friend who understood.”

“No.”

“No, there was no time to feel lonely. I was one of six and we had two neighboring families that also home schooled. Although our home education was

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very free and unstructured we were always busy playing and riding our bikes around...”

“No. Why would I?”

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31. Were you ever worried about your path through adult life because you were home educated?

“No, I had a better idea what I wanted to do and how I would do it, and knew that there were ways around things to end up with the outcome you want, even if it’s not the traditional way of getting there and sometimes was actually better. For example, no need for school certificate to enter TAFE at 15, my sister was then able to get advanced standing at university and be two years ahead of the university course at age 18, which meant she actually got to her goal faster.”

“No.”

“I was worried for a while when I was fifteen and sixteen because back then the pathways to university were much more stringent than they are now. There were far less options for entry. However, we figured out a way to get me in by completing the high school equivalency.”

“No. School doesn’t set you up for adulthood, it just passes the time until you’re considered ‘responsible enough’ to be independent. Education sets you up for adulthood. And education is always and everywhere.”

“No.”

“Only when people were harping on about ‘what will you do when you finish school, what will you study at TAFE/Uni and how will you do a STAT test to get in?’ There are a few things in life looking back that I had a gut feeling while growing up, and one was that I’d like to do something I enjoy but keep the options open as I would also wish to be a wife and mother too. And that is what happened: I’ve had three different part-time jobs in radio, retail and hospitality, am now married and a stay-at-home mother while doing a little casual work from home to keep the mind active.”

“No.”

“Yes.”

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“No. At 14 I was already doing voluntary work at a library and was making and selling jewellery at my local market. At 15 I was able to start my piano teaching business which I have been able to carry through into my adult life.”

“No. But having attended school from grade 9, I had the same pre-tertiary qualifications as anyone else.”

“No.”

“No.”

“Maybe a small amount of doubt when I was a young adult and still finding my place in the world and the direction I wanted to go... Not overriding though and very fleeting.”

“No, never. I’m not actually aware of any career that is contingent on a mainstream secondary education nor am I aware of any pathway in life being closed off due to home education. I knew from a very young age that I wanted to go to university, and once you actually get into university, your place of prior schooling counts for precisely zilch (*see 12 and 16 for more info regarding my transition to uni and how home ed prepared me for this*). The same goes for getting into TAFE or following any other non-university pathway. I’m not aware of any job which requires a year 12 education AND specifies that this education must be from a mainstream source – they tend to say something like ‘year 12 or equivalent’ (hint: home education is equivalent!) and if they do try and specify a preferred educational mode, I’d say it’s grounds for a discrimination case.

Outside of careers and education, home education prepared me much better for the transition to adult life and gave me better life skills than I would have received in mainstream school. Particularly in terms of fostering self-initiative, personal responsibility and things like resilience. *See 16 for more on this.*”

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32. Is there anything you would change about the way you were educated?

“More hands on math but I guess now with computers and hand held devices it easier to find more entertaining ways of teaching a child a subject they find boring.”

“That’s a really tough question. I feel that my mum was finding her path, just like I will with my kids, and as parents we can really only feel our way through, and adapt as necessary.”

“Nope.”

“No. Is there anything I would do differently from the way I was educated when educating my children? Most probably.”

“No.”

“Having the internet freely to use to research further, particularly with newer findings in science and history.”

“Answered already.”

“The curriculum.”

“No.”

“No. Although I wonder whether I should have remained home educated for longer, perhaps through to University age (rather than attending school from grade 9).”

“No, I don't think so.”

“I went to a single sex boarding school for high school, a long way from home – that was a big shock after homeschooling – pretty much the extreme opposite situation! We didn’t have telephone at home so contact was sparse, and there was no stand-in mentor figure. I often think how different it would have been if I had had parents to debrief with after each school day.”

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“No.”

“See 14.”

33. Do you think being home educated made it difficult to transition to a structured working environment?

“No, I went to TAFE first so had a chance to get used to timetables and a more structured environment and had no issues with working or making friends in the workplace. I was a high achiever at work and received several promotions and raises within my first two years.”

“Absolutely not. I never had trouble getting or keeping work.”

“Not at all.”

“Yes. Having experience in structured and unstructured working environments from my childhood made it difficult to follow the flawed and irrational structured working environment I have been subjected to in adult working life. I guess you could say I expected more from the places I have worked and studied.”

“No.”

“No. I often was considered older than I actually was, that is, more mature than peers and very capable of working, performing, meeting standards and working with others.”

“Not at all. It made me better at organizing my time, organising myself, prioritizing, identifying learning gaps and taking steps to fill those, more initiative etc.”

“No.”

“No. Our school days were structured and we were made to do chores before homeschool each morning. I have even met employers who were biased towards homeschooled people as they tended to be more self-motivated.”

“We were encouraged to organise our own timetable/schedule. I was a naturally organized and disciplined person, and chose to arrange my study in a relatively structured way. I think this personality trait made the transition to school easier.

“One thing I noticed on starting school is that I had to learn to write faster –

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writing speed had never been an important thing at home, but in class you had to copy off the board before it was erased. Having had so much autonomy in arranging my study, I did find school structure frustrating at times, and found many parts of the school day pointless and unnecessary.”

“No, I managed very well in my first job and in other positions after that.”

“No.”

“I have actually never really experienced a structured working environment. I became a mum when I was 18. I think though that if there was any lasting negative aspect about being home educated in the way that I was, being able to transition to a structured working environment might be it. A structured working environment, however, is not my preferred working environment. I am an artist and poet in my spare time. Earning large amounts of money is not my drive in life. Having a strong work ethic is not important to me. Having a job that earns a lot of money doesn't interest me. I respect it and encourage and support my children in that direction if that's what they want. I am also a Birth Attendant (Doula). I do not earn money this way though and it is wonderful and very satisfying in other ways.”

“Personally, I felt it made the transition a lot easier. I've found that employers tend to value the increased initiative, self-organisation and responsibility that home schooled kids tend to have. The only thing that didn't sit too well with me – and I suspect the home ed lifestyle made it worse – is the rigid power hierarchies and blind obedience to higher authority which is demanded at many places of work – particularly the unskilled casual type jobs you tend to get when you're young. Archaic and inefficient power structures are a problem in society generally, to be sure; but at least if I had gone to school I would have already experienced such power structures and had my spirit beaten out of me sufficiently to shut up and accept it!”

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34. *Have you thought about other alternatives to home education and school that might provide a more ideal education?*

“Part time home education and school is something I would be interested in but NSW does not allow it. I have a child with Autism so want him to have more social interaction but don’t drive so makes it harder to meet up with other homeschoolers to give my son the social interaction he needs. (My kids are both currently enrolled in school with part-time unregistered homeschooling, the school is aware of it and work with me so homeschool days are marked as appointment or sick days.)”

“I’ve looked briefly at Steiner and Montessori, but neither is available or affordable where we are, so haven’t looked any further.”

“Not really, the only thing that is interesting is hack-schooling, but that is very similar to unschooling. Some of my friends have spoken about having co-ops for homeschooling, but I don’t think they would be much better than a school, despite the lofty ideals.”

“Yes. I have thought about it. Keeping an open mind is important to me.”

“No.”

“No.”

“I would love part-time schooling / part-time homeschooling. It would be great if little groups could come together like that. More flexibility in education.”

“Just doing homeschooling differently.”

“No I haven't. I suppose that is more to do with lacking a creative imagination and the idea having never been put to me. I would be open to it though.”

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“I think home education provides the most potential for an ideal education. If I were unable to home educate for any reason, I would consider a Montessori school (if we had one in our state, which we don’t unfortunately).”

“Yes.”

“No.”

“Yes I have. I haven't come up with anything completely ideal. I sometimes think that shorter school hours and school week would be better. Like four hour days and three day weekends. Kids in rooms with two teachers and no more than say 15 kids... And the classes made up of kids different ages, not all the same age.”

“Alternative education to both home education AND school? Like what? Travel the world as nomads? Live and learn with a family of orangutans in Borneo or something? Seriously I can’t think of anything... But I’m curious now! Seriously though, I’m not sure what alternatives there can logically be. Home education doesn’t mean the education happens strictly in the home... To my mind, home education is a holistic system of education which involves learning everywhere – out in society, in nature, in the city, on the farm, anywhere. So the travelling nomads and the ones in the jungle, they’re home schooling too (in fact, such tales are not all that uncommon in the home schooling world, funnily enough!) Anyone educating their children out in the real world is home schooling them in some form. So by definition, I’m not sure whether alternatives to both school and home education are even possible (other than obviously no education at all – that would be bad!) ”

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35. As a child, and later as an adult, were you able to make friends who really 'got' you?

"Yes throughout my childhood and adult life I have been able to make friends who I really click with."

"Yes, I have some fantastic friends."

"Yes, absolutely."

"Yes."

"Yes."

"Yes, I have close friends who see and understand me for me, as I do them."

"Yep."

"Yes."

"Yes. Some of my best friends are not homeschooled."

"Yes. Some did, and some didn't – as I assume is the case with most people. I certainly haven't had any issues as a teenager/adult making friendships."

"Not often."

"Primary school didn't really give the opportunity since we were so extremely isolated. High school and as an adult: yes."

"Yes. Definitely! I loved making friends and meeting people. I was always very good at making friends and keeping them and also networking with other people. My friends really got me and loved me for who I was, and I them. I felt confident and sure of myself around my friends."

"I really have no idea how this question could possibly have anything to do with home education. Sorry, I just can't see any relevance or make any kind of connection at all... To whoever asked this: You're kidding, right? Refer to question 8, please. Okay, I mean... I have someone I consider a life-partner and

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soul-mate (who happened to move half way around the world for me, no less); I would like to think she ‘gets’ me to some extent! Or maybe I’m wrong, maybe she doesn’t ‘get’ me; maybe every single home-schooled person is left permanently socially incapable. Maybe every home-schooled person permanently lacks the ability to maintain any romantic relationship, form a best friend relationship, or indeed have any kind of human relationship at all. Yes, maybe that’s it...”

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36. As a child did you think about the advantages or disadvantages of being home educated? If so, what were they?

“As a child I would think about the disadvantages of equipment and chemicals and the advantages of being able to learn anywhere and not be stuck in a classroom.”

“Yes. I didn’t like ‘playing by the rules’ at school, but did so, because that’s how you get through. I didn’t like feeling isolated at home, I remember being ridiculously happy when friends visited, enough that I felt embarrassed to let them see me unable to stop grinning.”

“I didn’t think a lot about it, I just kind of did it.”

“Yes, I did think about this. I often contemplated going to school as my parents always gave me the option. Obviously I felt home education was more suited to me.”

“Yes, I could play lots more, but I didn’t get to be with friends all day.”

“I did hear about the supposed disadvantages a lot. I also saw many, many advantages from my point of view as the child learning and preparing to be an adult one day and just rode with it. The disadvantages were the common questions we all get about socialisation, how does my mum get the materials and if she was a teacher, what do I do about exams, how do I do sport, when do I see others, etc. The advantages included freedom to learn at my own pace and pursue creative interests, more exposure to wholesome friends, attitudes and morals, ability to do work experience from age 16, not have money wasted on superficial stuff like uniforms and conformed events/activities etc, ability to work around illness/severe headaches, having holidays that didn’t necessarily coincide with school holiday peak times...”

“I don’t think I really thought of it much as a child. We just did it.”

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“Advantages: time, flexibility. Disadvantages: nope, can’t think of them!”

“Yes. I knew I was getting a very strong education in the subjects that mattered. I also understood that as a Catholic, I had a better chance of learning my faith properly than I did in a mainstream school.”

“Yes. As a child I thought I had a lot more freedom and fun at home than I would have at school. We were able to go on long holidays/camping, and often at non-peak times so it was more peaceful. I felt lucky to be able to pursue my own interests more than I would at school – for example I would choose to spend a lot of time doing maths. I don't think I thought there were disadvantages.”

“Not really.”

“No: we really didn’t have any alternative.”

“I didn't think about that as a child.”

“As a child, I don’t think I ever saw any disadvantages. I think the advantages I most appreciated were being the freedom to be able to pursue my own passions and study at my own pace and level. I loved being able to go to home school camps. I appreciated having so much flexibility in my schedule, and I must admit I certainly appreciated being able to get enough sleep every night!”

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37. As an adult, do you think about the advantages and disadvantages of being home educated? If so, what are they?

“As an adult I think more about the advantages like having so many great memories with my mum and sisters growing up.”

“Yes. As a mother I need to think about this, and with friends with older children, discussion comes up regularly. In this state I could start my son in school next year, at just 4 and a half, in Queensland I would be forced to start him next year. He’s not ready for a structured learning environment, or for his behaviour to comply with school’s needs. My children need more time, more unstructured play and learning, more freedom to learn as they choose to.”

“I think about it a lot. The advantages are having a tailored education, a more focussed education, not falling through the cracks, being in a supportive and loving environment. The disadvantages are very few, and I think come down more to the personality of the child and the parent rather than homeschooling, per se.”

“Yes. I feel there are more advantages for home education. Listing them here would take too long. Only picking some to list would be unfair on the comparison between the two.”

“Yes, one of the main advantages of being home educated is learning what you want to learn and in your own time, instead of learning what other people want you to learn.”

“The more I read up on what is done and charged for in pre-primary, primary and secondary school these days, the more disadvantages I see to be in the system. I feel, as my mother did, quite responsible for having a personal hand in raising the children we brought into the world. I could send them to school and be hands-on and unpaid as parent support for the class and pay all the fees; or I could keep them at home, go through the learning materials, cater to their individual styles of learning, socialise with schooled and unschooled friends of various ages, socialise with adults and ground them well for life as adults. The cost of it may be slightly more than public school, far less than private school, but ultimately the value to

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the children is priceless. Also, for five or so years of working before having children, I would plan my day around the school hour traffic during term in order to miss the inconvenience of the madness of school drop-offs.”

“Yes absolutely, particularly after having children myself, but I think I’ve touched on these already.”

“Advantages: time, flexibility. Disadvantages: nope, can’t think of them!”

“Yes I do. Of the many advantages, my main reasons for wishing to homeschool are: 1) the ability to tailor each child’s education based on their needs; 2) being able to safeguard younger children from things that may not be so wholesome for them to learn (the things I hear happening at schools among young children I find horrific); 3) being able to let my child learn at his or her own pace. I skipped a grade at home, for example, when my brother needed to repeat a grade. Obviously I know of some disadvantages too. Having a larger family can put a lot of stress on the primary educator, particularly if one or two of the children are more high needs. And there are some children who just blatantly refuse to listen to their parents as educators and can only be motivated by someone outside of the home. But these issues I believe can be dealt with in various ways. Bringing in a tutor, for example, has worked well in my family.”

“Yes, very much! I think there are very few disadvantages, and huge advantages. The main advantage is that it gives me the opportunity to tailor my children’s education to their method of learning, interests, and changing mood or energy levels. I hope to be able to make learning a fun part of everyday life and to foster a life-long love of learning. I don’t so much think there are disadvantages to home educating as much as obstacles that are easily overcome. For example, it can be more difficult to access specialized teachers or equipment, programs that are only run through schools, extra support for children with learning disabilities, etc. However, in my experience groups of home educating families are very good at organizing their own group lessons with a specialist teacher, sharing/hiring equipment, or arranging access to a lab or other location that has the equipment.”

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“Yes: advantages would include more freedom; allow the child to work at their own pace; develop strong family relationships. Disadvantages: child feeling ‘different’ to everyone else; negativity from friends/family; lack of like-minded friends/support.”

“As my kids near school age, I am thinking more about those outside influences, peer pressure, bullying and I’m really unsure I want to expose my babies to that.”

“I haven't given that any thought really... I am happy with where my life is and I cherish my home education experiences.”

“As an adult, I still don’t see too much by way of disadvantages. I appreciate the flexibility I had to pursue a mixed-mode education to best suit different areas; so, for example, there was a time when I was doing Italian and psychology at the local high school and competing in school sport, doing a first year uni course externally, studying the guitar and music through private lessons, and pursuing various other interests at home. I love that home education allowed me to get the best of all worlds. I often think about how well such a holistic system of education set me up for university and adult life in general.”

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38. What would you say to parents who are at the beginning of their homeschooling journey that would help them understand it from the child's perspective?

“Most kids don’t want to do ‘work’: make an activity fun and build the learning around it. If a child is not in the mood for something then come back to it later or offer another more interesting activity for when the first is completed. Kids want fun so have as much fun while teaching them as you can. Even though you’re teaching them you still want them to see you as mum so have fun, act silly, tell them when you don’t know the answer and that together you will find it out.”

“Talk to your children. Listen to your children.”

“You’ve stumped me there.”

“Playing is education. Feed the child’s imagination and don’t try to force your own opinions on what people ‘need to know’ on them. Be patient with situations of difficulty. Use things of interest to the child as learning tools for the skills you want them to learn. Be interested in the topics you want your children to learn, they will pick up on your enthusiasm.”

“Your child is going to enjoy learning what they want to, in their own time, and still get to satisfy their social needs through homeschool groups, sports activities and other social groups. And best of all they will do it all with the people they love the most, You!”

“Your child could be in a class with a qualified stranger trying to wrangle and teach a bunch of kids, and this changes year to year and then subject to subject. And after the compulsory hours are over, there is more learning to be done at home with homework with a tired, hungry child and exhausted parents who’ve finished work for the day. Or your child could be brought up by you and guided not only in the area of subject learning but also emotionally, morally, and spiritually, if that is important to you. You can and don’t have to be scared to pass on what you have learned and bond with your child/ren to help them grow into

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healthy and capable adults. My parents had the failings of their parents but the trend stopped with them, and if applicable this can stop with you too and everyone benefits. There are plenty of times that a person will have negative experiences and have to deal with nasty people in their life: it doesn't have to start in the tender young years in school. And appreciating siblings and people of various ages whether within five years of you or much older is fantastic for adult life – if you are in a position of leadership you have understanding of how to manage those who are older and build up those who are younger. Giving a child the freedom to learn at their own pace and style, choose what they like best and be independent is amazing.”

“Learning in a safe, nurturing environment with primary caregivers who love you and want the very best for you as a whole person, not just a NAPLAN score, will never be able to be replaced, no matter how lovely the teacher or school. Being able to learn at your own pace and have an education tailored to your own needs is optimal. Never being frightened of sounding silly or being called dumb if you don't get a concept first time makes for a cooperative and effective learning environment. Growing in maturity and self confidence in a nurturing, empathetic environment prepares you for social situations outside the home.”

“Follow your child's suit. Things will flow so much better!”

“If they are starting with young children, I would tell them not to stress too much if the child is not grasping concepts from a book very quickly. Sometimes all it takes is a few months and finally things start to click, but that there are also many other ways to incorporate learning into everyday life. Helping to measure out in cooking, or sorting coloured laundry are fun basics.”

“I would say to follow the lead of the child, and the learning styles of the child, and to incorporate as much natural learning as possible. Rather than focus on how much work is being completed, focus upon fostering their passions, interests, curiosity and love of learning. Help them to view learning as a natural part of life, and not a separate activity (slightly unpleasant and best avoided). Assist your

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child to build their sense of identity, and confidence in their abilities and personal attributes. Avoid unnecessary comparison with siblings or age-matched peers.”

“Let the children be children, keep it simple, take it slowly, don’t put too much pressure on yourself or the child to conform academically.”

“The child's experience of homeschool is very different to yours as the parent. They don't have all the same worries and concerns as a parent. They don't feel the pressure from society. I feel that homeschooling is about family relationships, enjoying being together, enjoying each other's company... Just relax about it. Let it happen. Live now, for the present. Children are in the present. They aren't so concerned about what they are doing now affecting their chances at this or that future job etc. Life is our best teacher. Go with it. Be proud of homeschooling. The children absorb your attitudes to things, so be aware of your attitudes, what you are projecting. Take it easy. Read a book to your child. If all you do each day is read a book to your child then you are winning.”

“I’m not entirely sure what to say here. Every child is so different and every home educating journey is unique. I’d say if you want to understand things from the child’s perspective, the best thing to do would simply be to actually *talk* with your child about what they think and how they’re feeling! The decision to home educate is one that should only be made in close consultation with the child in question, and the lifestyle is such that you’ll need to form a close, cooperative working relationship with your child. Thus, from the very nature of the journey itself, I’m sure that by embarking on the home education adventure, you’ll find that you quite easily and naturally develop a great understanding of your child and the way they see the world. There’s not too much I can add from here!!

The only other thing I might say is you needn’t worry so much. Most children love the idea of home schooling (think about it from the kid’s point of view: you don’t have to wake up to an alarm every morning, you get to focus on studying the things you’re most interested in, and you get to do cool things and go on awesome camps while your school friends are stuck in class everyday – what’s not to like?!) If, for whatever reason, home schooling doesn’t suit the child and

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they don't enjoy it, you'll soon find out about it anyway. Also, I've never, ever met anyone who was home schooled as a child and now resents that choice as an adult (quite the opposite, in fact).

I guess I might add that children (in particular, younger ones) don't generally have as a developed ability to appreciate long-term benefits beyond those on the immediate horizon. It can be pretty tough then to convince them of the benefits of doing work that seems boring, difficult, uninteresting and even useless in the short-term. For me, this was mathematics. For many (including for myself), this can lead to head-on conflict and tantrums when parents try to force their kids to do fundamental subjects that their kids hate and see no use in. It might be worth keeping the child's perspective in mind, and working that extra bit harder to get around the head-on conflict by showing the child the long-term benefits (for example, all the super cool interesting things you can do if you persist with maths [astronomy, engineering, whatever]). No easy task I know, but still.

Enjoy the journey and all the best!"

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