

Who Wouldn't Be 'School Phobic'?

Submitted by Sarah Fitz-Claridge on 23 August, 2003 - 22:39

Sarah Fitz-Claridge (<http://www.fitz-claridge.com/>), 1992

'School phobia' is a dreadful label for some children's perfectly understandable response to **being compelled to go to school** against their will. They are not phobic, any more than a conscientious objector is a coward; they are *refusing* – and in most cases very nobly. Over the years, I have spoken to many worried parents of school-refusing children. The outrages these children have been subjected to in the name of 'education' disgust me. They have been saddled with a pseudo-medical label that has deliberate connotations of 'mental illness' – with all the stigma and the implied (and not-so-implied) menace that goes with that. Their perfectly reasonable dissent, and their desperately courageous resistance to being hurt and harmed has been cynically redefined as 'overdependence,' 'psychological instability,' and 'immaturity.' They have been psychologically tortured under the guise of psychiatric or psychological 'treatment' for a non-existent ailment. Their parents – also demeaned by labels such as 'overprotective' – have been threatened with court action unless they physically force their terrified, traumatised children into school every day. Many such parents who have sought my advice have themselves been in a terrible state of stress and trauma. Why don't they just comply? Because they know that forcing their child to go so school is immoral, psychologically harmful, and inimical to their child's education.

Or do they know that? Parents often do not seem to know it consciously. Or if they do, they also 'know' the contradictory idea that it is right and important for children to be schooled, because the law, the psychiatric, psychological, and educational professions all say so. They may be nice people in many respects, but as a result of their own parents' coercion, they are simply unable to see how damaging and wrong it is to force a child to go to school.

Ask parents what they would think of a system which not only imprisons innocent people (some of whom are terrified and suffer lifelong trauma as a result) for many years but then forces them to obey every whim of the warders, takes up their time with mind-numbing makework, leaving them almost no time for their own pursuits, and in some cases even force-feeds inmates, and so on. Thinking of vicious tyrants like Saddam Hussein, most will be incensed. They will rail against the brutality and immorality of such a system. Until you tell them that you were referring to our own dear school system. Then they will think that you are guilty of hyperbole, and that anyway, schoolchildren get nights and weekends out, unlike 'real' prisoners. Oh, well that's all right then! They are only imprisoned for five days out of seven. Super. And I suppose that the knowledge that they are to be locked up for five days a week for eleven years does not remotely affect them on the days when they are 'free'? False. The psychological effects of school hang like a pall over children's lives, twisting their thinking and stunting their intellectual and psychological growth, whether it is a school day or not.

How would you feel if you were told today that you must go to school for the next eleven years, that you must attend all the classes I have deemed necessary for you, that you must submit to humiliating procedures and that you will probably be in fear for your physical safety much of the time. But worse, that you will have to put your own life on hold for eleven years in order to jump through the hoops that will be set up for you?

Even this comparison fails to capture some of the more destructive effects of compulsory schooling on children. Childhood is both the most important and the most vulnerable period of life. Children are at the beginning of their lives

and do not have the inner resources that you might use to palliate an eleven-year imprisonment. Furthermore you are not in the position of having an overwhelming need to please your parents. As adults, most of us have to a significant extent escaped the need not to disappoint our parents or invoke their wrath. But children cannot throw off the need for their parents' love and approval without terrible emotional cost.

Even given that I am free from parental coercion, being forced to go to school would ruin my life. I should have to give up doing and thinking about what I want to do and think about, when and where I want to. Life is all too short and precious to waste doing things we don't want to do. In spending seven hours a day, five days a week, doing lessons that are at best only accidentally related to things I am interested in, I should be enacting someone else's notion of what I should do and of who I am. I should have no mental energy left to spend another seven hours at home thinking about the things I really want to think about. This would be very debilitating, and would adversely affect me at weekends too, because all the time, I should have in mind that on Monday morning, I must be back at school. The knowledge that there is a time limit – that on Monday morning I must be back at school – would make it very difficult to start any major project or train of thought during weekends and short holidays. (And that is assuming that there is no homework. I once spent virtually an entire six-week summer holiday solving 590 sets of simultaneous equations, only to return to school to find that the teacher, having had second thoughts about the drudgery of marking the work he had ordered, exercised his right to choose and claimed to have been joking. I wasn't laughing.) I used to feel an increasing sense of dread as the weekend or school holiday wore on. I used to feel physically sick every Sunday night.

Was I labelled 'school phobic'? No. My mother thought I loved school, because I did quite well and didn't make a fuss about going. She was very surprised when, some years ago, I told her that I had loathed school. As William Blake wrote,

And because I am happy, & dance & sing. They think they have done me no injury...

Children whose parents would neither dream of forcing them to go to school nor of preventing them from going, and who support their children in anything they want to do, and who do not allow themselves to be drawn by the school system into a conspiracy against their children, have a very different experience of school if they do choose to go. Not having to worry about their parents' approval (for they will have it anyway), they are free to take their teachers just as seriously as they deserve. They are free to do what they think right instead of deferring to authority. They are free to leave.

Sadly, there are very few such children, for most parents cannot bring themselves to cede this elementary aspect of self-determination: they wouldn't dream of allowing their children to leave school just because they want to, or indeed to attend just because they want to. Some of the children become deeply miserable as a result; some rebel; some really do go mad in the end. Is this surprising? I have, if anything, more hope for children who kick and scream when their parents drag them into school than for children who respond only inwardly, as I did, for the kickers and screamers are still fighting; they still have a sense of self; they have not been successfully crushed and moulded by the system. They are like the character played by Jack Nicholson in the very important film *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. And teachers and parents who calmly conspire in this despicable treatment of fellow human beings (yes, children are human beings too) are like the serenely evil psychiatric nurse in that film.

So I, as an adult and a psychologist, want to say to any children out there who hate school: you are not alone. Most people hate it too, but usually they don't feel entitled to say so, and many can't bear to think about it so they hardly even know how they feel. You are not mad – you don't have a Deep Psychological Problem (though you might develop one if you stay in school against your will!); and you are not bad for wanting to live your life the way you choose, doing what you think right – that is what everyone should be doing. You are not the problem: coercion is the problem. Being forced to go to school is the problem.

1. Contrary to popular belief, school is not compulsory in most Western countries.

2. If Jamie wants to go to school, the parents should support him wholeheartedly in that choice, not stop him or pressure him not to go (though if the parent has information about this choice that the child would want to know, obviously, the parents should give him that information).

[to post comments](#)

Comments

I have also found it interest...

Submitted by a TCS reader (not verified) on 4 September, 2003 - 12:56

I have also found it interesting that child labor is illegal, yet, starting with kindergarten, children are "trained" for jobs. Then the general public is taxed to pay for this mandatory training. If someone is to pay for this, why not the future employers of the kids. They seem to be the only one's benefiting from it. But don't the kids owe the "government" this, so they can grow up and bring more money into the country by their superior education? I guess I still find forced child labor disgusting, even if it is mass forced child labor "for their own good!" - I, by the way was sick often during the school year. Luckily my mother had the wisdom to realize that the same sickness that could make a child too sick to go to school, didn't necessarily make him too sick to go to the zoo. (other mother's have found this rather disturbing in her, as their kids don't see why, if jo's mom does it, they have to go to school.) All my mom's kids were at the top of their classes "despite" their frequent absences ;)

[to post comments](#)

Garbage

Submitted by a TCS reader (not verified) on 18 December, 2003 - 16:09

That's what i think your article is, Garbage!!!. I have been schoolphobic for 12 years now and it is a debilitating phobia. You have no idea how difficult it is to attend a public institution where you feel you are the constant ridicule of all your peers.

[to post comments](#)

Can you be serious?

Submitted by a TCS reader (not verified) on 28 December, 2003 - 05:20

You are not the ridicule of your peers.

It is as simple as that.

Stop believing it the case, and it ceases to be the case.

Your perception is the problem here, not a "phobia" nor 'society' nor a 'garbage' article.

This article is a masterful and insightful peice outlining the horrors of forced indoctrination by the state.

If you did not like your primary schooling, it was most probably if not definetely for good reason.

Feel relieved of your great burden... you are not at fault, should that be the case.

This system, difficult as it is to blame such a large thing, something so great outside one's self...

Is truly at fault.

Do not fear not being able to attend Universities, College, or what-have-you.

They only prove how much patience and tolerance you have for an excruciating experience, even if you otherwise enjoy intellectual stimulation.

Coercion is death, or surely the latter is preferable to a life lived under the former.

Live free, and have good reason to, then.

I rest.

[to post comments](#)

college

Submitted by a TCS reader (not verified) on 13 July, 2004 - 19:01

I can totally relate to this article. It brought tears to my eyes.I hated school. I was teased and called names not only by classmates but also some teachers! I grew up feeling like there was something wrong with me, not that the feeling has ever left me (I am 41 now)- and I blame it all on school. I hated Sundays more than Mondays. My parents brought me many times to the emergency room with stomach pains- nerves. I had a horrible time with my oldest who was diagnosed with school phobia. He was also labled special ed. early on, and was totally treated differently in the school system and I believe it ruined him too. I used to literally carry him into school kicking and screaming all the while thinking I am doing the right thing (because the teachers are telling me I am)and not even thinking about my own experience. When he was to too big to carry I was chasing him around the yard to get him into my car, and when I couldn't get him the car, the police were knocking on my door. What was wrong with me??? He is 18 and still in the 9th grade-although he is in the process of quitting and going to GED classes. I homeschooled my daughter last year because she was being picked on so much and the school was doing absolutly nothing about it. So I pulled her out. They were almost sounding threatening when I told them I didn't want to meet them to discuss her going back. I did eventually meet with them and she might try again next year. I was a college student (and I still find it very scary-and I don't know what I am trying to prove to myself).But I would like to go back. I took last year off to homeschool. I feel I am being selfish, but she does want to go back. It has raised a question. How does a home schooler get into college if they happen to for some reason want to? The college I attend needed a transcript from my old school. Again, this article really hit home with me. Thank you.

[to post comments](#)

I think you proved the author's point

Submitted by a TCS reader (not verified) on 15 July, 2004 - 00:09

It sounds to me as if your debilitating phobia is well grounded in reality. If you're really been suffering that way for 12 years, you should be just about over it.

I suggest that you educate your children at home, when they arrive, so that they don't have to go through the misery you did. I also recommend a book called ``Spelling Power". We're using it with our kids, and it works well.

[to post comments](#)

Anthropophobia

Submitted by a TCS reader (not verified) on 4 August, 2004 - 04:06

What you have is called anthropophobia, that's a fear of people or "your peers" I have a little bit of it too. I make a complete ass out of myself in fastfood places when ordering something because I panic. He's talking about something completely different.

[to post comments](#)

School, I hated school...

Submitted by a TCS reader (not verified) on 4 August, 2004 - 04:55

Elementary school: I learned how to read, write, and do simple math (adding, subtracting, multiplication, division) and they made me take five years out of my life to learn that? Most of the school work was useless busy work because we all know "practice makes perfect", true, but I could have learned all of that stuff in less than a year, and it might've taken six months to "practice it and make it perfect". But no, the system said "hey, guess what? We know you could learn this and practice it in less than a year, but we're gonna spread it out over five years and you have to come whether you like it or not."

Middle School: Oh the happy years!! I had no friends until the 8th grade, and that was a very small number, and the teachers were bearing down with more weight in homework and school work and projects (on the first day of seventh grade, we were assigned a project... in MATH!!!) then most people get in the real world, weekends were spent doing homework, and my grades were slipping a lot. And it pretty much ripped me from my family for the rest of my life because my parents were tearing into me about it constantly, my dad mainly, I would get upset from him constantly yelling at me and I would cry about it (like every other 12 year old would've in that state)and at first he was sympathetic, but eventually he stopped being sympathetic and went all crazy with being super, no-crap, no mercy, hardened father who would just continue yelling and pulling the cliché "this is for your own good" crap that every parent used, because he wanted me to succeed in life and claimed that one day I would thank him.

Somewhere along the line I was broken, I was brainwashed and thought that he was right, forgetting about the horrendous years of emotional stress, and forgot how much I hated it all, forgot the reasons why I hated it and thought it was cruel and was brainwashed with the "you were young and stupid and didn't understand" line. I'm in the tenth grade now, very little of my time is spent learning, most of it is spent worrying about who's planning on kicking my arse. It's not as if I'm being distracted from work, it's that there is no work or new curriculum, I'm

basically forced to go to a prison like ghetto school were there's no such thing as learning other than learning how not to get the bullies and gangsters on your tail.

I have to do this and get through the next two years so that I may go to college and commit another four years of my life to worthless crap, just so I get another job other than flippin' burgers for the remainder of my life. Did I mention I also have to join clubs for the colleges to think of me as "college worthy"? That's gonna be kind of hard to do at a school full of people that want to beat the heck out of me if I so much as look at them funny. But like I'd said earlier, I'd been brainwashed into thinking that that was part of maturity and growing up, that I was just being a stupid kid that was fighting school because it wasn't fun. But this topic has helped me remember my reasons for thinking it was all so wrong.

Thank you. I needed this, maybe I can throw this back in my parents and teachers faces, and now maybe I can win an arguement about this since people take me as more than just some dumb little twelve year old and take me seriously. Thank you.

[to post comments](#)

school phobia or anthropophobia??

Submitted by pooka on 25 August, 2004 - 02:34

Pooka School phobia or anthropophobia- what's the difference? "some of whom are terrified and suffer lifelong trauma as a result" " resistance to being hurt and harmed" What i got was it's labeling a child who doesn't want to go to school with some sort of phobia or condition. A child shouldn't be forced to go to school whatever the reason.

[to post comments](#)

silly?

Submitted by a TCS reader (not verified) on 6 September, 2004 - 23:01

they NEED an education

[to post comments](#)

We NEED food and water. Educa

Submitted by a TCS reader (not verified) on 8 October, 2004 - 01:50

We NEED food and water. Education is a want.

[to post comments](#)

RE: We NEED food and water, Education is a want.

Submitted by a reader (not verified) on 1 November, 2004 - 19:33

Yes, we need food and water and we do NEED an education. I find it interesting that the author of this thread feels that you child should decide if they want to go to school or not. Who is the parent here? Children do need an education. We have schools in our towns and cities to provide education to our children. Education is the tool in the success of our childrens future without it where will they be?

to post comments

RE: We NEED food and water, Education is a want.

Submitted by Deicidus (not verified) (<http://www.studentunion.org/>) on 17 November, 2004 - 10:25

Why is it your responsibility to help force other people's children to go to school by paying for schools with your tax dollars?

Why is you child better off by being coerced into doing mindless things they have no interest in for twelve years?

Why do children need an education?

to post comments

We need an EDUCATION perhaps, we do not need SCHOOL!

Submitted by Anonymous Reader (not verified) on 24 November, 2004 - 22:29

We need an EDUCATION perhaps, we do not need SCHOOL! You seem to be under the impression that school is the only valid way to educate children. I beg to differ.

to post comments

Please...

Submitted by b reader (not verified) on 27 November, 2004 - 01:59

Please...

There is nothing wrong with choosing to live a "feral" life. It is perfectly acceptable to live in a hut in a jungle without any "modern" implements of technology.

to post comments

SCHOOL IS NOT EDUCATION

Submitted by Relsqui (not verified) on 4 December, 2004 - 07:01

Forgive the shouting but I feel very strongly about this. You can lead a person to information, but you can't make him learn--and if he knows you'll be chaining him up next to the information for the next sixteen years (there's a great deal of pressure to go to a four-year college), he's very likely not to learn just out of spite. The real world, even those small parts of it which are designed for a child to understand and enjoy, has so much to teach! It's absurd to assume that learning can only happen in a classroom.

I'm very curious where the tenth grader above is from--his high school sounds a lot like mine. I stayed mostly out of trouble but you couldn't miss people being beaten up for no reason. (My best friend once had a box shoved over his head and the shit beaten out of him in a stairwell--the most common place for it, and the only place at the school where there are no security cameras.) Then of course there were the people being robbed, which also sometimes meant being attacked (I'll never forget getting called to the emergency room at midnight...). Arson was a fad as well; mostly small fires in trashcans, but one was enough to render a building unusable. (I'm not joking, nor exaggerating. The site has been razed and is now a parking lot, I think.)

Did I mention we had five principles in the four years I was there? (The standing record was negative three months--that one quit as soon as he saw what he had gotten into.) And that it was the only high school in a city that needs about five elementary schools? I'd have to look it up but I believe the dropout rate was on the order of 50%. Can you honestly tell me that I'm describing a place of learning? Do you really believe anyone found a good education there?

I was one of those dropouts and it was the best thing I ever did for my sanity. I took the CHSPE (which I recommend over the GED--stronger legal weight and probably easier). I'm taking community college classes now after a long break, enjoying the freedom to seek out the knowledge that interests me. (I work at the college, too--teaching other students. For someone who'll be nineteen years old tomorrow, I don't think that's too bad.)

When I moved to a more traditional public school from a fairly liberal (but far from perfect) private one, I suffered from severe culture shock. I was in young adolescence and in the early stages of becoming clinically depressed; my life at the time, which was for the most part out of my control, almost literally killed me. Anyone who believes this is a healthy thing to do to their children should be forbidden to have any.

to post comments

In Agreement

Submitted by C (not verified) (<http://www.silentnights.net>) on 5 January, 2005 - 01:38

I would have to agree; school really isn't an education. I'd also almost forgotten my reasons for hating it- being forced into something so repetitive and so unnecessary, etc. That's not to say I was broken- I just decided to go around it, in a way. I seem to have this expectation that college will be better since I'll have more of a command over what courses I take and such (currently I'm a senior in high school). My point is this: school is simply too systematic to be a good learning environment. Any study could tell you that people learn in different ways. They do stretch things out far more than is necessary for most students that care to learn, and no amount of time is going to be useful for those that don't care to learn.

Elementary school was a fairly good time for me; I was an optimistic kid, I had a couple of really good friends and I *wanted* to go to school. I started school early though, and I was adamant about not being held back. Thus,

my mom decided to homeschool me for 6th grade. Looking back on it, it was quite a bit of fun. Despite that, I hated it. I missed my friends and I really wasn't learning anything. 7th grade, I went back to public school. Two of my three good friends from elementary school switched to a different middle school for 7th grade, so I never really saw them anymore. Besides that, everyone else had the sort of "buffer year" of 6th grade. The practices of public middle school were new to me and my grades dropped. I never really picked them up. I started hating school, not because it was so difficult, but because it was so much more businesslike and impersonal. Elementary school's lack of these things were just what made it bearable and even likable.

Middle school and high school were pretty much the same. I developed bad habits of forgetting work and missing deadlines, habits I still can't shake. I'd say a lot of it was because I was being made to do work on things I already knew perfectly well. Especially English- I always hated English after 6th grade. I don't mean to boast, but I think I have a perfectly workable command of the English language and can express my ideas clearly when I want to. Also, I don't even plan to need English in my post-collegiate life; I intend to live and work in Japan. In any case, I do feel that education that's catered to the masses has stifled me. Thankfully I have only a few months left until I can get a hopefully more personalized education.

That's just my two cents.

to post comments

school

Submitted by a readerhdjjdkasg (not verified) on 15 January, 2005 - 20:28

I'm thirteen years old. I'm a straight A student in honors classes. It mystifys some people why I want to take harder classes. Answer: I might learn something!

I haven't learned anything in school besides reading, basic math, and photosynthesis until this year.

This year I have surprisingly a few fact However I am wasting a lot of time doing NOTHING. I already know Algebra I...I know everything up to Algebra 2 and I did well on the SAT-math section yet I still have to learn it. In reading, I have learned NOTHING in the past THREE years except that if the teacher disagrees with your opinion or is too lazy to go to the dictionary and look up the big words in your essay she doesn't know you get a bad grade. Science this year has been ok but throughout elementary school we have learned NOTHING. Social Studies is a waste of time. Yeah we learn stuff but I don't see why we have to spend a month going over 5 pages of material. Spanish is a waste of time. We recently had a test on a chapter. We had pictures (black and white, blurry pictures) and we had to label what they were. I did bad on that although I know all the words. Gym/health is even worse. By the time we are thirteen we know about menstrational cycles! And in gym we play basketball everyday. Wait I mean we are told to play basketball in the over-crowded gym but instead cliques use the time to pick on others. Ha...so much for school being educational!

School is also demeaning. We spend about 5 minutes in class discussing a dress code violation (wow! someones shorts in winter are a centimeter shorter than there fingers! We're all going to die) We aren't allowed to speak without permission and lots of times go to the bathroom. Once I, a thirteen year old girl, was going to the bathroom with my purse. My teacher thought that was enough evidence to think I was doing drugs or cheating or something so she decided to look through it's contents in front of the class. Needless to say, everyone was falling out of their seats laughing. Teachers make up rules but we are forced to follow them because we agreed to them at the beginning of the year (one of the rules says teachers can make up rules) and we agreed because we would have gotten into serious trouble if we hadn't. Students with asthma can't carry inhalors. The hallways are so crowded that people get hurt. One time I fell down and people literally stepped on me! We have 3 minutes to get to class

even though there is major traffic. If we lose something (remember - very crowded violent halls) we get yelled at. Our homework is stupid and demeaning. We have 30 problems to do on really easy yet-timing consuming (we have to have a detailed explanation). It's stupid! School is a demeaning waste of time. I'll write more on it later. Oh but by law I am required to go to it. maybe I'll drop out at 16 and go to a college that doesn't require a high-school diploma, early. In the future my kids are going to be home-schooled (I hope) and you all should home-school your kids. I know lots of home-schooled kids who have lots of friends. Just get them involved with sports or something.

[to post comments](#)

Learning more

Submitted by WereWolfGirl (not verified) on 17 May, 2005 - 14:31

I learn more on summer and winter breaks and weekends than in school. How, you ask? I write stories. I want to be a bestselling author someday, and school can't really prepare you for that. The ideas for stories come from your own mind, school doesn't give them to you. We get our education from doing things that we actually plan to do for a living someday, not from doing 35 advanced math problems a night.(Yes, I really had to do this, and I LOATHE math.) Remember, Mark Twain once said "I try to never let my schooling get in the way of my education." Thank you, Mr. Twain!

[to post comments](#)

My 2 Cents

Submitted by Enforcer (not verified) on 1 June, 2005 - 01:14

Thank you very much for writing this article. This article reflects my thoughts exactly.

On another note, it's an issue to see how school teaching has been overrated, and in the process we seem to have forgotten the basis of true education. When it all comes down, in principle (excluding the success in doing the job that any schools in this world have) all that schools are really important for are helping our people take notice and hopefully grasp skills and pieces of knowledge that they will need in order to survive through the laws and systems in many cultures. At the bottom line, schools and their legion of academic tools teach nothing, with the hopeful exception of appreciating creativity, which is usually only truly taught in very few schools by comparison to mainstream academia.

One of the most educational things in humanity's lives are creativity and various art forms that humans can relate to and sometimes create: paintings, creative writing, sports and recreation, video games, etc.

Until then, most of society today is being spoon-fed standardized garbage that says that unless you read non-fiction books, follow the public school agenda, solve millions of trivial equations, do everything Sean Hannity tells you or tell everyone that you love Shakespeare that you're not only an 'uneducated' person that isn't following society's skewed formula of what 'education' is, but you're also useless, unintellectual, and an idiot! Welcome to the world of stereotypes, where you either conform or suck dust.

[to post comments](#)

I am a former school-phobic

Submitted by violet_yoshi (not verified) on 5 June, 2005 - 14:01

I went to public schools. Now while I didn't go to school in an area, where there was violence and such. I was still humiliated everyday, sometimes by teachers. I was treated as lesser than teachers, and they would tell my mom I was misbehaving, when I was trying to talk to them at their level.

Right now I suffer from depression, whether it was school related or not, I don't know. I would guess probably, because they say over-stimulation of the amygdala, which is responsible for the flight-or-fight response, leads to depression. Lord knows that your amygdala gets a work out in public schools.

I had a nervous breakdown towards the end of high school. I was screaming, over and over at my dad, who had the unfortunate position of having to wake me that morning. "I WON'T GO TO SCHOOL YOU CAN'T MAKE ME GO AGAINST MY WILL!" So my dad saw to it that I wasn't going to be dropped but that, I wouldn't have to go back to the school physically.

He felt I'd feel appreciative after I had my diploma. I don't have my diploma on my wall, why be reminded of 11 years of heck, that I certainly could've done better without. I could've learned all the stuff from school with educational software, without the stress.

I think the public schools have become nothing more than, day-care centers. Where you're told it's more important to be social, than to get an education.

I tell people, the only thing I learned from school, is how to hate. After being humiliated for so long, you become defensive against your humilators. I was told shortly after Columbine, to change how I dressed. I considered myself a Goth in high school, which was a sign I was depressed. I mean if you know the Goth subculture, it's about being depressed/depressing. They said the other students felt upset, and scared after what happened with Columbine.

I said to the dean, "I come to this school everyday terrified, of what those students will say to me. How they will humilate me today, and get away with it. They deserve to feel the fear, that they've made me feel for so many years. Let them learn how it feels, when they hurt others"

So my point being, is that I don't see why anyone should go to a public school. It just seems pointless, and as mentioned does result in PTSD. I'm pretty sure I have PTSD, because the Zolofit I'm taking says it's for that and depression.

I tell people, even though this is a very contraversial statement. Did what Eric Klebold and Dylan Harris, do at Columbine, really that unexpected? You have boys being called fags and having coke cans thrown at them at lunch, while the teachers just watch.

By the end of my school year, after being left helpless by the deans and the faculty. Claiming that I was the problem, blaming me, the victim. I almost beat up a guy, or at least had a very strong urge to. That's why I had the nervous breakdown. I thought it will get to the point where I will hurt someone, and I might go to jail.

Note that I'm female. As you know, there is still prevalent sexism in most public schools, where women who stand up for themselves are considered bad. Where women who dress revealing and giggle, and act like twits are considered good. I've always been a tomboy, just so you know. Even though I'm female, I probaly would've tried to kick that guy's butt.

I hope you read this, and decide if possible, to homeschool your children. I mean, I've told people my story so many times over. I'm not on the news, I'm not getting the pity. Neither did Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold. We're not the people you see being empathized with. I feel that should change. Had someone just sat down with Eric and Dylan, and talked with them about what was wrong, perhaps Columbine would've never had to happen.

to post comments

I object to the foundation

Submitted by a reader (not verified) on 24 October, 2005 - 22:55

I object to the foundation of your response. You say that mandatory schooling is harmful, yet you clearly cannot spell correctly or form grammatically correct sentences! No child has ever succeeded from not being sent to some sort of schooling every day for at least ten years. Home-schooled children are still "forced" to go to school, even though it is in their own home. Pick up a first grade book and learn how to spell and write sentences. Then, and only then, can you lecture someone else on their opinion of "forced" schooling.

to post comments

Re:I object to the foundation

Submitted by Thomas Levine (not verified) (<http://www.slackworkz.org>) on 2 January, 2006 - 03:21

In seventh grade I read Woe is I, The Elements of Style and some Webster's guide to grammar. I am now in tenth grade. Before seventh grade, I never really learned anything about grammar or style in school, and I learned almost everything that I needed to know about grammar and style then, and I was more comfortable with grammar and style than many adults.

The stuff that I was taught in the seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth grades conflicted. One year, I would learn to put a comma in a certain place, and the next year, I would learn not to include it, or I would learn to capitalize something differently one year. This might have made sense had I changed school systems, but I have been in the same school system for all of my life.

I still understand grammar and style significantly better than most other people in my grade (and many adults) do. While being able to ask English teachers seemed helpful sometimes when I asked them about things that I did not understand after reading the three books that I mentioned, I never really trusted what they said.

I'm sure I could find an expert who could help me understand the few things that I could not grasp by reading three books in my spare time. This should be the role of a teacher--clarifying things that a student did not understand from a reading. It would be great if I could trust my teachers to be right, but, unfortunately, I can't.

to post comments

School is HARDLY EVER an

Submitted by a reader (not verified) on 10 April, 2006 - 07:35

School is HARDLY EVER an education. It is memorization of petty facts to regurgitate for a test and then to be forgotten and never used again. I have always been intellectually gifted - a psychologist told my mother that I was almost a genius. Then at age 6 years I went to school and averaged Cs and Ds through to high school graduation, which I barely passed. But if I am so "smart" then why is this so? It's because teachers don't teach the way I learn, and they don't teach anything I'm interested in. These are just some of the massive loopholes in institutionalized public schooling.

[to post comments](#)

I agree

Submitted by a reader (not verified) on 24 May, 2006 - 17:53

I totally agree with and I relate to certain things in that article. It makes me want to cry thinking about it. I'm 16 and I'm attending school and I hate it and I have since I was 7 years old. I want to leave but my parents won't let me. When I ask them why they won't give me an answer. My mum just says "Because you have to go and I'm not having you hang around the house all day" but that's not what I want to do. I want to go on to acting and do what I want but they just won't give me a chance.

It started when I was 7, I was back in school again after my Summer holidays. I didn't want to go to school anymore. I used to kick and scream and cry because I was so miserable. My mum brought me to a doctor and they said I had some sort of mental illness and a separation anxiety (which I don't have, I wasn't miserable because I was away from home, I just didn't like school) and I was sent to a counsellor. Even though I was only about 7 or 8 I knew that they thought I had some mental problem. Why couldn't they just understand that I just don't like school? I was put on anti depressants and I was forced to go back to school.

When I was 9 my family moved home and I changed schools. It got worse from here. I was away from all my friends and then I was bullied by teachers and pupils because of my accent. My parents complained about the bullying and changed me into a different class but it didn't help much. So I changed schools again the following September. I wasn't bullied or called names all the time here but I was ignored by all the other pupils and I felt so alone.

I was brought back to the doctor when I started refusing to go to school and again he said I had a mental illness and I have to go see a counsellor again. I refused to go so the doctor tried putting me on anti depressants again. I never took a single tablet. I was throwing them in the bin, down drains and flushing them down the toilet when my parents weren't looking. I was not going to let them treat me like this.

School had ruined my confidence. I've regained that confidence now but I'm still not happy in school.

So now I'm in secondary school and I hate it even more. It's a private school and everyone's a snob and expects you to be perfect at all your subjects. At first I got excellent grades but I'm bored and I do nothing interesting so I don't bother trying anymore. I just want to get out of that place. We get too much work and the stress is driving me insane. Are my parents going to force me into college too and into a job? They understand that I am miserable but they seem to think that "Oh well you've only got another 3 years" is a comforting thought. They just want the best for me and for me to have an education but what about my happiness? Shouldn't that come first? I'm not going to let them push me around anymore. I am getting out of that school if it's the last thing I do.

[to post comments](#)

A few things

Submitted by Andy (not verified) on 3 September, 2006 - 23:14

I am currently a college graduate, and I can tell you absolutely that there are *plenty* of students in college that still cannot write worth crap--punctuation, spelling, etc.--so just because that person had bad writing skills, doesn't mean their argument is weakened.

I was just wondering...does anybody know any good fiction books about a character who hates school and rebels against it? I want to read those. It would be like an Atlas Shrugged of high schoolers.

[to post comments](#)

"School phobia"

Submitted by [Serena \(not verified\)](http://www.serenarainey.blogspot.com) on 10 September, 2007 - 21:51

School phobia is as rational as labor-camp phobia or rubber-room phobia or any other overwhelming fear of an overwhelmingly frightening place of confinement. I posted a short story on my blog about this that I would love to add to this conversation. Look for it on <http://www.serenarainey.blogspot.com> (<http://www.serenarainey.blogspot.com>). Looking forward to talking more about the gulag system we tolerate our young's abduction in. Check out John Taylor Gatto's site, as well, anyone who hasn't yet. It has a forum and a good, really good online book. Make public school compete.

[to post comments](#)

An excellent article

Submitted by [slarab31 \(not verified\)](#) on 18 February, 2008 - 15:40

What an excellent article! You have managed to summarise in less than 1500 words my sentiments on compulsory schooling. I am currently trying to persuade the father of my 5 year old daughter to let me take her out of school and I will certainly be using some of the points you made in my discussions with him. My daughter cries every morning when I tell her she has to go to school, she has stomach aches, tantrums and is tired and stressed in the evenings and at weekends. I feel like the instigator of her torture.

I am sure that future generations will view the idea of forcing all 4 and 5 year olds to attend school, with the same abhorrence as we now view sending 10 year old children down coal mines.

We don't question the ability of young children to learn to speak on independantly and at thier own speed. Why should we question thier ability to learn to read and write in a household where there are books and writing materials and where these activities are considered to be worthwhile and inherently interesting?

[to post comments](#)

When are we ever going to

Submitted by Me. (not verified) on 3 March, 2008 - 02:18

When are we ever going to need that anyway...society isn't about how perfect your spelling is, is it?

[to post comments](#)

Ironic?

Submitted by a reader (not verified) on 3 March, 2008 - 20:08

I once toured a police station, and noted that the concrete blocks they use for the jail-cells is the same material they use in the schools.

[to post comments](#)

what happens when you need

Submitted by Serr (not verified) on 5 March, 2008 - 05:56

what happens when you need to find paid work?

in all the jobs i've had, authority figures "force" you to be in a certain place for a certain time, and they definitely give you plenty of pointless busywork, esp when you first start out.

do you advocate finding paid work that allows you more freedom, like freelancing or busking? or do you advocate living on the dole?

[to post comments](#)

paid work

Submitted by Willow on 12 March, 2008 - 12:59

It's not nearly as bad as school. If it was then I would very much advocate going on the dole.

It's fab. I work only as much as I need to pay the bills. When I walk out the door I leave the job there. I chose what job to do (from the available jobs for my skills). I can sit and eat chocolate at my desk. I can take my annual leave when I like. If it was that bad, I could always resign.

Work is nothing like school. If you think it is, then quit.

[to post comments](#)

I agree

completely with the article. It actually brought tears to my eyes. I'm a 17 year old in a public school in the US, I have LOATHED school ever since I can remember.

You know that feeling that you get when you walk by a group of people who are laughing and you get all self conscious and think that they are laughing at you? They call that paranoia. (Paranoia is a disturbed thought process characterized by excessive anxiety or fear, often to the point of irrationality and delusion.) Well, I get that all the time. Maybe it's because I have really bad self esteem to begin with. If someone looks at me, I assume that they are staring at my huge forehead, my weird eyebrows, my gutt, my love handles, my chubby arms, or my acne. I start freaking out, silently, thinking "Ugh I'm so gross, that's why they are staring at me. They are laughing at ME. They think I look awkward." Not every once in a while, but ALL THE TIME.

It's not that I care about what other people think, because really, I don't. I just don't like to be thought of as ugly or unattractive. I know, that's really shallow, but it's 100% true. When a teacher asks me to read something for the class, like a story in a Lit. book or something, I get REALLY nervous and tense up. I studder, turn red, and get super paranoid that everyone is staring at me and judging me; even when they are not.

I don't know if it is just me that does this, or does everyone have anxiety (Anxiety is a physiological state characterized by cognitive, somatic, emotional, and behavioral components (Seligman, Walker & Rosenhan, 2001). These components combine to create the feelings that we typically recognize as fear, apprehension, or worry. Anxiety is often accompanied by physical sensations such as heart palpitations, nausea, chest pain, shortness of breath, stomach aches, or headache. The cognitive component entails expectation of a diffuse and certain danger. Somatically the body prepares the organism to deal with threat (known as an emergency reaction): blood pressure and heart rate are increased, sweating is increased, bloodflow to the major muscle groups is increased, and immune and digestive system functions are inhibited. Externally, somatic signs of anxiety may include pale skin, sweating, trembling, and pupillary dilation. Emotionally, anxiety causes a sense of dread or panic and physically causes nausea, diarrhea, and chills. Behaviorally, both voluntary and involuntary behaviors may arise directed at escaping or avoiding the source of anxiety and often maladaptive, being most extreme in anxiety disorders. However, anxiety is not always pathological or maladaptive: it is a common emotion along with fear, anger, sadness, and happiness, and it has a very important function in relation to survival.) attacks like me?

My English teacher read my essay out loud once, and I was MORTIFIED. I tried to hide how nervous and ashamed (I guess?) I was, and I knew that nobody could tell that I was scared deep down, but the paranoid me thought "They think I'm lame. They are all staring at me. Everyone." I freaked out. It's not like my essay was bad or anything, I thought it was really good, I got a 4 on it, but still you know? Shit like that happens to me EVERY DAY.

The weird thing is, it only happens to me at SCHOOL. Nowhere else. Only at school. Maybe it's the fact that I am at a brand new school and I don't know hardly anyone. Well, it doesn't matter anyway. I'm done. I HATE high school. Next year I want to be home schooled. Seriously. I'm DONE trying to fit in somewhere that I don't belong. I'm tired of feeling like this. I have told my mother this many times, I have actually cried in front of her and BEGGED her to go back to my old school (I was at my other public high school for 9-10th grade and had TONS of friends, and NEVER felt this way) and she said "No." because she doesn't want me to go to a "ghetto" school. (I apologize if there are any profanities in this entry by the way :/) I asked her if I could attend CompuHigh Online School so that I can graduate early and she said "No, you are NOT quitting school." The typical response. "It's for the best." Right? WRONG. I want to be a graphic designer, and I will achieve my Diploma from CompuHigh in January of 2009 if she paid for the classes. NEVER leaving school. She doesn't understand. Please, any comments?

An aspiring free spirit's point of view

Submitted by Andy S. (not verified) on 2 October, 2008 - 15:07

The article and comments included here make a profound statement about the pros and cons of what is deemed acceptable for learning path ways in society to groom the next generation of movers and shakers. The one size fits all approach of school works for some, but I have to wonder, how many true success stories exist which are spawned as a catalyst that is predicated on many years of institutionalized learning? The Montessori school approach and others like it certainly foster more creativity and individualism but are not exempt from these conditions.

I have battled nearly a lifetime of social phobia since early adolescence and I know for a fact that I possess innate paranoia of ridicule by peers (and other symptomatic manifestations of the formal diagnosis). However, nature versus nurture comes into what is cause versus effect, as well as the degree of magnitude regarding impairment. Just as I can pinpoint my own innate traits of social phobia, I too remember what it felt like to be an outsider, not only from a social context, but with respect to the generalized learning model employed by the public school system in America. I remember a happy creative boy before the storm of school rained on me. Innate tendencies toward shyness and my own overemphasis on the actions and reactions of people (i.e. being under the microscope of scrutiny) became chronic debilitating panic attacks based on intense fears. In the present, I am well attuned to the results of my learned helplessness tendencies of avoiding social situations due to a cumulative experience of interactions that created negative emotions. This facilitated a mentality that fast accepts reclusiveness as a survival technique to avoid intense irrational perceptions of scrutiny by others under the guise of unworthiness. Much to unlearn...but I digress.

There are recent studies identifying a symbiotic relationship between innate disposition and environmental influences that can trigger full blown instances of more chronic mental disorder symptoms (not necessarily a diagnosis as there is of course a difference). Neuropsychology tells us about theories like Nongenomic Inheritance, Diathesis-Stress Model, and the Reciprocal Gene-Environment Model. All essentially emphasize that the genetic potential for mental conditions or disorders does not necessarily mean they will occur in an individual. In my mind and from my experiences, these postulations and experiments heighten the role of environmental influence, and in this context, the effect of school on susceptible individuals who are pre-sensitized to their surroundings and peers by innate traits. If people meet with negative learning experiences, then there is a good chance the outcome is positive. But, if they feel trapped, suppressed, and reduced as human beings, the odds of escaping intense negativity decrease significantly. And the effect is dangerously exponential as cumulative experiences only reinforce what was learned in school and with each passing moment, the ability to unlearn and escape negative thoughts can become increasingly more difficult.

Such concepts just mentioned could be argued until the day the brain is understood in its entirety, say around the year 2170! But, in the end, one can dwell on the problem or inch ever closer into the solution of what could be, versus what was in the wake of a tattered and torn existence. As a parent of young children who will enter the public school system not many years from now, I am quite concerned about generic linkage and how they will fare in a systematic learning program that leaves many behind with a resultant general distaste for learning (whose pure form is actually a wonderful thing). The first step of course is to identify and understand a problem. This I have done with many years of self-discovery, learning about human behavior / mental disorders, with the support of professional intervention. Next, the process of rising above is crucial to begin unlearning all that has been taught, which conflicts with the values of the true underlying self. For me, I compromised that happy little boy in trying to please all those who embraced institutionalized values of which they were a byproduct (knowingly or not, benevolent or not). I existed in what psychologists coin "identity moratorium" from assimilating many value systems of others as I bounced from cliché to cliché in an attempt to fit in, despite the toll it took on diverging

from my true self, who was suppressed in the interest of social survival (i.e. I was as phony as the day is long). I lost myself and forgot who I was from the machine of society.

Moving past what I was, now is a time to converge on identity and reconnect with the sleeping child inside who lies dormant only out of necessity to make ends meet in a society that moves at the speed of lightening and judges all who do not conform. I cannot go back to this person in the state he once existed, but I can rejoin him with the knowledge and lessons I have picked up from the day he was lost until now. Whether from a formal social phobia condition or learned behavior as a byproduct of our failed academic institutions, the issue here is how to solve the aftershock whether within or upon escaping the grasp of these non-forgiving entities. The return to self must be recognized as a way to escape the potentially endless cycle of negativity created from such experiences as described in this article and comments.

By taking a journey of self-awareness (whatever the means or mechanisms) at any juncture to understand all that is reality, versus what has been spoon fed us, will we who suffer from our past, grow to become at peace and achieve the holy grail of happiness, and that is self-acceptance. If you have kids and fear they may end up experiencing the same trauma, then it is your duty to embark on this mission so that the wisdom of this journey can be passed onto the children who are our greatest hope for a better world. Only when the self has returned despite numerous environmental curve balls, will we know the difference between a child who is suffering from chronic school trauma, versus those who are simply rebelling because it is in their nature. From that plane, intervention and action will be natural and appropriate for it means we are in close touch with our children's needs.

[to post comments](#)

Some of these comments are ridiculous

Submitted by Paige (not verified) on 30 September, 2009 - 00:56

I just started my freshmen year in High School. I have missed as many days as I have gone. I know this is my fault and am not blaming it on anything or anyone, but I just have to say school phobia does exist. I have had some sort of school avoidance since starting preschool. I would cry until I couldn't breathe and then the teacher would call my parents. I have had a 4.0 all through middle school and have many friends who I can rely on while in school. So, what is the problem, why can't I ever make it there. Obviously there is such thing as school phobia. Just because you don't understand it or can't comprehend it doesn't mean it's nonexistant.

I think school academics are great, they are a needed to make a living in the future. What would we do without some jobs, such as surgeons. Who because of school are saving lives everyday. If you believe school is a waste of time, then how come ever person who has made something of their lives went to it. Explain? Your 13 you still have a lot to learn, listen to your teachers most the time you'll actually get something out of it even when you think you don't.

This is coming from a girl who is so nervous over school she has to take 100 mg. of Xanax just to make it there.

[to post comments](#)

;))

Submitted by TylerDoll;) (not verified) on 29 January, 2010 - 16:27

I completely agree. If there wasn't so much pressure on kids to be in school. More Kids would be in it. And if more kids didn't have pressures to get straight A's. More Kids would. Well. At least that's my take on it. Not too much pressure; but still giving some care;;; :D Perfect (Or having amazing teachers(Stewart,Collins,Rotzlers))

to post comments

I so glad there are others that think this way

Submitted by jill (not verified) on 13 August, 2010 - 21:53

I have 3 children that have all been through different tragic events at school and all got depressed and withdrawn it was very upsetting. I told their absent father that they couldn't handle school they all left at different times but always almost the same problem he didn't care less what they did, it was me and their step dad that had to do all the comforting and get them through the tough times. But once they were home school the difference was amazing they cheered up almost straight away and I got three very happy children that now love learning. and we have fun learning together, sadly they decided that they didn't want to see their bio father anymore who didn't support them one bit now he's trying to force them back to school I've now got 3 very terrified children who don't want to go back to all the nightmares and have to relieve them one is even biting herself and getting very upset, the one that has been out of school the longest, but it's upsetting them all very much and it's upsetting the whole family. I don't know what to do I'm just getting as much info as I can and this site has helped me no end and I thank everyone that has shared their experiences.

to post comments

So many still don't understand

Submitted by Eleanor (not verified) on 31 July, 2011 - 23:16

I have had school phobia for the past 7 years, and I can assure you it is very real! All I keep reading is how you all hated or loathed school, well school phobia isn't about hating or loathing school it's about having a FEAR of school. I used to be so petrified of school I couldn't be there, look at it, talk about it or even think about it without bursting into tears. But so many people just don't understand and I get that to a degree, because I have had the same argument with my father and we have not spoken for the last 6 years because of it. I would say I hope one of your children get school phobia cause maybe then you will see and understand but I would never wish it on anyone.

to post comments

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