

Foreword

This is a good book. This book has been needed and I'm glad Skyler Collins found and inspired these men to share their thoughts and experiences.

This is an important book. I'm glad you have it and are about to read more. It will help make many children's lives wonderful. When the parents relax enough to see the wonder in their children, then their own lives will improve. As each life is made richer and more peaceful, the family grows lighter, and happier.

Unschooling sounds crazy. Peeking out of school doorways, or out of school eyes, it looks dangerously insane. But here's the deal: school-eyes come of having lived in school, identified with school, having become schooled, and schoolish. Peeking out of a school doorway is no place to stand to see the whole real world.

This book lets you see from different continents and from the perspectives of dads from different decades, whose children are all different ages. They have gone on the dangerous, scary path, and have left messages here for you to come on—it's a pretty nice path after all.

Don't be surprised if reading this causes you to alternate between attraction and aversion. That's normal and healthy, but don't believe everything you think. There are some voices in your head that you might want to say "Enough" to now, for the benefit of your inner child, your living outer children, and your own future ability to think freely and widely.

Over twenty years of communicating with unschoolers, I have only counted a dozen men who discovered and desired unschooling before their wives did. Thousands of moms, a dozen dads. Skyler Collins was one of that dozen. Those represented in this book are about half and half. Be glad if you're one of those dads who gets to be persuasive rather than defensive. And if you're being persuaded by

someone excited about unschooling, I hope this book will help you see different facets and possibilities from a male stance.

For years when moms asked what might convince a dad who didn't want to read, who thought things were fine and school was great, unschoolers would say "Get him to a conference where he can see unschooling dads interacting with their children." That has helped many, but there are dads who won't go, or who can't go because they're musicians, chefs, emergency room doctors and the weekends are their main work days. There are families for whom conferences are too far away or too great an expense. The stories in this book might give you some of that benefit, though you'll miss the joy of the eyes lighting up between a joyous child and a dad who knows he is contributing to that joy. If you can find more experienced families to meet and hang out with, somehow, there can be value in seeing those relationships.

Sometimes dads are impressed by seeing older kids—twens, teens—especially if they're familiar with any currently schooled kids of the same ages. A dad I know coaches girls' soccer. His confidence in his own daughters grew as he dealt with so many others their age. Some unschooling dads are teachers, or public servants dealing with children, and they too have reported a growing appreciation for benefits their children have gained from an unpressured life filled with real choices.

My husband, Keith Dodd, didn't write for this book, but he has spoken at conferences, in groups—a family panel once, and two or three panels of dads. I have saved one thing he said because it stunned me:

"We wanted our children to become thoughtful, intelligent, undamaged adults."

In so short a summary of what we hoped to accomplish by unschooling, he used the word "undamaged." That's quite powerful.

I remind moms, when they're confused about why fathers are "being difficult" about children, that inside every man is the little boy. Women forget that sometimes. When men are energetic, efficient, organized, resourceful and strong it can be easy for women to pour all their gentle nurturing energy onto the children, forgetting that the dad might be needy, too. In varying degrees, childhood

hurts can hinder clarity. Sometimes dads are jealous of their children's options and opportunities. Don't banish the little boy inside you, or ignore him. You can nurture and soothe your own soul and psyche by giving your child what you wish you had had when you were that age.

Generosity makes you generous. Kindness makes you kind. Respecting others, and their ideas and their interests, makes you full of respect—respectful. These are little things that build up quickly.

Practicing on children can make it easier to be kind and patient with a spouse, partner or co-parent. Many marriages have improved because of changing attitudes and abilities that grew out of unschooling principles and practices. And just as surviving a disaster, pulling through an emergency, or remodeling a house can bring a couple together with shared memories, pride and mutual admiration (or relief that it's over), so can looking back at successful parenting experiences. When things go well and both parents contributed to that, it strengthens the partnership. That was an unexpected benefit of unschooling, but it's not a fluke.

This book can soothe and support, inspire and uplift. Relax. Allow your thoughts and hopes to rise. It's easy to "Yeah but" and "What if" yourself into a hole; don't. You'll pull your family into the hole with you.

If you move into unschooling, you won't become a fantasy dad. You will still be you. Your children will be the humans they were born to be, but perhaps you can assist in helping them grow up undamaged. With practice, you can find ways to nurture a relationship with each child that could improve generations of your family to come.

Those who read here will be doing a good thing. Those who wrote at Skyler's request have done a great thing. Channel these positives into your children's lives, and may you have many years of peace together.