

A woman with dark hair, wearing a light blue top and a necklace, is smiling and looking towards the left. She is holding a green marker and a white sticky note. In the background, there is a whiteboard covered in blue handwritten notes and diagrams. Several yellow sticky notes are attached to the board. The overall scene suggests a professional or educational setting.

HOW TO RAISE AN ENTREPRENEUR: NEVER LET SCHOOLING INTERFERE WITH YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATION Margot Machol Bisnow

With the school year in full swing, take some time to look around and evaluate.

Has your child been happy? Are they thriving? Should they return to the same school next year, or should you make a change?

Schools don't tend to be nurturing grounds for inquisitive young people who show signs of being budding entrepreneurs. Traditional schools value students who learn the lessons they've been taught. But that's not how brains work for many future entrepreneurs who often have traits most schools don't value.

For example:

- They question rules.
- They want to solve problems their own way.
- They want to try a new approach.
- They lose focus when the subject doesn't interest them.
- They hate sitting still and listening to someone lecture them.

While conducting research for my book, I interviewed 70 successful entrepreneurs. One-third graduated at the top of their class from top universities, and one-quarter earned advanced degrees.

But many others—who are just as successful—were unhappy in school.

And even some who were good students and enjoyed school decided not to finish college and instead to get on with what mattered more to them. Whether these entrepreneurs graduated with honors, never went to college, or dropped out was irrelevant to their success in life.

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It's important to put your child in a school where they can thrive. If your child is thriving, that's fantastic. If they're not, consider what change to make. Don't keep them in a situation where they feel stupid. Don't force your child to stay at a school where they're uninspired. And if they hate college, don't make them finish.

These are some of today's successful entrepreneurs whose parents worked to find the right school for them:

Benny Blanco is one of the top songwriters and record producers in the world, with hundreds of millions of songs sold for artists like Rihanna, Katy Perry, Ed Sheeran, and Justin Bieber, who won the BMI Songwriter of the Year Award five times.

But when Benny was in school, his teachers found him annoying. His mother got a call every week from his kindergarten teacher, complaining that he wouldn't sit quietly in the circle. His mother's response was, "So?" She never considered Benny's habits to be a problem. She focused on his strengths and found him a music teacher outside of school who recognized his talent and mentored him.

Jenna Arnold co-founded ORGANIZE to end the waitlist for organ transplants, was on Inc. magazine's 35 Under 35, and was named one of 100 Awakened Leaders by Oprah.

When she was young, she struggled in school. When Jenna was in second grade, her family took her out of the school that didn't know how to deal with her learning differences and put her in a lab school to help her. Eventually, they moved her again to a Quaker school to enhance her self-esteem. Ironically, she majored in education in college and won the top teaching award for her class.

Jeff Marx is a Tony-winning composer, playwright, and songwriter best known for co-writing Avenue Q, which won the Tony Award for Best Musical. He has also co-written songs for many TV shows and wrote a book, How to Win a High School Election.

When he was in sixth grade, his private school tried to “counsel him out” because he refused to turn in homework he thought was too easy. His parents stood up for him. Two weeks later, when he performed for the first time at a school show, the same teachers apologized to his parents for not having grasped how talented he was.

Parents, pay close attention to know if your children are in the right school. If they’re happy and motivated, that’s great. But if they aren’t, question what their school is doing that hasn’t engaged your child. Consider switching from a large public school to a small private school or the reverse, or to a charter school—or even home-schooling for a while.

Trust in your child’s ability. Maybe the school just hasn’t recognized it. Your understanding and support will make all the difference in their future success.

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WHAT PARENTS SHOULD DO WHEN THEIR NEW GRAD DOESN'T WANT A NORMAL JOB

As a parent, what should you do if your adult child chooses not to take a normal job after finally getting a diploma? Sure, the job market is tough for new grads, but your friends' recent graduates are finding jobs. And your child has interviewed for a few jobs you thought would be great.

But what if your child tells you they honestly can't imagine taking the kind of entry-level job you signed up for back when you graduated? What if you always told them to be practical, but they don't want to be practical any longer? What should you do?

While researching how parents of entrepreneurs raise their children, I interviewed 70 thriving self-starters who took a different path from most college graduates. They represented a very diverse group from a variety of career paths. They all decided not to be practical and instead set out to turn their passion into a career.

Each of their parents followed their child's lead when they decided not to pursue a traditional job. And the parents' support as they followed their passion was crucial to their success.

Let go of your nervousness. Take comfort in these five stories of successful entrepreneurs who decided not to go the route of a traditional career, but instead to follow their dreams.

When **Bert Jacobs** graduated from college, he and his brother Johnny started selling T-shirts they designed on the streets of Boston. Their friends would ask disapprovingly, “What are you doing with your life?” After a few years, they came up with Jake, a smiling stick figure with “Life Is Good” written underneath. Their T-shirts are now sold in over 4,000 shops across the U.S. and in 30 countries around the world as part of a \$100 million positive lifestyle brand.

Joel Holland was getting ready to graduate from Babson and had a six-figure job offer on Wall Street. He turned it down. All his friends said he was nuts. Instead, he moved home with his parents and worked on the company he had started while he was in high school, called Video Blocks, selling stock film footage. Within five years he sold half of it for \$10 million. Then he started pursuing his other passion—touring the country in an RV—but he hated staying in crowded RV parks. He bought a small company called Harvest Hosts, providing memberships to stay in farms and wineries, places he had wished to stay. It now has over 5,000 locations. Joel told me, “When you love something, and get to understand every aspect of it, you’ll realize what you can add, and you can make a business of it.”

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and that failure is how they will learn
and grow.

Paige Mycoskie had always loved art, but after college, she took a traditional job. A few years later, she bought a used sewing machine and told her parents she was quitting her job and moving back to their home in Texas to sew. After a few months, she took the first group of surfing-inspired clothes she'd made to Los Angeles and sold them to Fred Segal, a high-end clothing store. Within three years, she opened her first store, Aviator Nation. She now has 17 stores and is opening more around the world.

Thomas Vu was majoring in bio-engineering at the University of California San Diego, but his passion was video games. He was one quarter away from graduation when he had a chance to talk to someone from Electronic Arts who was a guest speaker at his school. Thomas told him about an idea he had for a game, and soon was invited to join the Sim City team as an intern. He dropped out of school and became the lead producer on *League of Legends*. It now has over 100 million monthly active players around the world. Last year he became executive producer of the breakout Netflix hit series *Arcane*.

Unjoo Moon's family was unhappy when she announced she was giving up the law to try to get into film. Then she went on to direct and produce many winning films and music videos. In particular, her film *I Am Woman*, the Helen Reddy biopic, has enjoyed critical acclaim.

Not everyone thrives on risk, is willing to live with uncertainty, and work really hard to turn their passion into a project. But if that's your child's dream, tell them to go for it. Let them know they should try doing what they love, not what they think will please their family, or their teachers, or their friends.

Will they all be successful at everything they try? No, that's not how life works. Will they hit bumps in the road? Of course. Let your child know it's alright to fail and that failure is how they will learn and grow.

Naturally, you're concerned they won't make enough money to live. But let go of your anxieties about their future. Tell them you know it may be hard, but you want them to pursue their passion, and take a chance on turning their dream into reality. Then take a deep breath and try to be excited for their journey. **It could be the start of something great.** 📌



Info



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Margot Machol Bisnow spent 20 years in government, including as an FTC Commissioner and staff director of the President’s Council of Economic Advisers. For the last 10 years, she has spoken to parent groups about raising creative, confident, resilient children who achieve their dreams. She served as an Advisor to EQ Generation, an after-school program in New York City that gives children the skills to succeed; on the Advisory Board of the MUSE School in Malibu, that prepares young people to live consciously through passion-based learning; and on the Board of Spark the Journey in Washington DC, that mentors low-income high school students to achieve college and career success. Her new book is *Raising an Entrepreneur: How to Help Your Children Achieve Their Dreams—99 Stories from Families Who Did*. Learn more at raisinganentrepreneur.com.



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