

Dealing with Sceptics Toolkit

For those days when you're tired of explaining yourself this toolkit offers credible, evidence-based resources about homeschooling, neurodivergence, and alternative education. It's designed to remind you that the research does exist, the experts are talking, and you're not alone in challenging outdated systems.

The Psychology behind scepticism

Most scepticism isn't really about *you*. It's about the other person's brain trying to feel safe.

A few things are often happening under the surface:

1. **The brain loves the familiar.**
Our brains are wired to treat the "usual way" as safer. School is seen as the default, so anything outside that can trigger quiet alarm bells, even if the person doesn't consciously feel scared.
2. **Uncertainty feels like danger.**
When someone hears "homeschool" or "alternative education", their brain might jump to:
"But what about friends? Qualifications? Future jobs?"
Their nervous system is reacting to uncertainty long before their logic catches up.
3. **Status quo bias.**
Many people assume: "If it was good enough for me, it's good enough for you."
Questioning school or traditional paths can feel, to them, like you're questioning their own choices or identity.
4. **Fear of loss.**
Scepticism often hides a fear that your child might "miss out":
 - a. missed opportunities
 - b. missed social connections
 - c. missed supports they *think* only exist in school
5. **Social pressure and judgement.**
People worry about being judged by others for "allowing" something different in their family or community. Sometimes their criticism of you is really them trying to reassure themselves that they're still on the "acceptable" path.

What's really underneath common sceptical comments

Here are a few examples of what might be hiding under the words:

- **“But how will they socialise?”**

Underneath: *“I’m scared they’ll be lonely or rejected.”*

- **“Are you even qualified to teach?”**

Underneath: *“I’m worried the system won’t recognise what they learn.”*

Or: *“If you can do this without school, what does that say about the system I trusted?”*

- **“You’re wrapping them in cotton wool.”**

Underneath: *“I had to tough it out. If they don’t, does that mean my suffering wasn’t necessary?”*

- **“But school is the real world.”**

Underneath: *“I don’t know how to imagine a different kind of life, and that’s uncomfortable.”*

Here are some starting points if you (or someone you love) would like to understand more about homeschooling and neurodivergent kids:

- A short list of **research studies** showing how homeschoolers fare academically and socially
- A few **TED talks** about creativity, alternative education, and different kinds of minds
- A small bookshelf of **autistic, ADHD, and neurodivergent authors**
- A couple of **podcasts** by neurodivergent parents sharing lived experience

Each source below was chosen to inform, inspire, and give you confidence when you need a little extra backup.

Academic Research on Homeschooling

Reliable research on homeschooling (especially for neurodivergent kids) is surprisingly thin. Most studies that claim “mainstream is best” don’t factor in experiences from the point of view of the neurodivergent student. Instead, they measure teacher comfort or parent satisfaction and call it inclusion. The research that actually includes neurodivergent voices tells a different story: when regulation, safety, and autonomy come first, learning naturally follows.

(I’ve included links to each study along with a brief explainer – **NOTE** if any of these links don’t work you can also input the research title and author into a search engine to bring it up)

- **Ray, Brian D. (2017). “A Systematic Review of the Empirical Research on Homeschooling and Achievement.”**

A summary of decades of homeschooling studies showing strong academic outcomes across diverse groups.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15582159.2017.1395638>

- **Kunzman, R. & Gaither, M. (2020). “Homeschooling: An Updated Comprehensive Survey of the Research.”**

A widely cited meta-analysis reviewing all major studies up to 2020; balanced and academically neutral.

https://icher.org/files/Kunzman_and_Gaither_An%20Updated_Comprehensive_Survey.pdf

- **Duvall, S. F. (2020). “Autism and Home Education: Outcomes for Learners with ASD.”**

Evidence showing academic and emotional improvements for autistic students educated at home.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/20473869.2021.1975253#d1e156>

- **Murphy, J. (2014). “The Social and Educational Outcomes of Homeschooling.”**

A general review of socialisation, identity development, and long-term outcomes.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/261885035_The_Social_and_Educational_Outcomes_of_Homeschooling

TED Talks & Educational Videos

- **Sir Ken Robinson — “Do Schools Kill Creativity?”**

The most-watched education TED Talk of all time. Challenges traditional schooling assumptions.

https://www.ted.com/talks/sir_ken_robinson_do_schools_kill_creativity

- **Temple Grandin — “The World Needs All Kinds of Minds.”**

Clear, accessible insight into autistic thinking and strengths.

https://www.ted.com/talks/temple_grandin_the_world_needs_all_kinds_of_minds

- **Sugata Mitra — “Build a School in the Cloud.”**

Research showing that children learn exceptionally well through curiosity and autonomy.

https://www.ted.com/talks/sugata_mitra_build_a_school_in_the_cloud

- **Ali Carr-Chellman — “Gaming to Re-engage Boys in Learning.”**

Explains the mismatch between school environments and neurodivergent learners.

https://www.ted.com/talks/ali_carr_chellman_gaming_to_re_engage_boys_in_learning

Ken Robinson – *Bring on the Learning Revolution!* (TED)

A follow-up to his famous talk, and *more directly about reimagining education*.

https://www.ted.com/talks/sir_ken_robinson_bring_on_the_learning_revolution

Books by Neurodivergent Authors

Unmasking Autism — Devon Price

Odd Girl Out — Laura James

I Overcame My Autism and All I Got Was This Lousy Anxiety Disorder — Sarah Kurchak

The Electricity of Every Living Thing — Katherine May

Divergent Mind — Jenara Nerenberg

A Different Kettle of Fish — Michael Barton

PDA in the Family — Gillian Drew

ADHD 2.0 — Hallowell & Ratey

Science-Backed Books on Learning and Development

The Self-Driven Child — Stixrud & Johnson

Range — David Epstein

How Children Learn — John Holt

The Whole-Brain Child — Siegel & Bryson

Podcasts & ND-Led Media

Stark Raving Dad (Issy)

A father of neurodivergent children sharing supportive homeschooling stories and advocacy.

Newly Diagnosed Adult podcast

Autistic-led, honest conversations about identity, support needs, and practical lived experience.

The ND Mummy Podcast (UK-based)

Mother of autistic/ADHD children interviewing professionals and ND adults about childhood, education, and family life.