

We are one year into our world-schooling journey, and we've taken some significant steps forward: 1) We have kids (and a dog) who are now international travelers; 2) we have experience renting our house; 3) we've met, learned from, and made friends with traveling families, and 4) we've joined some world-schooling communities that feel vibrant, rich, and authentic.

Alongside all of the progress, though, I still feel a bit stuck in certain patterns that I just can't quite break. Being in the suburbs felt like I was planted where I didn't want to be, perpetuating privilege by living in a nice neighborhood, sending my kids to the good schools that were part of that nice neighborhood, having to drive everywhere. I wanted out.

I want to be in a space where I feel like I'm sharing my gifts while also working to do what little I can to create a better world. I want to be of service. As usual, though, the hard part is *how*?

It feels like the problems I keep running into are structural—a housing system that pretty much requires having a car. Driving a lot means causing more emissions. It also means me and my family are, by design, less active, which causes us to be less healthy, which causes a heavier strain on an already broken healthcare system.

One thing we tried this spring and summer was to join a traveling community where they rented us an apartment, had a co-working space, and had a micro-school for the kids to join. In a lot of ways, this solved the problems of the suburbs. We were a lot more active, there were kids around to play with, I didn't drive as much.

But, now that I'm processing our time with this community, I think it still has a lot of the structural problems that I'm trying to break away from. For one, it is pretty expensive. That in and of itself is not a bad thing; of course, we want people to be able to make a living wage. But, without some sort of tiered system to make the community available to those with less capital, we're all just surrounded by privilege. Privilege perpetuates more privilege.

The real issue for me, though, is that this company is structured as a startup. To be fair, I'm not saying the startup model is in general bad or evil. It works well in the context of a company that provides a distinct product.

Full disclosure, my husband is currently working in his second startup. He is a Software Development Director who does his best to reject bro culture—his current CEO is a woman, his last one was openly gay—and he does his best to find diverse candidates when hiring.

There is a troubling trend recently, though, with startups that are going in with the promise of creating “community.” This can lead to tactics that are shady, even downright dangerous. ([See here a recent Vox article about this.](#)) In the same way that I bristle about the popularity and, what feels like, perversion of yoga and mindfulness, so, too, do I bristle in the face of “community” that doesn't feel authentic.

The startup model captures only certain value, the idea being to return more capital to the people who already invested capital. What about other kinds of value? What about people who invest their time and energy into creating a real, strong community? That is added value, but it is not captured.

The startup model also creates certain structural incentives. No matter the great intentions of the people who are working for the startup, the incentives come down to growth at all costs, the business must try to make it to an IPO as fast as possible, in order to pay back

the investors. No matter how much the people running the business are wise, kind, and well-intentioned, at the end of the day, it's the capital that pushes the decisions. ([This is the podcast episode that started me really thinking about this.](#))

So, here I am again, disappointed that I didn't like this community more—I would say it didn't even feel like community—and wondering how I keep working to break out. I feel frustrated with myself for not being able to just go along. Why do I always have to push back? Why can't I just join in and be happy?

I told my partner and husband, Tim, that I was feeling frustrated with myself and, as usual, he had something wise to say that made me feel better: "Without a critical eye, no real change will ever happen."

That's it. *I want to help make real change.* We are at the place in our life where we've been fortunate, we're not wealthy, but we have enough. Enough that I have the luxury of worrying not just about my family's survival, but about how to live intentionally in the world.

I am grateful that we gave this company a try, as it taught me what I don't want to do, pushing me a bit closer to the *how to help* that works for me. Here are some of the points I want to hit moving forward:

1. **Support established world-schooling communities:** There are people who have been living this lifestyle, traveling for a long time, who know a lot about world-schooling and are working to create intentional community. I'm going to join in those groups, I'm going to support and share their work, and I'm going to participate in their platforms. One of those people is Rachel Carlson, who created Worldscool Popup Hub.
2. **Participate in and learn more about co-ops and zebras:** These are two concepts that have come to my attention recently, and I love both of them. I need to learn more about both, but this is my understanding so far:
 - **Co-ops:** A co-op is a new business structure that seeks to further mutuality by starting with a mutual aid fund from the very beginning.
 - **Zebras:** Zebras came about to counter the idea of silicon valley unicorns—supporting business structures that capture the value of everyone's contributions, that are both black and white, and that allow an exit to community or an alternative exit that doesn't simply make a few people rich.
3. **Follow and seek community in other settings:** When I pay close enough attention, I find people who are already working to make these changes.
 - **Spirituality:** I will continue to support the spiritual leaders I admire. This includes Marcia Miller, Linda Oshins, Anne Weidinger, who are all lovely, real-deal yoga teachers. It also includes Casper ter Kuile and his new project, The Nearness, as well as Vanessa Zultan with her non-profit, Not Sorry Productions, and Colette Potts, and Matt Potts.
 - **Alternative Education:** I will continue to support the alternative education projects that I admire, including Unarvu Education, run by Suma Holdsworth, an Agile Learning Center in Sintra, Portugal.
 - **Friends:** I will notice what my friends are already doing—friends who have chosen to have very strict social media boundaries, friends who volunteer their time for projects like the

ones mentioned above, friends who are setting the bar for stepping away from a traditional life and following a more meaningful path.

I think I will always be working on my iteration of *how to make real change*, but these ways forward feel like the right ones for me right now. Finally, I'm ready to get to work. Finally, I see a bit of the way. Finally, I want to row long and hard until I arrive, floating, on an ocean where the tide lifts all boats.