

By Mary Beth Weisenburger

Honorary degree

Anyone who has college-aged children knows that their education does not come cheap. Our well-intentioned idea 21 years ago to have our children close together so they could be good friends resulted in two children in college at the same time today, doubling the attack on our pocketbooks. But take heart, college moms and dads: I'm here to tell you that your investment in your child's future will pay off not just for them, but for you too, long before graduation day. They will be able to offer you invaluable pearls of wisdom that were gained through the experience of living on their own, being immersed in a culturally diverse environment and having unfettered access to the hallowed halls of academia.

It's true. My husband and I have already learned so many things in the two-plus years our kids have been in college, we're on our way to honorary degrees.

For instance, our son, who is now a junior, taught us last summer that for our entire lifetimes, we have been approaching the task of peeling a banana in a very inefficient way. All this time, we've been opening the fruit by bending and snapping the stem, risking the embarrassment of banana oozing out the tops and sides. Little did we know that by flipping the banana over and breaking open the peel at the bottom we would be saving ourselves the humiliating struggle of neatly preparing the banana in question to be consumed. Imagine – all of this engineering information from merely thousands of dollars in tuition!

Likewise, our daughter has opened our eyes to some astounding previously unknown psychology class stimulus-response hypotheses. Just the other day, she informed us that by simply throwing sweatshirts and blankets on instead of turning up the thermostat in their apartment, she and her roommates saved money on their utility bill! Her dad and I looked at each other in stunned silence. "Thank goodness we are able to participate in these advanced educational discoveries!" we whispered to each other.

We have learned a few additional “did you knows?” over the past couple of years as well. For example, in the math, physics and finance categories we have been taught:

- Increases in text messages and phone calls from our children directly coincide with increases in requests for money.
- Dirty clothes that needed to be meticulously separated into darks/whites/colors at home can somehow all be jammed in to the same load of wash at school.
- Grocery shopping in a big city is much more expensive than loading up on items from your mom and dad’s pantry before you head back to college.

So remember, parents. When you write that tuition check, you are not only raising your children’s IQs, but you’re giving your own a boost as well. And on graduation day, when your offspring is walking down the aisle to the tune of “Pomp and Circumstance,” you can be sitting in the audience, tears of pride streaming down your face, peeling a banana. The correct way.

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The opinions stated are those of the writer, and do not necessarily reflect that of the newspaper.