

My Daughter Didn't Walk Out and I Struggle With Her Choice

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PARENTING/PARENT STORIES

My Daughter Didn't **Walk** **Out** and I Struggle With Her Choice

"I respect her right to choose whether or not to protest, but I struggle to understand her choice."

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On Wednesday, three-quarters of my daughter's school of nearly 1,000 students walked **out** as part of [the national protest](#) of adults' failure to pass common sense gun laws that would keep them safe. But my eighth-grader? She stayed in her seat.

Where did I go wrong?

I know that she wasn't afraid. Last year, I brought her with me to the [Womxn's March](#) so that she could see first-hand that protesting can be [safe and empowering](#). But when it came to the walkout, she admits to a little bit of cynicism.

"I'm sure some of the kids who walked **out** really care, but I think most of them just wanted to get **out** of class," she says.

It wouldn't surprise me if gun violence seemed like a distant problem to a 13-year-old in a liberal, pacifist community like ours but my daughter assures me that she understands the issue and sympathizes with the message of the walkout. Her decision, she says, was purely practical.

The walkout was scheduled during her science class the day before a test. She worried that missing class could hurt her grade.

"If it was during third period, I definitely would have joined," she says. (Turns **out** that she was right about needing to study; even with the extra review, she barely passed.)

I didn't mean to teach her that grades are more important than [political engagement](#) but if I'm being honest with myself I've made

political engagement but if I'm being honest with myself, I've made similar choices.

I've missed public meetings to make a work deadline and forgotten to call senators before an important vote because I was too busy driving kids to soccer practice. I marvel at the courage of mothers like those of [the Russian punk rockers and activists Pussy Riot](#), who sacrifice family life for protest and jail, but it's a choice I could never make.

And, the truth is, I don't have to in the same way other mothers do. My basic freedoms are protected by layers of privilege. Still, I remind myself, that is no excuse. My challenge to myself: Integrate civic action into my life through voting, volunteering and protesting *and* balance it with my other responsibilities.

Thankfully, the student walkout wasn't the only way I can work against gun violence. On Saturday, March 24, I will join the nationwide [March for Our Lives](#) to demand that our politicians prioritize the lives and safety of schoolchildren over gun sales. Seattle's student-led demonstration begins at 10 a.m. at Cal Anderson Park in Capitol Hill and marches to Key Arena.

I hope that my daughter chooses to [walk](#) with me.

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