

e-Thoughts — Swimming upstream

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Our e-Thoughts feature provides close-up views on topics and areas of interest from everyday life.

I like to think I'm an independent thinker. I've never been one to give in to peer pressure. In high school, I was always somewhere on the fringe of the "in-group" because I didn't do things just to go along.

Why? Well, for starters, my parents wouldn't hear of it!

In truth, my parents are probably the biggest reason why I learned to swim upstream — or think for myself. Ever since I was little, my parents urged me to make my own choices.

They were forever saying, "If your friend jumped off a cliff, would you jump too?" Another of their favorites was, "We don't care what your friend is allowed to do, you can't do it!"

My parents taught me that following a crowd was easy, but not always smart. I wasn't allowed to do lots of things my friends were doing. That certainly caused some arguments during my teen years (not too unusual for parents and teens, right?)

I bet it was hard for my parents, too. But they hung in there. They insisted that thinking and acting as an individual wasn't "wimping out" but being strong.

While it may have caused some hard times for me as a teen, my parents' values also helped me grow up as a person with my own decision-making skills and beliefs. My parents helped me learn to determine what I really want to do — and not do.

Parents make an impact on their kids every day. Whenever I go against the tide, I thank my parents for teaching me to swim.