A High School Break-Up Gets a Second Chance

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BEFORE YOU READ: How is it different to be in school as an adult (instead of as a child)?

My relationship with math has been like it is with an ex-girlfriend who broke your heart in high school and whom you have not seen in many years. And when you see her again, you think, “I know everything about you.” But then you realize she is no longer the same girl and that 15 years can change a person beyond recognition.

So it is with me and math. We definitely “broke up” once high school was over. Since graduating from high school, I have only done math operations using my smartphone at work. (I work as a server and bartender. At the end of the night, I share a percentage of my tips with runners, bussers, and barbacks.)

I kept my distance from math! That is, until my daughter Lindsey began third grade. I was always her genius. I almost always knew how to help her. Third grade, however, brought more challenges, and I started to run out of ideas.

I decided to enroll in school to get to know math once more, but this time it’s different because I am learning math in the same way (and in the same language) that my daughter is learning. My confidence in math is growing and I am able to help my daughter more assertively than ever before. I’m happy to say that math and I are not stuck in the old high school relationship. We have both changed!

AFTER YOU READ: Describe the central metaphor of this essay. Have you ever “broken up” with someone or something, and then discovered that person or that thing again later in life? What changed in your relationship? What is something you learned when you were young and then rediscovered later?

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