

Cultural Daily

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8 Ways to Get Your Teenager Thinking About a Career Path

Our Friends · Tuesday, May 19th, 2020

Arguably, the teenage years are among the most important with regard to early career planning. And, even though they may spend most of their time with their friends and screens, teenagers are thinking about their futures way more than we think they are. In fact, studies show that by the time they're 17, [91 percent of students](#) already think they know what career they want to pursue. It's your job to keep an open dialogue and encourage them to make the right turns along the way so they can get there.

Here are some specific ways you can get your teenager thinking more about what they want to do with their life.

1. Have Them Build a Portfolio — Building an [online portfolio that showcases your teen's talents and accomplishments](#) is an awesome way to help get them to look inward and think about what they're good at. On top of that, a well-done online portfolio on the right platform can lead to college scholarships, internships, connections with specific colleges, and even jobs down the road.

2. Know That Teenagers Meander — The last thing you want to do is push your child in a certain direction, only for them to accept your suggestion and regret it later on. In truth, teenagers and young adults need the space to explore a variety of fields and interests. If you've got a teen who seems to be all over the place, one of the best things you can do is encourage a liberal arts education, starting with general education courses that will lead down a more specialized path later on.

3. Suggest a Personality Test — We know that many personality tests, such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and the Big Five Personality Test, are [rooted in pseudoscience](#) and probably shouldn't be used as an end-all, be-all career-finding solution, but we also know that these quizzes are amazing tools of self-discovery. While they shouldn't be treated as gospel, they can help students think about their personalities, skills, and characteristics, which can lead them to move towards a career that suits them personally.

4. Send Them on a Shadowing Spree — OK, a shadowing spree may be a bit much for a teenager who isn't amped about the idea, but one or two days of shadowing a professional can really get their wheels spinning about their futures. If your child is in high school, talk with their guidance counselor or advisor about setting them up with some in-person job shadowing experiences across various different industries. This will help them get an inside look at potential roles while also allowing them to rule some out that aren't a great fit.

5. Ask Them About Their Goals (and Listen) — Ultimately, the careers we choose should be aligned with the goals we have for the future. Our jobs dictate so much about our lives, from where we live and how much free time we have on a daily basis to how fulfilled we feel in the work that we do. They can affect how much we can travel and dedicate to our hobbies. Here are some good questions to ask to help determine what's most important to your teenager:

? How many years of college or job training would you be OK with?

? Financially, how do you envision your future? How important is money to your future and your ability to do the things you love?

? Do you think you could do a job day in and day out that wasn't meaningful to you or rewarding on a deeper level?

? How big of a part of your life do you want your work to be?

? Do you want to work in a helping profession?

? What is your favorite thing to do in the world? Can you monetize it?

? Where do you see yourself living in 10 years?

6. Encourage Them to Get a Job — For many of us, our teenage jobs had nothing to do with the final careers we chose, but they gave us practical first-hand experience with many aspects of work, including scheduling, dealing with management, working with the general public, and helping others. It will also help teenagers see that work can be fun and fulfilling in the right environment.

7. Try the Seven Stories Method — [The Seven Stories Method](#) is an exercise used by career development professionals to help students discover jobs that will make them feel happy and fulfilled. Ask your teenager to tell a series of stories about times they did something they enjoyed and felt that they did well. Try to draw some comparisons and patterns throughout their stories to determine what things are creating meaningful experiences for your child.

8. Always Encourage Their Interests — Even if your teenager is interested in something you don't totally understand or something that's not traditionally "academic" — think: video game design, anime drawing, or soccer — it's still important that you cultivate those interests and fan their creative flames. If your youngster is interested in art, performance, sports, robotics, or any other realm, you can encourage them by enrolling them in classes or camps that help support their interests. You may also encourage them to think about how they can earn money in a way that involves their passion, such as by teaching or coaching.

Self-Discovery Is Key

If your teenager seems directionless, don't panic. The later teen years and early 20s are vital to self-discovery, and chances are your child will carve out a real vision for their future in this time. At present, the best thing you can do is encourage your teenager to think about the things they enjoy doing and help them hone what they're good at. A fulfilling career will follow!

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