

Part 2: What Can Parents do to Support their Teenager transition successfully to Higher Education?

In Part 1 we looked at the main challenges facing school-leavers as they transition into the next phase of their lives – the dramatic transformation that has occurred in the workplace, higher education landscape that requires a new set of skills, and many secondary school students unprepared for the uncertainty and rapidly changing world. Knowing what the challenges are sets us up to consider what can be done to help. Because parents are perfectly positioned to support their teenager's transition, we will look at some of the things that they can do to get started in this role.

Parent as ally

If the goal is that children grow up to be healthy, happy individuals who are self-sufficient and contribute to the betterment of society, then one way of looking at things is through the prism of one's career development. A career is no longer an end point or destination, it is a journey, lasting well over 50 years. The uncertainty that characterises the 21st Century can be offset by people being grounded in their self-belief and in possession of the skills and resilience to survive and thrive. How can they best capitalise on their ambitions, talents and abilities? Parents can become their teenagers best ally, providing not just financial support but also, a sounding board to test ideas.

Parents may feel that they do not want to influence their children's career choices. The fact is that parental influence is second to none. Children start to develop their career identities early in childhood, based on their experience of the world around them. Parents are the primary source of influence in relation to their children's career exploration, career development and career decision-making and they provide the environment that can nurture their children's self-belief, their independence and their adaptability - essential ingredients for young people navigating the uncertainty and rapidly changing world.

However, parents can also discourage career exploration and development through what we say and do. Here are a few examples from the research:

- career indecision is often the result of individuals not receiving much support for the choices they made in earlier development;



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- a history of criticism can lead to extraordinary anxiety in developing a life purpose; and
- choosing careers that conflict with parent's expectations, can be emotionally demanding and lead to depression in adulthood.

5 things parents can do to help

Listen more

Listening is an important social activity, based on 'I'll listen to you but then you listen to me'. Our focus is often on trying to get our speak in to tell our story. It is basic and superficial. In contrast, attentive or active listening is much more focused on what the speaker is saying. Just speaking about a situation out loud often helps us understand the situation better and come up with our own solution. Being a sounding board for our teenagers is a gift, greatly enhancing relationships.

Judge less

We judge others all the time, not realising that we are only seeing things from our own narrow perspective. Everyone has their own unique experiences. When it comes to teenager's career exploration, a useful starting point might be to get a conversation going over dinner on what it means to be successful in the workplace and delight in family members differing views. Support greater creativity and thinking outside the box, in the pursuit of new and uncharted career paths.

Be optimistic

While it might seem like the world is falling apart, it is worth remembering that previous generations faced great threats such as war. It is essential that parents are optimistic about their children's future.

Be informed

Make it your business to stay up to date on topics that relate to college and work, such as, eligibility for college, costs, scholarships/grants, and emerging career sectors. You may find that it's a fascinating subject.

Develop your child's independence, self-esteem & adaptability

Start developing their independence early in life and support the decisions that they make. Examples can include - encourage them to take an active part in the running of the home,

providing support for developing new skills and praise for tasks done well. Avail of opportunities that present themselves outside the home also where they are required to learn new skills and take responsibility. Summer jobs and trips away without parents usually lead to lots of learning about themselves and helps them adapt to change.