

# What Can Parents Do...

1. Encourage your teen to investigate a variety of careers. Talk about work and your own job at the dinner table. Talk with friends and relatives about work when your children are present—but not in complaints and gossip!
2. Stress to your teen that school is their work. Attendance is important. You don't take a day off from work just because you feel like it. The same goes for school.
3. Explore with your teen, without being judgmental, her or his personal talents, strengths, likes and dislikes. Ask: What do you like to do? Do you like being around people? Do you prefer working outdoors or indoors? Do you like to take things apart? Do you prefer school courses with a lot of "doing" or with a lot of reading? The more teens know about themselves, the easier it'll be for them to recognize the careers that suit them best?
4. Help your teen experience first hand as many different work situations as possible. Through school, your employer, friends and relatives, get your teen to take advantage of both formal and informal work exposure programs. These include:
  - Job shadowing—going through a day or two of work watching someone do his or her job.
  - Mentoring—being paired with a working adult for discussion of jobs and career likes and dislikes and to identify particular skills and knowledge an employee needs on the job.
  - Internships—a chance to work in a job with an employer for a few weeks or longer to learn more about a career field.
  - Youth Apprenticeships—A work experience in a technical field that helps the apprentice begin to learn the skills required to carry out a specific job.
  - Cooperative Education—working at a job under the school's supervision while also going to school.
5. Provide as many opportunities as you can for your son or daughter to learn technology. This knowledge is essential for success in the workplace. Encourage your teenager to sign up for a computer literacy course in school, at the "Y" or through a youth group. Understanding today's technological world and a chance to take a

hands-on look at the tools, techniques and skills involved in a range of careers.

6. Pressure your schools to expose students to career choices. Work through parent/teacher organizations to provide students with career fairs, field trips and class speakers who focus on careers and career paths.

*Finding a career focus has a big payoff—*

- If your teen is doing well, a career focus can make selecting a college and choosing a major easier.
  - If your teen is struggling in school, a career focus can add purpose to his or her studies and give grades a lift.
7. Talk to your teen about a career as a goal of education. It's okay that teens usually don't know what they want to do for the rest of their lives. What's not okay is avoiding thinking about future career goals altogether. Preparing for a career is part of what education is about. Don't let your son or daughter get short-changed.
  8. Guide your teenager to acquiring skills. Every employment opportunity requires people to use both head and hand skills. Encourage your teen to take courses that him/her an opportunity to apply skills—like keyboarding, automotive technology, accounting, graphic design, construction, journalism and marketing. These are equally important to college-bound and non-college bound teens.
  9. Give your teen responsibility, the more the better. Young people need to learn that we all have to carry our own weight—that we are all important and that people rely on us to get things done.
  10. Suggest that your teen consider career opportunities that were once considered for males or only for females. There are excellent job opportunities for persons entering non-traditional career fields. It may take extra commitment to cross gender lines, but there are rewards.

## **Bonus Tip!!!**

Keep your sense of humor. No matter how hard we try to point our sons and daughters in the right direction, we can't live their lives for them. So keep your approach light. Be persistent in presenting opportunities; be relaxed in expecting outcomes. Avoid being judgmental.