

## 10 TIPS TO INCREASE YOUR CHILD'S INTEREST IN CAREERS

A few lucky people know from an early age what they want to spend their life doing. The rest of us fit somewhere between having some idea and no idea about it.

It is not unusual for young people to be unclear about their direction in life, and it is often not until their early twenties that they gain a good sense of who they are.

Our system, however, asks much younger people to make decisions based on knowing who they are and what they want to achieve in life – think subject selection, elective choices, vocational study opportunities. There is a wealth of information about possible choices, which can leave people feeling overwhelmed, unable to decide or perhaps even uninterested in the whole 'careers thing'.

Finding out who you are and what you want to do is a process that depends on many factors. Below are ten strategies that may assist you and your child.

### **1. Stay calm and open-minded**

Remember, it's your child's life and they are your child's choices to make, not yours. Many parents believe that they must insist on certain directions for their child. There is a difference between guidance – where you explore and talk respectfully – and bossiness – where what you want is paramount. Children appreciate guidance. They usually don't appreciate control.

### **2. Be a positive influence**

Talk about your career. Tell your child how you arrived where you are today. Perhaps as you talk you could draw your 'path', and highlight events and experiences that influenced how your goals were realised, or weren't. The important messages here are your hopes and dreams, how you managed change, what external factors affected your decisions and how comfortable you felt at various stages, as well as how you feel now. Share any plans and goals you might have and how you see your future panning out.

### **3. Encourage your child to talk to other adults about their careers**

Hearing about careers from young as well as mature adults will build a positive sense of self in relation to your child's place in society at different life stages. Perhaps they could talk to their grandparents, aunts, uncles, their friends' parents or other family, friends or people they know.

### **4. Watch movies and television together**

Most characters in movies, television dramas, and novels have, will have – or did have – some kind of work. Discuss the characters, what they do, how satisfying you think their lives are and how work contributes to their happiness.

## **5. Talk about the people you know or those you meet in your day-to-day activities**

Ask questions like, 'Do you think Sally likes being a nurse?' or 'Do you think the dentist is good at her job?' This will lead to discussions about the benefits or otherwise of doing certain jobs, as well as more general questions about why people work.

## **6. Do things together**

Baking a cake, planting a vegie garden, making a website – whatever the activity, do it together and use it as an opportunity to compliment your child on their skills. Keep it simple: 'You're very organised when you cook, I see: turning on the oven, preparing the tin, assembling all the ingredients before you start'. Wait for a response. In time, you can begin to underscore these skills and link them to the workforce, for example, 'Plumbers need to be organised, otherwise they miss out on making money because they're too slow and people don't refer them on'. These conversations highlight the importance of recognising one's own skills and how such skills are valued in the workplace.

## **7. Ask your child what would they choose if they could be or do anything in the whole world**

Your job here is to listen and remember. Maybe later you can use the responses when a career-related discussion arises or a decision needs to be made. 'Would you consider drama as an elective? You said once you wanted to be a famous actor.' Your child may be encouraged by such a statement and open up about the benefits of drama. On the other hand, your child may look at you disdainfully and offer a correction. In any event, there is now an invitation to continue talking about what dreams and aspirations are now current. People are generally happier and more satisfied if they can turn their dreams into reality. You can help your child by showing how that works in practice.

## **8. Make it easy for your child to participate in work experience programs**

This may include formal work experience or other school-organised fieldwork that has a focus on the workforce. Knowing what does not appeal is just as important as knowing what does. Wide experience can open eyes and change views.

## **9. Encourage your child to participate in activities at school or in the community**

Your child could help out at a sports club, join their school fete committee or get involved in the school production. They could even do 'special' jobs around the house such as painting or serious spring cleaning. Such activities count as work and develop work skills, which are invaluable to learn and practice. It demonstrates to your child that work can be routine, fun and dull on occasions, preparing them for thinking about and making career decisions.

## **10. If your child is ready, encourage them to seek a part-time job**

Help them to write their resume, be there when they deliver resumes in person, and support your child if they don't get the job. When they do, there are forms to fill out, tax file numbers to obtain, bank accounts to set up and superannuation choices to make. Knowing how to do these things is invaluable and can change a

person's view of themselves. Once at work there will be highs and lows, perhaps shift work, conflict, and customer issues to deal with. Again, these experiences can and do influence career decisions.

## **USEFUL WEBSITES**

### **Victorian Tertiary Admission Centre**

<http://www.vtac.edu.au/>

### **Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority**

<http://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/>

**MyFuture:** An interactive, online career exploration service for 16 to 24-year-old students wishing to explore their career options. Helps you see job possibilities, identify your own interests and skill areas, and set career goals and plans to achieve them.

<https://myfuture.edu.au/>

**Apprenticeships:** Website is designed to provide quick and easy access to information regarding Australian Apprenticeships.

<http://www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au/>

### **Australia's free online job board**

<https://jobsearch.gov.au/>

**Job Outlook** is a careers and labour market research information site to help you decide on your future career. Use the search options below to find a wealth of information covering around 350 individual occupations.

<http://joboutlook.gov.au/>

**Youth Central** is the Victorian Government's website for young people aged 12-25, filled to overflowing with great information and articles about:

- How to find a job
- Your study options
- Moving out of home
- Getting your driver's license
- Travelling around Australia or overseas
- Managing your money
- Your rights as a young Victorian
- People who are doing interesting things and making stuff happen

<http://www.youthcentral.vic.gov.au/>

Find out more about life in the **Australian Defence Force** or about Army, Navy and Air Force careers.

<http://www.defencejobs.gov.au/>

**MY Skills** contains training information and the type of skills gained in a training course and links to Registered Training Organisations offering a range of courses.

<http://www.myskills.gov.au/>

Lists **universities** across Australia as well as the type of degree programs and degree course design that each university offers. Some universities specialise in certain areas of study and only some courses are offered at particular universities.

<https://www.qilt.edu.au/>