

TALKING WITH YOUR CHILD ABOUT THE FUTURE



14 TIPS FOR PARENTS

When it comes to choosing a career, believe it or not, most teens really do listen to their parents! Yet it's confusing for teens to consider career choices. They're surrounded by often-conflicting messages from advertising, the media, educators and friends.

Here are some things you can do to provide good advice:

- 1. Debunk the stereotypes.** Remind all young people that most men and women will work for pay most of their lives. Every individual needs to be prepared to support himself or herself. Nontraditional occupations provide more income for women and often a healthier, more flexible and satisfying lifestyle for men.
- 2. Actively seek services in your community that are provided by a nontraditional worker.** If at all possible, consider services from a computer technician or carpenter who's a woman or a social worker or nurse who is a man.



- 3. Identify family members who have or had skills that relate to nontraditional occupations.** Share family history and traits. Many family members have or had aptitudes that adapt to today's challenging and skilled workplace: farming/earth science, housekeeping/management, cooking/processing, sales/communication and so on.
- 4. Teach young people to watch TV, movies and commercials and read advertisements with a critical eye.** Discuss what you've seen together. Look for strong, smart capable men and women who are not limited to traditional roles.
- 5. Use the media to start a discussion about body image.** Consider how girls and women, boys and men are portrayed in the media. Are heavier girls shown as unpopular? Are caring, tender males shown as "wimps"? Do they go out on dates? Are they used as comic relief?

WHAT IS A NONTRADITIONAL OCCUPATION?

The term "nontraditional occupation" is used to describe any occupation in which women or men comprise 25 percent of total employment or less, according to the Women in Apprenticeship and Nontraditional Occupations Act of 1992. The definition also appears in the Carl D. Perkins Act.

Data from the U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics indicate that women in nontraditional jobs typically earn 20 percent to 30 percent more than women in traditional occupations, which translates to 150 percent more over a lifetime of work. Examples of nontraditional occupations for women include engineer, pilot, firefighter, auto mechanic, computer repair technician, law enforcement officer, carpenter, truck driver and more!

Some nontraditional occupations for males often provide increased job satisfaction. Nursing and teaching are high-demand, high-skill and high-paying occupations that are nontraditional for men.

Are young people with “perfect” figures and physiques only shown as sex symbols? Do they seem smart and skilled?

6. Give girls more opportunities to be leaders.

Let them choose the activity, make the rules, settle a dispute. A girl who has learned to lead is better prepared to take charge of her own education, training and career.

7. Give boys more opportunities to be mediators, artistic, caring and supportive.

Let them resolve disagreements, include girls in discussions and appreciate their environment. A boy who can negotiate and consider others will be better able to parent and lead.

8. Encourage young people to experience science, math and technology.

All young people are ready, willing and eager to explore but often they haven’t had enough exposure or encouragement. For example, even very young girls can put objects in water to see if they float or sink, attempt simple household fix-it activities and understand how machinery works. And boys can do household chores, redesign a home office and care for someone in need or a pet.

9. Help young people get beyond “yuck.”

Insist calmly that girls catch an annoying bug, unplug a drain and get their hands dirty putting oil in a car. Boys can help change a diaper or clean a toilet. This is all part of discovering the world around them.

10. Praise young men and women for their skills and successes, not only for their appearances or popularity. Say “You did a terrific job,” not “You looked cool or attractive today.”

11. Support your teen’s exploration of new areas of study and interests. This, after all, is what education is all about!

12. Affirm what you know to be areas of skill and ability your teen has consistently demonstrated. Sometimes students overlook these and need to be reminded.

13. Talk with your teens about the courses and activities they are enjoying and how well they are doing. Students discover new things about themselves throughout college or other postsecondary educational experiences. Your willingness to listen and be a sounding board will keep you in the loop.

14. Don’t deter your son or daughter if he or she is excited about majoring in something like drafting, consumer science, computer-aided design, health care, mathematics, music or art, etc. These can be excellent choices, particularly if they are a good match for a student’s interests and skills. ■

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FIVE WAYS TO GET YOUR CHILD TO TALK

1
Make an appointment.
What days and times can we get together to talk? Where can we go that we’d enjoy? What can we do to learn about careers together? (Career fairs, Take Your Child to Work Day, Job Shadow Day, etc.)

2
Discuss interests and strengths.
What things do you do well? What do you like to do? What’s important to you? What have you done that makes you feel good? What are some things you might like to do differently?

3
Ask how your child sees the future.
What will your life look like in the future? What will you be doing two years/four years/six years from now? What are you doing now to get where you want to go? What do you need to do?

4
Share your personal career journey.
Here’s how I got where I am today. This is why I did it. Here’s what I’d like to do over. This is what I do on my job. This is what I like/dislike about my job. These are my mistakes/successes.

5
Identify any nontraditional fields your child may want to explore.
Your son or daughter may not have tried, or even seriously considered, everything he or she might like to do. Help your child identify and think about nontraditional areas to explore.