

The role of parents in their child's career choices - Careers

Ensuring your children are set up for a successful career, future financial security and a good quality of life is a pressing challenge for every parent. As parents, your children will look to you for advice and guidance even if they don't like to admit it!

Parents have a key role to play in the decision-making and the general career path your children choose to pursue; but how involved should you be in this decision-making process? Should you adopt a hands-on role? What is the best advice you can give your child at this point?

Parents have adopted beliefs about success, how to be successful and what constitutes a 'good job' or 'ideal life'. Anything we feed back to our children is based on these beliefs and our own experiences. Many of us make the mistake of trying to shield our children from the mistakes that we made - whether knowingly or unknowingly. While we can guide them away from some of the pitfalls we encountered, they'll inevitably make mistakes and hiccups along the journey – but these hiccups are vital for their personal growth.

The best thing you can instil is a mature and sensible mind-set, giving your children the tools to make their own informed decisions.

How you can influence your child:

- Having a strong, mature parent-child relationship
- Set a good example (socially, personally and professionally) for your child
- The attitudes, views and values you adopt and express
- The expectations you set for your children's education, career and life
- The opportunities you provide for your children to learn and develop.

In terms of career choice, you should:

- Aid, but not dictate, the decision-making process
- Support your child's decisions
- Give your children freedom and time to discover their skills
- Provide motivation to develop and achieve
- Provide encouragement to pursue interests and ambitions
- Try to instil a responsible attitude and mature outlook
- Instil an attitude of self-belief by being positive and never critical – as a parent your words will have the biggest effect on your child.

What should you bear in mind when helping your child with education choices?

The decisions we make in our early life (e.g. what school we go to, the subjects we chose to study, the decision to go to university/college, the courses we choose) can impact our career path. If this decision is heavily swayed by parental preference, the child may end up following a vocation that, deep down, they aren't interested in. At the same time, without practical guidance and support when pursuing interests, poor choices can be made.

Everyone has a unique set of skills and aptitudes. Each child is individual in their own way, and so may possess different skills and abilities to their parents. With this in mind, adopting a similar career role to either parent may not be the right course of action.

We all take time to 'find our feet'. Parents will often say things such as "pick a course you think you'll like" or "why don't you apply for this job". Though it may seem they're doing the right thing in terms of steering their children in the right direction, parents also need to understand that we all need space and time to discover what we truly want to pursue. University, for example, isn't for everyone – and engaging in relevant work experience and/or undertaking an apprenticeship can be just as valuable in finding a suitable vocation in which you can thrive.

The trick here is to educate children that life is about self-discovery and new skills and talents are developed. How many of us are in careers we thought we would be in when we were 18? We can only make decisions based on what we know about ourselves at the time, take the pressure off of them by letting them know it's okay that they aren't sure what they want to do yet but the important thing is to be proactive in finding their way.