

### Teen's First Job

A teen's first job is a right of passage. It provides the teen the ability to earn money independently and teaches them new meanings for responsibility. The first job also enlightens the teen to the responsibilities of the parents and for many, makes them appreciative not only of their parents, but of the value of money.

However, having that first job and getting that job are two different stories.

Many kids begin to take on job –like responsibilities as pre-teens. They may cut the grass, help in the care of a younger sibling, do extra chores or volunteer through a church or community group. These teens tend to have an easier time getting their first job. Their resume began before adolescence and they are used to doing something for others.

Other teens however may not have prior experiences on which to draw or build from. They may never have helped out within the family or community. They are not used to this sense of responsibility or commitment to someone or something beyond themselves. Their actions and activities have been more solitary, or only with peers or only self-directed. These teens tend to be less equipped to enter the workforce and may require additional support.

Teens who require more support often need both emotional and instrumental support. Emotional support is provided in the way of encouragement and education. Education is directed to teaching about the process of job hunting, resume writing and interview skills. Encouragement is directed towards supporting the teen through the job search stages and in particular, handling rejection. Instrumental support is provided by actually going with the teen to potential job sites where they then hand in their resume and request job interviews. Teens with absolutely no experience of helping others or being of service will likely feel awkward, shy and embarrassed and even with coaching, may seek to withdraw from the job hunt.

Parents are advised to remain patient and supportive with their teen during their job search, yet maintain an expectation of perseverance and success. While the teen will be focused on the end product of their endeavour, getting the job, some of the best experience is actually a by-product of the job hunt itself. It is through the process of looking for the job that the teen learns how to prepare themselves and present themselves. These are life-lessons that equip the teen for vocational participation in latter life. The teen will likely not appreciate these life-lessons at this age, so parents are cautioned about lecturing on this when the teen may be bemoaning they are getting nothing out of the job hunt experience. Rather, parents must still remain patient and supportive. This is where encouragement and maintaining expectations comes into play. Do not let a teen's discouragement cause them to quit. Quitting undermines future efforts as additional efforts will be viewed as useless. Support and encouragement and even problem solving offers the teen help and strategies to continue their efforts. It may be that a review of efforts can give clues as to different strategies.

Eventually almost all teens land a first job. When they do, they experience a sense of satisfaction, both for the achievement and the sense of autonomy earning one's own money brings. The first job is a milestone towards developing vocational skills necessary for independent life post graduation.

Help your teen achieve that first job, then stand back and watch them grow.

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Gary Direnfeld is a social worker. Courts in Ontario, Canada, consider him an expert on child development, parent-child relations, marital and family therapy, custody and access recommendations, social work and an expert for the purpose of giving a critique on a Section 112 (social work) report. Call him for your next conference and for expert opinion on family matters. Services include counselling, mediation, assessment, assessment critiques and workshops.