



Parents as Career Educators

Top 10 Ways to Help

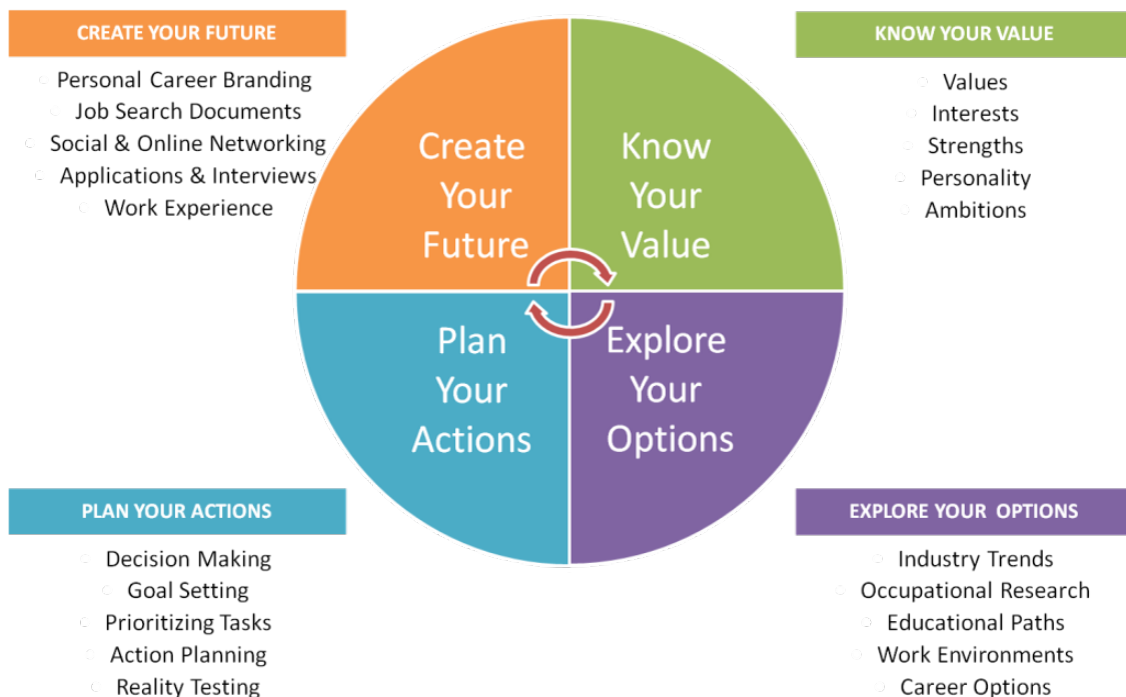
Summary of presentation delivered on July 25th, 2019 by Lila Pulsford, PMCDANZ

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What is Career Development?

Career Development Model



Often people come in to a career development session hoping to plan their actions while not having yet explored who they are – what they value, which skills they enjoy using, or, without having done some initial exploration of possible options. So, depending on where the client is at, a career development session may include any of these elements. Career development can be quite philosophical – who am I? What kind of impact do I want to have on the world? Do I want to have an impact? What do I want to do with my life? Equally, career development can cover totally practical, concrete issues like how to find labour market information or how to market skills through a CV or LinkedIn profile.

What are Career Development Competencies?

In 2016, Careers New Zealand published the *Career Development Benchmarks (Secondary)*. The central focus of the benchmarks is the acquisition of student career management competencies. It describes the career management competencies students need to develop during their years of education to successfully manage their transitions. “Career management competencies have the potential to be a transformative “core service” in career education. They can reinvigorate the direction of schools and sharpen the focus for the New Zealand Curriculum principles and vision of young people becoming confident, connected, actively involved, lifelong learners.”

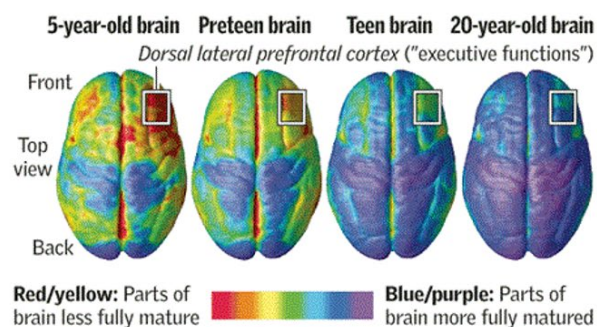
Spiller, L., & Vaughan, K., ‘Learning to Fly: Career management competencies in the school subject classroom’, July 2012.

To access the full document, visit: <https://www.careers.govt.nz/assets/Benchmarks/Career-Development-Benchmarks-Secondary.pdf>



Adolescent Brain Development

The part of the brain that controls 'executive functions' – including weighing long term consequences and controlling impulses – is among the last to fully mature.



The parts of the adolescent brain which develop first are those which control emotion – it's sometimes called the limbic system. So, during the ages of 11-18 (and that's different for everyone – those are generalised, not precise numbers), the limbic system dominates, and this part of the brain is associated with intense emotions and thrill seeking – think of it as an accelerator pressed flat to the floor. The brake stopping the accelerator is the pre-frontal cortex, but the problem is, the pre-frontal cortex does not fully develop until the age of 25, and that's the part of our brain that controls our thoughts and behaviours. The pre-frontal cortex gives us the ability to plan ahead and make decisions and to understand consequences. That means, that many 15-17 year olds find it really challenging to come up with concrete plans. This can have noticeable effects on adolescent behaviour. Behaviour like a preference for high excitement and low effort activities / poor planning and judgement / more risky, impulsive behaviours.

What does this mean for us as parents worrying about our teen's career decisions? I think it means that we need to ease off on the pressure and instead look for quiet, concrete ways in which we can enhance their career prospects. Because here's the thing: Parents have the biggest influence on a child's career choice. You are their #1 influencer – the job you do, the views and opinions you hold, the offhand comments you make about the types of jobs other people do – all those things you say and do are shaping the views and opinions your child holds.

Top 10 Ways Parents can Assist

1. Notice and name your teen's skills

Is your teenager really good with people? Mention that they have strong social skills. People skills, by the way, are something that employers are constantly crying out for – people skills, interpersonal skills. Are they avid readers? Mention how people who read a lot have strong critical thinking skills. Is your teen great at Fortnite? Mention that the game is developing their problem solving skills, and potentially, their coding skills. Try and get in the habit of noticing and naming what they have natural skill and ability in. That's who they are and that's what they need to know about themselves.

2. Grow your own network of contacts

Grow your own network of contacts and then introduce your kids to interesting people. This one will be useful both now as they are deciding what to do after secondary school and later as they are looking for work in their chosen field. We have a great resource we give to students who want to contact people – it includes a sample email and 10 or so great questions they can ask to get relevant career information.

3. Find neutral sources of information

The ability to locate information is another really important career development skill. Now, remember that you are not neutral. If they want to do a career which you suspect will be low paid or if you think their chances of finding work in that field will be too difficult, instead of telling them they're wrong to want it, you know you don't want to be a dream killer as a parent, show them neutral sources of information on income levels and labour market statistics. Three websites with great labour market information relevant to NZ are:

<https://skillshortages.immigration.govt.nz/assets/uploads/long-term-skill-shortage-list.pdf>

<https://www.careers.govt.nz/jobs-database/>

<https://occupationoutlook.mbie.govt.nz>

Top 10 Ways Parents can Assist

4. Listen quietly

Listen quietly, patiently and uncritically. Just listen with your full self. Restrain yourself from offering opinions / advice / solutions. Remember that your needs and your unfulfilled dreams are perhaps very different to your child's needs and dreams. As you listen, encourage them to tell you: What do they think are their strengths? What things do they find challenging? Who would they most like to be like? Do they like themselves?

5. Believe in 'possible selves'

If you believe in their possible selves, they will begin to believe in all of the different possible versions of themselves. We get all this pressure to be our 'best selves' to live our 'best lives' to 'never settle'. Remember that neither you nor your children are static – you can play out different versions of yourself throughout your life. There is no single best version of you – there's many – and you can find equal amounts of happiness and satisfaction within any of those versions.

6. Critically examine your definition of success

A recent article by a Pulitzer Prize winning journalist in *The New York Times Magazine* talked about a class reunion of Harvard Business School MBA graduates. The writer, a Harvard MBA graduate himself, describes how the majority of his former classmates had developed a 'lingering sense of professional disappointment' and a sense of their work being meaningless, despite having high status, six figure salary jobs. He started doing more research into professionals doing law and medicine and found that their job satisfaction levels were also dropping. Research shows that once you can provide financially for yourself and your family, additional salary and benefits don't reliably contribute to worker satisfaction. Much more important are things like whether a job allows you to be in control of your own time, whether you work alongside others whom you respect and whether you feel your job is meaningful.

Top 10 Ways Parents can Assist

7. Encourage curiosity by being curious about people, issues, events

Encourage them to talk to people, to try new things out. Lead by example. Encourage them to do some voluntary work – there is a great website called www.volunteeringauckland.org.nz that lists both short and long term voluntary opportunities. Encourage them to get a part time job. Working part time will grow their employability and working in customer service for a while will definitely make them curious about other career options. If they do go to university, encourage them to take advantage of the career centre there – they are staffed by great people and they organise a range of fantastic events. If you're talking to people, if you're trying new things out, if you are constantly learning you will be developing your career skills and if you are doing all of those things – that is going to be a life well-lived. For sure.

8. Take action

Action is the antidote to not knowing what you want to do with your life. Very few people have this searing moment of clarity where they just instantly know what they're supposed to do with their lives; instead people discover what they like and what they are interested in by trying lots of different things.

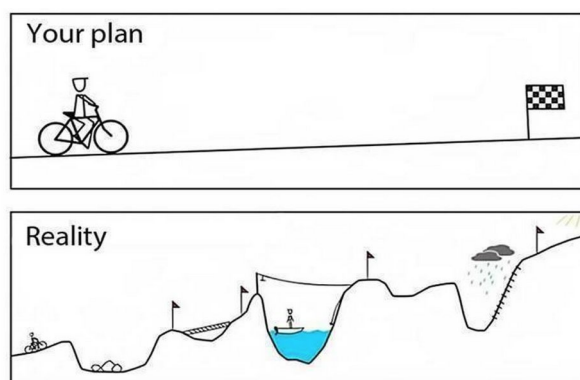
9. Value emotional intelligence

Remember that you cannot choose well if you only base your decision on rational thought. Like it or not, we are emotional. Human beings base their decision making on emotion. By all means, get the facts, know the numbers, know the labour market, know the salary expectations, but don't discount how you *feel* about it.

Top 10 Ways Parents can Assist

10. Embrace uncertainty

As a society, we seem to be nervous about uncertainty. A lot of us like to know what the plan is, and like to feel secure that we know what's coming our way, and that is not always helpful when it comes to career development. There are two career development theories that address this - one is called the Chaos Theory of Careers and the other is called Happenstance Learning Theory. Both of these theories talk about how a really important career skill is to learn how to capitalise on chance events and how to realise that the chance of something good happening is just as likely, if not more likely, than something not so good. Have conversations with your teens about things in your life that were lucky, things in your life that seemed to be chance events that led you to a great opportunity, times in your life when you were presented with an unexpected opportunity and ran with it – help them to see that all plans need to be flexible. And to welcome unexpected positives. An inflexible plan can easily lead to disappointment whereas, a flexible plan leaves room for unexpected positives. A famous career theorist once said: “Know what you want, but don't be 100% sure.”



Bonus Tip: Like our Facebook page: ‘EGGS Career Education’

Our posts tell you about countless opportunities ; recent posts included Engineering experience days at UoA, links to videos on what it's like to study in the USA, coding events for girls, part time job opportunities, endless cool stuff.

Appendix I: Conduct an Informational Interview

Finding information from people doing the job you are interested in is a great idea. Informational Interviews allow you to meet people, learn useful information and leave a great impression.

General Guidelines

1. Assume most people will be willing to talk with you if you are genuinely enthusiastic and interested in them and their point of view.
2. Be sure they understand you are looking for advice and information, **not a job**.
3. Ask for advice on your career plan and skill requirements.
4. Prepare well by researching the company.
5. If you requested 15 minutes, do not overstay your welcome.
6. Ask for a business card.
7. Write them a thank you email.
8. Maintain contact by requesting to connect with them on LinkedIn.

Email Script

Hi [insert their full name],

My name is [insert your full name]. I'm a senior student at Epsom Girls Grammar School and I am trying to decide on various career options. I am interested in [enter area of work they do], and was wondering if you have a spare 15 minutes to have a chat? I would love to hear about your journey as a [enter occupation], and any advice you may have regarding [enter occupation].

If you have some time in the next couple of weeks I'd love to speak with you over the phone, via email, or in person at your workplace - hope to hear from you.

Kind regards,

Your Name

Possible Questions You Could Ask

- How did you get into this field? Why did you choose it?
- Tell me about some specific projects you've worked on recently.
- What skills and abilities have you found the most useful?
- How did you prepare yourself for this kind of work? What preparation would you suggest for someone who wants to do the same?
- What would be your top piece of advice you might give someone who is interested in working in this type of role?
- Do you know of other people doing similar work? Would it be okay if I use your name when I contact them?
- Tell me about the positive and negative aspects of this career/business.
- If you could do it all over again, would you choose the same career? Why?
- Do you feel this job gives you [insert your top 5 non-negotiable values]?

Contact Information

Please never hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions. Our contact details are:

Philippa Leask, Head of Careers

pleask@eggs.school.nz

Lila Pulsford, Career Practitioner

lpulsford@eggs.school.nz

If your teen is interested in seeing a private career practitioner, we would recommend they search for a practitioner on the [Career Development Association of NZ website](#).

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