

# Career paths for your kids

## TOP TIPS

- Allow your children their own dreams and aspirations — they will achieve and succeed best with these
- Put in the time to help them research options — they have many more to check out than you did
- Let them know their strengths and talents — it helps them understand their capabilities and make better choices
- Learn how to have good career conversations — they do want to talk to you.

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It was a life-changing accident. Careers consultant Heather Carpenter was harvesting grapes two years ago on her Hastings vineyard when a tractor hit her in the side, breaking her femur.

With limited movement for three months, she began thinking about the many anxious parents she encountered, wondering how best to guide their children when making career decisions.

"I wanted to let parents know there is a way to help their kids," she said. "Before I knew it, I had three chapters."

The author of the book *The Career Maze — Guiding Your Children Towards a Successful Future*, Carpenter has 20 years of career counselling experience, plus a PhD in career research.

Faced with a multitude of choices, younger people doubt their intuition and need help "joining the dots" between themselves and career possibilities.

Although school career counsellors can help, it's a huge job finding the right career path for every child they see. And besides, research shows that parents, not schools, are the biggest influence on children's career choices.

"They want to talk to people they trust," she said. "A marketing brochure just won't do."

Carpenter said self belief is key when deciding on a career, and parents can start developing children's confidence early by encouraging them to pursue their strengths at school.

For a time, commerce degrees and

IT related courses were all the rage, and many parents blindly encouraged their children to pursue those paths because they saw a future in them.

"But it's only a great future if it suits the child," she said.

"It's really important that you put the personal dream of your child ahead of your own."

Young people can be prone to changing their minds about future careers.

Rather than getting frustrated, the key is to listen, talk it through, and if there's one or two things they're interested in, find out more information about the job or check out the workplace.

"It's about joining the dots between them and their career possibilities," Carpenter said.

Making the right career choice the first time kicks off "the success cycle", leading to enjoyable training and a fulfilling job.

Not all children are so lucky, however. Some will enter the workforce and, in their mid-twenties, realise they've made the wrong decision, which will lead to a loss of confidence and motivation and high job turnover.

The parents' job then, Carpenter said, is to support children while they regain their confidence and work out where they can put their skills to use.

"Believing in your children and conveying faith in them is important to get them going in the right direction again."

■ *The Career Maze — Guiding Your Children Towards a Successful Future*, by Heather Carpenter, New Holland Publishers, \$24.99, is out now.



**FORTUITOUS:** It was an accident on her Hastings vineyard that lead career consultant Heather Carpenter to write a book about how parents can help their children make the right career choice — the first time. "I wanted to let parents know there is a way to help their kids."

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