

# Parents Can Have a Big Influence On Their Kid's Career Choice But That's Not Always a Good Thing

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A recent survey found that 40 percent of people felt pressured to follow their parents' career advice, while 2 out of 3 parents said they were disappointed their children didn't pursue their desired career. Here's how to set a foundation for healthy career influence.

By Bridget Shirvell October 20, 2021



Credit: Getty Images.

Loud tapping breaks up the otherwise quiet morning. My toddler is standing on a chair she pulled over to the kitchen counter, pretending to tap on an imaginary computer while occasionally scribbling on a piece of paper. She's play-acting, being at work, while I attempt to cram in a few emails.

Chances are, like me, you've looked at your child and dreamed of all the careers they could grow up to have. Maybe the child that loves the moon will be an astrologer, the one that loves to help bake a pastry chef. The possibilities when our kids are small seem endless, but while it's fun to consider our kids' career options, it's essential to be mindful of just how much influence we as parents and caregivers have on their dreams.

According to a [recent survey by Joblist](#), 1 in 10 Gen-zers said their parents started to influence their career paths when they were 5 years old or younger. Forty-eight percent of people surveyed felt that their parents strongly influenced their career path, while almost 40 percent felt pressured to follow their parents' career advice.

While some influence over kids' careers comes intentionally and directly, a lot of it comes inadvertently, even unconsciously, says Daniele Clarke, a registered psychologist and founder of [Superpower Kids](#), a program teaching children about values.

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"Since parents generally live with the child during the formative years, they tend to exert a relatively strong influence on how their children make career decisions," says Clarke. "While most parents report having little to no influence on their children's careers, research shows that children have a different perception stating that their parents played a significant role in their career choices."

It's true: parental interest in everything from schoolwork and educational achievements to our child's aspirations [can affect their career choices](#).

There are many ways parental influence on career choices can be beneficial. We often know our kids' interests and can help them associate those loves with careers they're well-suited for early on. And according to Clarke, parents' financial and socio-emotional support for a particular career path may boost the child's self-esteem and career self-efficacy. But there are drawbacks to our influence. "The danger is that children may aspire to a career that follows their parents' norms and values without developing their own sense of self," says Clarke.

## **How Parents Can Support Their Child's Career Aspirations**

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Almost 2 in 3 parents, according to the survey, said they were disappointed that their child did not follow their desired career. So how do we balance our wishes and dreams with that of our kids'?

### **Reflect on yourself**

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Before discussing career choices with a child, Clarke says parents should take the time to think about their own expectations, unfulfilled childhood desires, and what influenced their own career choices. That can help parents steer clear of pushing their kid in a certain

direction.

## **Provide exposure**

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If possible, expose your children to a wide range of activities starting at a young age so they can experience various things and develop a range of skills. "If these skills that the child develops are to their liking and they want to continue experimenting, it is essential to give it continuity since they may choose a career related to what they do and like," says clinical psychologist [Aura Priscel](#).

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## **Lend your ear**

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Listen to your children about the things they like and what they don't and avoid being judgmental. Remember, it's not uncommon for a child's ambitions to change as they grow, but it's important to be supportive as they explore new likes and dislikes.

## **Give your opinion**

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Parents should talk with their kids about career options and feel comfortable giving their opinion, says Priscel. Issues can arise though when parents begin forcing their opinion. "If the child chooses a career that the parents do not like, they have to respect that decision. They can give their opinion, but not to the point that their opinion is the best option," explains Priscel.

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## **Don't forget to have fun**

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Make the process fun, do not add pressure, and motivate the child's curiosity.

"They have to be happy, and they have to be suited for it," Klaus Di Giovanna, [a fifth-generation winemaker](#), told me recently when I asked if he thought his daughters would go into the family business. That's an admirable goal for any parent to have for their kids' career choices.

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