

LIFE TIME

Today's working adolescent

• By Ted G. Futris, Assistant Professor and Extension State Specialist, Human Development and Family Science, The Ohio State University

Adolescence is a period of transitioning from the carefree world of childhood into the adult world of responsibility. During this time, adolescents are developing their own identity and striving for achievement as well as for social, emotional and financial autonomy. Being employed during this time seeks to accomplish all of these goals.

Nearly half of all teens enter the work force around the age of 12, and before graduating high school nearly 80 percent hold at least a part-time job. Research shows that working during high school may have positive and negative effects. The many benefits for teens include: increased financial independence; learning how to effectively manage finances and time; obtaining valuable work experience and forming good work habits; and gaining useful, marketable skills.

The negative consequences of teen employment are mostly related to school performance and family relations. For example, working students may be more prone to cheating, copying assignments, or cutting classes to compensate for time spent with job commitments rather than school assignments. Fatigue or lack of preparation for the day's academic activities also may discourage the working teen from going to school, and a job may take the place of extracurricular activities. Also, students who work more than 20 hours a week earn lower grades in school than those who work 10 hours a week or less. Employment also has an impact on relationships within the family. For instance, less time is spent with parents and siblings, and more conflict with parents over spending decisions is likely to occur.

Importantly, research shows that the effects of employment are linked to how often and how long a student works, not whether a student works. The more teens work, the more prone they are to experience negative effects. Other factors that affect how students handle employment and school life include the intensity and difficulty of the work done.

How can parents help and support your working adolescents? Talk to your teens about why they want to work and explain the responsibilities associated with having a job while in high school. Come to a consensus about how you expect your teens to use their income. Create a daily or weekly schedule with your teens that highlights the time they spend working, the time they spend on homework and other school-related activities, and most importantly, the time they spend with family.

Lifeworks t o d a y

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From the Experts

Home environment can be affected by work environment

Are you challenged at work? Research has shown that jobs that provide employees opportunities to exercise autonomy and handle complex tasks with minimal supervision tend to socialize those employees in ways that can be generalized to life off the job.

For example, occupational self-direction and complexity are related to the extent to which parents create positive (e.g., stimulating, emotionally supportive, safe, nurturing, flexible) home environments for their children, and this has positive consequences for children (e.g., fewer behavior problems, enhanced school performance).

So, how does the type of work you do influence your parenting behavior at home?

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Understand generation gaps at work

By Joyce Fitro, Family and Consumer Sciences Agent for Ohio State University Extension, Delaware County, and Ann Clutter, FCS District Specialist for OSU Extension, Southwest District

Today's workplace is challenged with conflicting voices and views of the most diverse workforce this country has known since the Industrial Revolution. The four generations occupying today's workplace are clearly set apart by their early life experiences, the events that defined their times, the music they listened to, their heroes, and their early days in the workplace:

- The senior generation, referred to as the Veterans, are 61 years or older. As youth they experienced the Depression and continue to value hard work, personal sacrifice and civic responsibility. They respect authority and recognize administrators as the ultimate decision-makers. They take pride in doing a good job.

- Baby Boomers, ages 41 to 61, found early identification with Beaver Cleaver's television family. They witnessed the beginnings of the civil rights movement, experienced the assassination of John Kennedy, and watched as humans took first steps on the moon. As employees, they are driven to achieve and love the energy and support of team players at work.

- Born between 1965 and 1979, Generation X brings self reliance and competence but also skepticism to the workplace. Frequently described as free spirits, their first allegiance may be self, and personal priorities can overshadow responsibilities to a career. Generation X'ers don't generally seek relationships

with work colleagues and view authority as unimpressive.

- The Nexters or Generation Y comprises the workforce's youngest employees. The group is sociable, achievement-oriented and tolerant of differences. As team players they are viewed as "good scouts" and seek to fit in, not revolutionize.

These four generations have different viewpoints on work, distinct and preferred ways of managing and being managed, and unique ways of viewing work-world issues such as quality, service and how much time to spend on the job. These differences can result in creativity and strength or become a source of stress and ongoing conflict. Understanding generational differences and being willing to confront and manage them is essential to making them work in favor of one's organization and not against it.

Successful management of the "generational mix" requires some specific strategies. Avoid judging others' perspectives as "wrong." Offer choices to accommodate individuals and ask people about their needs and preferences. Finally, encourage generational conversations among co-workers to help develop appreciation of each other. Whether the workplace is a family business or a large corporation, effective communication can build respect and trust, important components of a productive work team.

Are we modeling good work ethic for our youth?

By Jane E. Keyser, 4-H Youth Development Agent and Chair for Ohio State University Extension in Harrison County

Do you never get to work on time? Do you talk negatively about your workplace at home? If you do, your children might begin to develop an unhealthy attitude toward work.

What is a good work ethic?

Positive attitudes and desirable characteristics make up a good work ethic. We can teach our youth to understand that employers look for workers who are responsible, have a good appearance, are cooperative, are honest and loyal, show initiative, and

accept criticism. Employers prefer not to hire or retain individuals with undesirable characteristics including being careless, being lazy, being a troublemaker, being disloyal, being frequently absent or tardy, not being reliable, and not following directions.

How do we develop a good work ethic?

You can help your children begin to practice a good work ethic by modeling a good work ethic at home. Getting young people involved in youth organizations, clubs and sports is

The Joys of Working

By Shari L. Gallup, Family and Consumer Sciences Agent for Ohio State University Extension, Licking County

For some people, the term "work" connotes an unpleasant experience. But it doesn't have to. By focusing on the joy of working, we can change future generations' attitudes by building positive experiences into what they observe and learn from us.

Here are some methods to consider:

- **Start early.** Teaching children the "joys of working" can't begin at age 16, when they are entering the work force. From the time they are very young, find ways to share the good things that happen at your workplace.

- **Take children to work when possible.** My husband began taking our children to work at a fairly early age, and now it is a privilege to work with dad. According to Jane Brooks, author of *The Process of Parenting*, "Working together brings a special closeness not achieved in other activities."

- **Anticipate mistakes.** Cracking 25 dozen eggs will, without doubt, mean that someone will have to strain out eggshells. Consider it a joy, knowing that you are planting the seed of having positive work experiences.

- **Take advantage of teachable moments.** Each day is so important. Share your insight when children are having their "aha" moments.

Source: *The Process of Parenting, 5th ed.*, by Jane Brooks, Mountain View, Calif., Mayfield Publishing Company, 1999.

another way to teach good work ethic. By being involved in these types of activities, young people are learning to be responsible, to work together with others, to set goals and work to achieve those goals, to follow directions and much more.

By modeling a good work ethic and by teaching your children about desirable characteristics in the work place, you'll help give a new generation of workers a head start on breaking into the world of work.