

A Message for Parents & Guardians

on how to help your teen get a job!

Dear Guardian or Parent,

We often get messages from parents and other adults who want to help their teen(s) be successful in the search for their first job. The Environmental Education team has hired hundreds of teens over the years, and we have compiled a few tips to help you help your teen through the process.

1. LET YOUR TEEN DO THE WORK. Many parents try to help their teen by doing the work for them. Parents call us, email us, and even turn in applications. A parent's urge is to minimize frustration, improve turn-around time, and make the process feel easier. This is an incredible opportunity, however, for your teen to learn what is needed to apply for a job. From our perspective as employers, we want to hire teens who show initiative by calling, emailing and turning in their own application. Parents who do the work are actually hurting the teen's chances, because we miss out on seeing the evidence of the teen's initiative.

2. IT'S OKAY TO CRINGE. Teens say and do awkward things. For many of them, this will be their very first job application. They have anxiety about calling. They ask questions in an unprofessional way. Their essay questions might seem off. The resume might need polishing. We understand that they are a work in progress, but we still want them to do the work. Create a safe space where your teen feels comfortable showing you their progress or asking for input, and notice their progress instead of offering unsolicited advice.

3. ALLOW THEM THE SPACE AND FREEDOM TO MAKE MISTAKES. It's alright if they don't get it right the first time. The focus should be on learning, growth, and healthy risk taking-- not perfection. If they do ask for advice, share your wisdom! If they don't ask for advice, give them the space to figure it out on their own.

4. ENCOURAGE RESILIENCE. Our jobs are competitive. Not every applicant will be hired (but a reminder-- we are not looking for perfection in our applicants.) If your teen does not get hired, help them have perspective. Rejection is a normal part of the job-seeking experience at any age. Normalize it! Tell a story about a time when you didn't get a job that you wanted. Encourage them to politely ask for feedback (we often have some.) Brainstorm ways that they could improve their chances (volunteering, letters of recommendation, interview practice, YouTube videos on how to nail an interview...)

5. TRY AGAIN! We often hire people the 2nd or 3rd time that they apply as it shows perseverance-- something we need in each employee. A teen learns something new each time they apply. Encourage them to try again next year or to go for a different type of position.

As a fellow parent, I can see how stepping in to make a child's project or a teen's application more "readable, logical, organized, (insert your own adjective)" might feel better in the present. In the long run, however, we all gain skills when we are forced to struggle, learn, and adapt. Good luck to your teen, (and good luck to you as you let go...)

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