

Young People Facing Unemployment

If your son or daughter is unemployed life can be tough. But you are not alone – around one in five young people in the UK are not in work, education or training – making a national total of over a million.

But what can you do to support and guide your son or daughter? What help is out there?

Parents tread a difficult path with teenagers and young adults. You have the benefit of your experiences to share with them, but young people may not want to listen! You might be accused of being out of touch, or of interfering. Nevertheless your support and encouragement is vital. Although you will naturally be very worried about the future, it is also important to remain positive and to help your young person to feel useful and valued.

So, how can you as a parent help?

1. Encourage your young person to establish a routine or daily timetable which includes set patterns, such as regular times for going to bed and getting up. The average teenager needs nine hours sleep in order to function well, and in addition sleeping and waking cycles tend to be later during adolescence. However, sleeping half the day and applying for jobs online during the night is not advisable!

The worry of unemployment can disrupt sleep patterns and sometimes cause insomnia. Regular exercise and a healthy diet all help with this, as does meditation. Mindfulness meditation helps you focus on the present moment, rather than worrying excessively about the future. Check out this site: www.franticworld.com/free-meditations-from-mindfulness.

2. Help them to decide how much time each day will be spent looking for work. Spending all day every day on online applications can be disheartening, and may not be particularly profitable.

3. Consider the unadvertised job market. In the UK a sizeable proportion of jobs are filled by word of mouth or speculative applications. Delivering CVs and a tailored covering letter to local employers can be a good idea.

4. It goes without saying that a good CV is essential. The National Careers Service Site has a helpful section on CVs and interviews: <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/youngpeople/Pages/Article-CVandInterviewSkills.aspx>. Of course it is important to be well-prepared for interviews and You Tube has lots of videos to help with this.

5. Ensure that your young person has sufficient time for fun and enjoyable activities. Colleges, adult education providers, sports centres and leisure activities often have concessionary rates for unemployed young people.

6. Voluntary work offers lots of benefits to anyone who is unemployed. Young people will meet new people and gain the all-important experience and skills that employers are looking for. <http://www.parentalguidance.org.uk/gaining-skills-experience/volunteering-something-to-tantalise-every-teenager>

7. Encourage your youngster to continue their education and learning, as this will greatly improve their future job prospects. As well as your local college, you can also try Learndirect for online courses that can be taken at home or a recognised centre: <http://www.learndirect.co.uk/>

8. Applying for jobs in today's job-market will inevitably lead to rejections. So do try to build up your youngster's self-esteem, focussing on the positive, and reminding them of all their talents.

9. Being unemployed can be a depressing experience. A lack of daily structure with no income and reduced contact with other people can all lead to feelings of futility or lowered self-esteem. If you think your son or daughter may have the symptoms of depression then seek help immediately from your GP. This site is also really helpful: www.youngminds.org.uk

Who can help?

- Find out if there is a Connexions and/or Youth Service in your local area. They can provide guidance and services for unemployed young people.
- The National Careers Service <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/Pages/Home.aspx> provides a telephone helpline for young people aged 13-18 and those aged 19+. For those over 19 (or 18 if you are in receipt of benefits such as Jobseeker's Allowance) it is possible to book a face-to-face appointment with an adviser. This might take place at the Jobcentre Plus office, or at another location such as the local library.
- The Princes Trust offers a range of services for young unemployed people (eligibility criteria may apply). These include a 12-week 'Team' course and support for finding work using Job Ambassadors. www.princes-trust.org.uk