

Guiding Your Teen After High School: College, Career & Purposeful Paths

1. Help Define the Goal

Not every student thrives on a traditional college path — and that’s okay. Your role is to help your teen discover what *motivates* them and what kind of future they can build based on *who they are*, not just what others expect.

- Ask: “What kind of life do you want to live?”
 - Focus on purpose, not just prestige.
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2. Consider Dual Enrollment

Dual enrollment allows high school students to take college-level classes — often for free or reduced cost.

- Saves time and money.
 - Gives early exposure to college-level work.
 - Helps them explore subjects before committing to a major.
 - Read more about options for Ohio students [here](#).
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3. The Degree-Free Paths (from Degree Free Podcast)

There are many ways to a successful career without a traditional degree:

1. **Get a job** using existing skills (retail, customer service, tech support).
2. **Find an internship/apprenticeship** — learn *while* getting paid.
3. **Earn a license/certification** (e.g., notary, tech certifications, DSP, real estate).
4. **Start or buy a small business** (e.g., lawn care, cleaning, e-commerce).
5. **Learn a skill** without a certificate (e.g., coding, video editing, language learning, bike repair).




💡 Encourage your teen to look at what *problems they enjoy solving* — this often leads to the most satisfying work.

4. Working Genius: Discovering Natural Strengths

The **Working Genius assessment** helps students identify:

- Where they feel most *energized* (their “Geniuses”)
- What kind of work *drains* them (their “Frustrations”)

Try this with your teen:

- Have them share their results with 2–3 people (e.g., teacher, coach, mentor).
- Ask: “How might this help you feel more understood at school or in your activities?”
- Discuss how they can use their Geniuses in:
 -  School
 -  Home
 -  Friendships
- Talk through how to manage their Frustrations. For example:
 - “When I know a task involves my frustration area of Wonder, I prep by writing a list first, so my Tenacity doesn’t take over — my Working Genius is Tenacity.”
 - “When I know that Tenacity (one of my frustrations) is needed, I write down my ideas that I want to Wonder about after I have finished the task at hand. Otherwise, I am tempted to ask all of the questions about why we do things this way — my Working Genius is Wonder.”

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💖 5. Doing What You Love (Insights from Paul Graham)

Key Takeaways:

- Society often teaches that *work isn't supposed to be fun* — but that's false.
- Encourage your teen to:
 - Resist chasing money or prestige just for its own sake.
 - Notice what makes them feel fulfilled — even in small ways.
 - Experiment, explore, and reflect.

💬 Ask:

- “When do you feel most alive or creative?”
 - “What projects or problems would you choose to work on, even if no one asked you to?”
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🌟 6. Your Role as a Parent

- Be a **guide**, not a director.
 - Create space for your teen to try, fail, pivot, and reflect.
 - Celebrate effort and progress, not just outcomes.
 - Model curiosity and lifelong learning.
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☀️ 7. Final Thoughts

There is no single “right path.” Your teen’s journey may include:

- A job right out of high school
- A delayed or non-traditional college experience
- Starting a business
- Exploring multiple paths over time

The best path is one they choose with clarity and confidence — and your support makes all the difference.

👤 8. Recommended Resources

- [Degree Free Podcast](#) or [Workbook Set](#)
- [Dual Enrollment for Ohio High School Students](#)
- [Navigating Your Career Journey: A Guide for Teens](#)
- [Ohio's College Credit Plus Program](#)
- [Paul Graham's Essays](#)
- [Working Genius Assessment](#)