



CAREER VISION

Teen Interviews Shed Light on Jobs

A 14-year-old wants to be a Navy SEAL but when asked how one becomes a SEAL, he replied, “I don’t know.” Nor did our young friend have a clue about daily tasks, pay, lifestyle, etc.

Most teenagers’ view of work is very limited. Often they don’t know what their parents do on the job, or if they even like their jobs. Or, teens see work through their summer or part-time jobs—what a grim picture that might be!

Informational interviewing is an effective tool to help children learn about jobs that interest them. Encourage him or her to talk to several people in selected jobs to discover if they are as interesting as your child thinks. Just a visit with a Navy recruiter could really open the eyes of our 14-year-old, for example.

Ideally your teen would “Interview” more than one person in these jobs. The interviews can take as little as 5 minutes or as much as 30 minutes, and can be scheduled or impromptu. For example, a neighbor who works in information technology might drop by your house; if you know your teen’s interested in that field, get them together for a few minutes.

Here are some questions that should elicit candid responses:

- What do you do on the job?
- What do you like about this job?
- What don’t you like about it?
- What kinds of skills, education, and qualifications do you need?
- Do you know someone else I could talk to about this job?

Parents should provide moral support if teens are hesitant in making calls to set up interviews, and debrief afterward by discussing what was learned and the child’s thoughts. Accompany your child to interviews if he or she requests, but don’t force yourself in if your child prefers to go it alone.

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