More Than a Job!

Helping Your Teenagers Find Success and Satisfaction in Their Future Careers

• Richard T. Lapan •
More Than a Job!
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Production Manager • Bonny E. Gaston

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Dedication

To my loving wife and lifelong partner
Sharon Loehr Lapan
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## Part Two

### TEAM! for Success

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Dr. Lapan is a professor and chair of the department of Student Development and Pupil Personnel Services at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. He is a counselor educator and a psychologist committed to transforming the profession of school counseling from an ancillary support service to a comprehensive program central to the academic and social missions of every school. The effectiveness of these efforts was recognized in 2006 when Dr. Lapan won the prestigious Counselor Educator of the Year award from the American School Counselor Association. In 1972, Dr. Lapan received his BA from St. Anselm’s College (majoring in philosophy). He earned his master’s degree in 1974 from Duquesne University (in existential/phenomenological counseling). In 1986, Dr. Lapan graduated with distinction from the University of Utah, receiving a PhD in counseling psychology.

Dr. Lapan has had extensive experience providing counseling services (career, family, individual, group, and residential) to children, adolescents, and adults. From 1975 until 1980, he worked as a master’s-level counselor providing counseling, educational, and residential treatment services for urban, suburban, and rural adolescents. He has worked in several school settings and psychiatric hospitals. After completing his doctorate, Dr. Lapan provided career counseling services to adults who were in the process of making significant career and life changes.

In 2004, Dr. Lapan published *Career Development Across the K–16 Years: Bridging the Present to Satisfying and Successful Futures*. This book synthesizes the research in this field and outlines the integrative contextual model of career development. This resource served as an important foundation for the approach and practices recommended in this current book for parents. Dr. Lapan has published numerous empirical studies on a wide range of career development topics (from the process of compromise adolescents engage in when orienting themselves toward the world of work to the entry of women into nontraditional science-related careers). In 2000, Dr. Lapan received the Distinguished Service Award from the Guidance Division of the Association for Career and Technical Education. His work has consistently emphasized expanding meaningful and satisfying career opportunities for all of our young people.
For more than 25 years, my wife, Sharon, has used her creativity, problem-solving skills, and art talents to help a diverse range of K–12 students fall in love with learning. She has been a source of support and hope for many parents struggling to help their children. In our relationship, I have certainly gained more than I have given. She successfully empowered each of our three daughters to create their own personal and career identities. Many of the ideas presented in this book are better because of Sharon’s insights and contributions. The older I get the more I realize that no one does anything of import by themselves. By reading and using this book, you too will benefit from Sharon’s skills and insights into how we can help adolescents create meaningful, purposeful, and satisfying ways to live in this world.

To write this book, I have drawn from my now 22 years of experience as a Dad. I couldn’t be prouder of my three daughters or love them more. Each treats others well, tries her hardest, and is not afraid to take risks that lead to self-determination and identity development. I have learned much from being their parent and hope that this book captures some of this for other parents.

I have been very fortunate to learn from and work with terrific colleagues. In particular, the following friends have been of enormous help in the development of this book: Dr. Norman Gysbers, University of Missouri-Columbia; Drs. Jay Carey, Carey Dimmit, and Mary Lynn Boscardin, University of Massachusetts Amherst; Karen DeCoster, Massachusetts Department of Education; Dr. David Blustein, Boston College; and Sarah Holden, an enormously talented student soon to graduate from our school counseling master’s program at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. I thank each of you for your help, friendship, and support.
First, The Big Picture

It’s kind of a Catch-22, because at the time you’re finishing high school, you have no idea what you want to do with your life. Yet you’re making the most important decisions about where it’s going.

—Fifth year Michigan State University senior, USA Today

Hope

My middle daughter left home for college this fall. Such an easy sentence to write for an event that has upended my family’s emotional life and laid claim to lots of our money for many years to come. Fortunately, 3 months in she has found her bearings and is both happy and productive.

Beginning around 11th grade, my wife and I noticed a different kind of self-understanding starting to take root inside of our daughter. This became evident in the choices she made about the classes she took, friends she hung out with, and the after school and summer activities she joined in on. Soon thereafter she began to identify college options that would get her closer to these dreams. When I asked her what it was about this direction that was so appealing, she said with great joy: “It’s everything that I like to do all linked together.” This focus required my daughter to fit together and exploit a wide range of her talents, interests, and values. It connected her present to a future she really wants to live. It helped her to experience a new level of satisfaction, purpose, and meaning in her high school coursework and in life outside of school.

Career Identity

One of the most important developmental challenges your children will face is the creation of a career identity that will help them act in the present and move toward the future with a sense of hopefulness, purpose, and direction. Ideally, your teenagers’ decision to pursue a career path will be an expression of a direction in life that means something very important to them. It is an enormous opportunity for creative self-definition, a chance to imbue what they do to make a living with meaning and purpose. Satisfaction with one’s work and satisfaction with one’s life are highly intertwined. A career path that enables your teenagers to create a personally valued adult lifestyle will greatly contribute to their future happiness and well-being. There are defining moments in teenagers’ lives when they take a step toward becoming who they really want to be. This book will help you help your teenager take these steps.

Game Plan

This book is not about your teenagers prematurely deciding on the “right” career choice. This will evolve as they mature. This book is about motivating your adolescents to become actively engaged in exploring career and educational pathways that will increase their success and happiness in the
present and future. The best way to do this is for you to get actively involved and do it with them. You have too much at stake not to take a very active part.

This book will take you through a TEAM! process grounded in the best available research on adolescent development. You will learn which behavioral Targets to focus in on. You will be introduced to real-life Examples of 12th graders, some who have mastered and some still struggling to reach these targets. You will be shown how to Assess your child’s development of these critical behavioral targets. You will be provided activities that you can Mutually do together with your adolescent. And finally, you and your teenager will construct an effective educational and career transition plan!

The activities that you will do will show you and your teenager strategies for using the enormous resources freely available on the Internet. For example, you will search for the right college for your adolescent, find out what it is likely to cost, plan for how your family is going to pay for college, and learn how your child could one day start his or her own business. By the end of this book, both you and your teenager will know how to use freely available online resources for whatever educational and career planning adventures you both may want to undertake. You will practice more effective communication styles, so you can more successfully listen and speak to your teenager about these life-altering decisions. These are truly lifelong skills that will be of great value to your teenager across her or his life span.

This book will take you step by step through a process that will be of great benefit to your teenager. The rewards for doing this are huge. In the years to come, the personal and financial costs to your children and your family for not doing this will continue to skyrocket. Let’s get started!