

FINDING THE RIGHT WORDS FOR JOB SEARCH SUPPORT



Question: How can I help my 24-year-old daughter move on from her low-paying job of nine years? She completed a professional arts program in broadcasting, which she excelled in. She uses endless excuses for not trying to get a job. What do you suggest?

Ann, Branson, Mo.

Ann: It is a fine line between help and intrusion, and the line becomes even finer when it's someone close, like a parent or a partner, trying to help. Without receptivity and readiness on your daughter's part, your well-intentioned messages may as well be broadcast with no volume, as she will block you at every attempt. There may be any number of reasons: fear of failure, lack of confidence about the job search process, comfort with the existing situation, or low self-esteem that are impeding your daughter's movement.

If you are supporting her financially and it is causing you hardship, then you can approach her as a financial partner, which goes beyond motherhood, to clarify boundaries and to set your own limits. In any case, combining the following three approaches will give you the opportunity to open the door to greater understanding between you and your daughter, and may even elicit a favorable response.

Use active listening skills. Avoid the natural tendency to offer advice. It is difficult not to lecture on solutions that seem obvious. To be heard, you must first listen. Demonstrate interest by acknowledging your daughter's point of view, asking questions and responding in a curious but nonjudgmental manner, paraphrasing and demonstrating through your words and your body language that you care. While you certainly don't have to agree with her views, acknowledging that you have heard her perspective will create a trusting environment in which to explore issues more deeply.

Offer resources. Information and [advice on careers](#) and the [job search](#) are readily available. Make your daughter aware of the articles on this site, as well as services available through her college or training program. Also consider any peers or relatives that she may be open to working with. If your daughter is interested in further exploration, you might offer to pay for career counseling with an objective third party.

Manage your own morale. One of the hardest realizations in trying to help another with a career decision is that you don't have control over their actions. You can try your best to provide a supportive environment and to suggest resources, and then you have to move out of the way. When you have a vested interest, it is especially important to take care of yourself, manage your own boundaries and prepare to cope in a positive way with the outcome.