

THE ROLE OF PARENTS IN GUIDANCE PROCESS



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The Role of Parents in the Guidance Process

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Introduction

Parents, or adults who play a preponderant educational role in the lives of children and young people, are 'special people'.

When it comes to thinking about the future and making decisions, children, even if they do not show it, are very attentive to support and opinion of the parents, hoping that they listen to their dreams and ideas, giving great importance to their reactions.

Given the influential role of parents in building their children's life projects, the purpose of this brochure is to provide some suggestions for more consistent and intentional action in their support in this area.

It is essential that parents follow their children's school life by regularly contacting teachers, school tutors, participating in meetings and initiatives promoted by the school, being aware of the resources and services available, namely, the work developed by the psychologist. Collaborating with these professionals helps to boost the necessary support, both at school and in the family.

Terminology used for the purpose of this publication:

The term 'children' is used regardless of gender;

The term 'parents' refers to parents, guardians, and parental custodians;

The terms although used in the masculine refer, indistinctly, to the feminine and masculine.

Parents count a lot!

Parents are central to their children's life story. They are the ones who know best their characteristics, expectations, desires and motivations. They are clearly the best positioned adults to boost young people's projects and watch over their success.

When it comes to the future, young people expect their doubts and hesitations to have their parents' understanding and trust and encourage them to explore the world and experiment ideas and projects. Parents and children share strong emotional bonds, and even if they express their projects hesitantly or poorly, they want to be listened to by their parents and look forward to their reactions.

It is important that parents seek to be involved in an intentional and reflected way in the construction of their children's school and professional life, taking advantage of everyday situations to "make it happen"!

In summary, for the construction of life projects for young people...

- The impact of parents/family is inevitable;
- The role of parents is very important;
- Children value parent involvement;
- Involvement should be intentional and reflected.

Throughout Life

A personal project is built throughout life. The school and/or professional future must be a project under construction, which can be reformulated as opportunities arise and contingencies are overcome. In any case, it is essential to define certain objectives and prepare the way to achieve them, carefully planning each phase.

Today, the world of work is very changeable. Technological advancement and economic globalization are constantly changing, new professions are being created and others are being extinguished. It increases the likelihood of each individual moving through functions and having multiple professions throughout life. People will more than ever be the managers of their career, and this will be increasingly marked by transitions. To address these and other transitions (geographic, cultural, family), parents can help their children:

- know how to plan;
- be autonomous;
- be curious;
- have trust;
- be cooperative.

It is also important to develop adaptability, flexibility, entrepreneurship and the ability to work in teams.

Qualifying, specializing, updating and recycling oneself are watchwords for the 21st century professional pathways. As soon as it is necessary and possible, parents should encourage their children to use the services of the school, or others in the area of guidance that can support them.

In summary, in order to support children, it is necessary to take into account ...

- That a career is built throughout life;
- The labour market is very changeable;
- There are strategies to be promoted;
- Guidance happens throughout life.

Their Life Belongs to Them

As children grow older, it is important to encourage them to make decisions and hold them accountable for them. If, from an early age, this is the practice, children and young people will naturally learn to make their choices and their autonomy will progress. It is essential to ensure that the young person takes the decision, de-dramatising a possible future need for reformulation of projects. The fact is that when we feel are the driving force behind a given action, we will more easily work on overcoming any obstacles that may arise along the way. Autonomy also brings responsibility.

Thus, the active involvement from parents does not mean deciding for their children or conducting their choices. It does mean to be a dynamic element in dialogues and activities that will make children's projects be built on a more solid and conscious basis.

It is necessary to identify and make available good information that allows young people to be aware of the various possibilities for their school or professional pathways, thus being able to consciously choose new alternatives and innovative solutions. Although children can share many of their ideas and ideals with the family, "their life belongs to them".

In summary, in order to support children, it is necessary to take into account that...

- Life belongs to the young person, he is the decision maker;
- Autonomy also brings responsibility;
- Parents are allies and facilitators;
- We must be open to what is less known.

Space for dialogue

Creating a space for dialogue between parents and children is indisputably relevant. The exchange of ideas on themes of everyday life fosters this dialogue and contributes to the strengthening of bonds of trust. When parents listen to their children's dreams, they get a more precise idea of their singularities and what has special meaning for them. However, when listening to their parents' life experiences, children feel that they actually share similar situations, analysing how their parents answer them and drawing valuable conclusions.

Communicating openly about a life project implies that there is no fear of being judged or dominated and facilitates parents' understanding of what their children intend to do in the future. Take advantage of auspicious occasions to approach key aspects, for example if the family saw a remarkable film, why not take advantage of that experience as a subject to discuss. Many family conversations are an opportunity for children to express their concerns and to reveal their interests. These are also privileged moments for the encouragement, sharing and reformulation of ideals.

Throughout life one has to assume different functions and put into action various capacities and knowledge. Prepare your children for these challenges.

PROMOTE PLANNING

Talk to your children about:

How your children look to the future. Promote positive scenarios for the future. Fostering hope is important for children to be interested in preparing for the future.

Dreams and projects for the future. Imagining multiple possibilities is the first step in finding options that will interest them.

PROMOTE AUTONOMY

Talk to your children about:

Quem eles pensam que é responsável pelo futuro. É fundamental fazer sentir aos filhos que acredita que eles são capazes de assumir gradualmente a sua autonomia e responsabilizarem-se pelas suas decisões.

What factors determine how life will go. Destiny? Chance? The general state of the world? Share with your children personal situations or of relatives and friends in which the driving force, determination and personal capacity to exercise control were decisive.

PROMOTE CURIOSITY

Talk to your children about:

How to explore more about who they are, the educational and training opportunities and the different occupations. For the formulation of ideas and possible scenarios for the future, it is essential to be curious and be an explorer about oneself and the world around you.

Who are the people your children most admire. What do they admire in these people? What activities do these people carry out? What did they do to get there? How do these people currently qualify in these areas of activity? What other professional activities are related to them? From your children's interests, stimulate the search for other similar areas of activity.

PROMOTE TRUST

Talk to your children about:

Como eles costumam enfrentar os desafios. Com confiança, ou evitam pôr-se à prova com receio de falhar. Perceba melhor até que ponto os seus filhos desvalorizam as suas capacidades e competências.

From what your children say or do, help them to better understand who they are by looking for their strengths in terms of personality, values, interests, abilities and skills. The construction of your children's life project must bet on their strengths and allow them to express themselves.

PROMOTE COOPERATION

Talk to your children about:

- How they feel when they meet a new group. More and more people are working as a team.
- How your children relate to other people. Do they tend to prefer to be alone? Do they like to feel part of a group?
- How they feel when they are working as a team. At school or in extracurricular activities, how do they face these situations? Do they call upon themselves to do chores or do they let others around them decide? Do they like to participate and play their part in the team? What have they already learned about the best way to work as a team.

In summary, in order to support children in the construction of their projects, one should remember that ...

- Dialogue is essential;
- It is necessary to cultivate the space for dialogue;
- It is good to share your own experiences;
- There are strategies to take into account in the dialogue;
- In dialogue, fundamental skills are promoted.

Get to work

Parents are an example of what it is like to be an adult and how work life can be lived. Many of the attitudes and behaviours of children are related to how they observe their parents 'get down to work' and move from word to action.

Encourage activities that complement the moments of dialogue and provide access to relevant information. Whether for parents or for children, there are very significant actions that speak for many words!

In this more practical aspect, it is important to integrate other types of allies in the support process. Resources, services or agents that can be useful must be identified.

There is a great diversity of activities that can favour the construction of children's educative and training path. Ultimately, almost everything we do in life shows us who we are, how we want to live, and how we organise and progress.

PROMOTE PLANNING

Be aware of the educational and/or training decisions that are approaching in your children's life. Will they choose a high school course after the 9th year? A degree after the 12th year? How to prepare for these decisions. What deadlines and dates are important. What sources of information and support services exist to know and prepare for these decisions. Accompany your children. Take time and energy to help them with service consultation and activities that prepare for these decisions.

Help your children chart a plan to achieve a goal they value. For example, if your kids would like to have an activity while on holiday, help them plan how to reach that goal. What requirements and training are required. Where and when to get this training. What obstacles may arise and how to overcome them. Without a plan of action, it is very likely that the goals are left behind as mere intentions.

PROMOTE AUTONOMY

Encourage your children to take initiatives and make them responsible for performing certain necessary tasks for the whole family. Ask your children to budget their weekly and/or monthly expenses and encourage them to make their own purchases, within the agreed limits. Help your children manage their time by dividing it by the various activities, according to priorities they assume. Help your children feel they have control over their own lives.

Encourage your children to research information about the life of a personality they admire (e.g. through interviews and/or biographies). Take advantage of several opportunities for your children to learn through the example of others, or through personal experience, the importance of taking responsibility for the conduct of one's own life with determination and effort.

PROMOTE CURIOSITY

To what extent have your children already had the opportunity to be 'put to the test' in concrete experiences? Ask them about the situations in which they perceived issues about themselves more deeply. Think together with your children what kind of experiences they can do to help them explore more areas they are competent in (which they do successfully), which are of interest to them and which they care about (and do with satisfaction) and to which they give value (which allows them to achieve important goals).

To what extent have your children been active in observing and exploring to learn more about educational and training opportunities? What occupations do they know and what do they know about them? Encourage your children to expand their knowledge in this area by identifying and using sources of information, namely by consulting information available on the Internet, speaking or accompanying a professional during a day at work. Encourage your children to broaden their knowledge of the labour market by experimenting with certain professional activities through short internships, part-time or work during holidays.

PROMOTE TRUST

Take advantage of the most diverse situations to express encouragement and support to your children. Whenever there is effort and persistence, praise the result obtained. In the experiments of trial and error one obtains small personal achievements and one learns to persevere and to find a way to make things work. When one fears failure too much, one feels unable to try success.

Encourage your children to face their fears through concrete activities. In doing so, children often discover resources that they thought they did not possess and begin to feel more confident and effective. Some 'radical experiences' (e.g. climbing) are, after all, controlled ways of facing the challenge and feeling empowered. Help your children identify situations that have helped them feel more confident in themselves, in order to embrace opportunities and face future challenges.

PROMOTE COOPERATION

Family-based sharing of responsibilities, negotiating with children the division of age-adjusted tasks. Do not give in to facilitating or performing the combined tasks for the children. As the children grow up, involve them in the planning and implementation of activities that also concern them, such as setting the budget for family expenses, shopping for the family, going out for a weekend, holidays, etc. It is important for each one to cooperate and feel part of a whole.

Encourage your children to take on new social roles outside the family, broaden their relationships, and adjust to various people and situations (e.g. holiday or part-time work experiences, volunteer activities, recreational and cultural activities, make certain trainings outside of school, such as a first aid course, have a learning experience in another country).



In summary, in order to support children in the construction of their projects, one should remember that...

- Children observe their parents' example;
- Actions complement dialogue;
- It often takes the action of other allies;
- There is a huge variety of useful activities;
- In action, important strategies are promoted.

You need to explore

Given the multitude of professional activities, courses and training options, it is important to outline a strategy to explore what is available. Research is part of life and is something to encourage from childhood. How to guide young people to research?

Take advantage of several situations to observe and ask your children what their favorite activities and settings are, namely: subjects, school content, sports, extracurricular activities, family life, socialising with friends, etc.). What interests them the most when they carry out these activities? What kind of skills come into play? What do they seek to achieve with them?

Probably certain interests, aptitudes and values are emerging, highlighting certain areas of interest to explore. Use this information to help your children consider possible career paths. Do they show an interest for more practical or more intellectual activities? Are they more fulfilled in groups or individually? What do they prefer being outdoors or indoors?

Exploration is a demanding activity in terms of time and personal energy, and it is important to carry it out in a timely manner and to develop it calmly. Help your children set career development goals and their qualification pathways (e.g. each month, explore together a group of professions that are close to each other, going through the months, the main topics of interest for your children).

Encourage your kids to explore the trends in the labour market. It is important to seek the opinion of people who know these sectors or the information available in specialised services related to education and employment.

In summary, for the exploration of information, some strategies are...

- Explore according to who we are;
- Explore from central points;
- Explore a lot, over time;
- Explore market trends.

Some suggestions of resources for the exploration of information on education and training opportunities and on occupations:

- Psychology and guidance services of primary and secondary schools; Employment and Training Centres; University Guidance Services; Youth Centres;
- Institutions or entities that teach courses and training related to the area to be explored;
- Teachers, other professionals and families;
- Books, brochures, leaflets and multimedia material;
- Biographies of personalities who excelled in certain domains;
- Articles in magazines and newspapers on the labour market (on paper and electronic);
- Events such as Fairs of Professions, Open Days of Institutions of Higher Education;
- Internet sites.

Six ideas ...

Parents have **an important role** in building their children's life projects. Increasingly, **lifelong learning** is essential, so parents should support their children to look at their life path in a flexible and open way to change.

Their life belongs to them! It is up to everyone to make their own choices. However, informed parenting helps children prepare and make good decisions. It is essential to create **a space for dialogue** and support **concrete actions**, conveying the importance of exploring the world around them and their interests and abilities - **exploring is needed!**

