

## Incorporating Life Skills into Your Parenting & Lifestyle PART 1

**What are life skills?** They are non-curriculum based skills that people can learn naturally through experience. The point of life skills is to help a person function in society by giving them the tools to make wise decisions.

**Technical life skills** are things like budgeting, finding a job, grocery shopping, cooking, paying taxes, managing a home, and so forth. **General life skills** are critical thinking, common sense, social-emotional skills, interpersonal skills, organization and time management, and so forth.

I've spent over 11 years researching and coordinating so I could implement a variety of life skill information into a program. Our program – Get.in the.Game - divides the knowledge into these six categories: Me & My Career, Me & Money, Me & My Space, Me & Society and Me & Wellness. Each category has many sub-sections. . (We're working on creating a Commitments section too!)

**But your life isn't compartmentalized like that is it?** You can't stop in the middle of a task when your teen asks you a question and think *"This is a career question so I need to put on my career counselor hat"*, right? And most life skill conversations have multiple facets, so while the question might be a career related question, the conversation might end up covering friendship, finances, self-esteem and more. That is, if you're one of those lucky parents that get to have a two-way conversation with their teen!

I want to help you communicate with your youth in a way that is realistic to your lifestyle so you can teach them life skills authentically and without drama. This information is just as helpful for parents whose teens do not talk or share with them because this information will help you relate to your teen, allowing conversations to be less awkward or one-sided.



### The Life Skill Learning Process

There is a step that must happen **before** discussing skills with your youth. This is the step that is so commonly missed by parents, educators and other life skill activities found in other programs.

LEARN THE WAY THE YOUTH  
PROCESSES INFORMATION

**STEP 1.** Understand how the youth will **PROCESS** the information you teach them. You want them to understand you, not just hear you. You want them to gain wisdom, not just knowledge. Here are some tips to consider about Step 1. When you are trying to share wisdom and random life tidbits with them, ask yourself this:

- How can they possibly apply new skills and knowledge if they do not understand when, where and how they are supposed to use what you've taught them?

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- And how can they understand what you teach if you are not able to relate it to them? Maybe you're sharing the information the way you understand it now, as a parent. Think back to what that 'information' would have meant to you at their age. Think of the best way to teach it for their individual needs and thought-processes, not yours.
- Study how they think and respond to various situations and figure out how to relate your wisdom and information to their life, their interests, their priorities – be realistic by understanding the difference between how you want them to think and respond, as compared to the way they actually think, act, feel and respond.
- Remember, what you identify about their thought process will **vary** in situations. They may show a variety of character traits among you, strangers, friends, teachers or authority.
- Many of their decisions will not fall in a right or wrong box; instead, they will be simple decisions that have a domino effect of good or bad results. Most youth already know right from wrong. They need to learn critical thinking so they can learn to foresee probable results and learn how to be prepared for multiple possibilities throughout life.

PREDICT HOW THEIR CURRENT THOUGHT PROCESSES MIGHT TRANSLATE IN AN ADULT DECISION MAKING SITUATION

**Example 1** -You may observe them to be argumentative and analytical when they talk to you but yet they may be passive and agreeable when they communicate with a friend.

Let's take that example and translate it to their adult life. If they were living with a friend in an apartment or a group of friends in a sorority or fraternity- with those traits we'd assume they may be passive and likely to follow the crowd. Or they would not be assertive with roommate problems and end up getting taken advantage of, or maybe they stuff down their feelings. This is not good.

Meanwhile, with those same traits we outlined above, they may be very analytical and argumentative with authority, as they were with you, and they may be likely to fight for a better grade with a professor or work hard in a job interview. This could be great.

The information provided so far will help you predict or understand your youth. Mainly so you can personalize the way you teach them life skills before they enter into adulthood. Now, do you want to also empathize, appreciate, respect and maybe even relate to their unique way of thinking and the way they process the information that drives their behavior?

**If so, move on to the next article on this site to learn about Step 2:** A person's thought-process begins with their **perception**.

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