

The goal of a child

The most important thing to understand when you're growing up and becoming an adult is why you are here and what your purpose is. This is a very open-ended question with several points of view and several answers. I won't touch on the philosophical or ethical perspectives today, I will write about those in the future. Today, I'm focusing on the idea from an economical and societal view.

What is society?

Society is a framework we make to make our lives easier. It allows humans to focus on things we are better at and more passionate in, and outsource other tasks to others in exchange for value. Lets break down how society trades value in the two most common systems, capitalism and socialism. In a capitalist society, I, the apple farmer have apples and you, the pear farmer have pears. I can't produce pears, so pears have more perceived value to me, and vice versa to you. We trade our pears and apples and make a net benefit in value because we both have something with higher perceived value. meanwhile, in a socialist society the same transaction happens, but in a slightly different way. Instead of being in a apple or pear farmer, we are both part of the union of farmers, and we co-own the pear and apple farms and share the value it produces. This is the fundamental framework of society. I provide you value in exchange for something of equal value. This goes for anything, and since we all live in a capitalist society, we will focus on how this effects a capitalist society. Value is exchanged so all parties can have mutual benefit, and we can focus on actions that provide us the most amount of value. I'm better at producing apples than you are, and you are better at producing pears than I am, so by focusing on what we're good at, we can produce more value than if we did both tasks individually. Think about how you buy food from the supermarket. If you had to grow the food for yourself, It'd probably take up your entire life. Allowing a farmer to make you food allows you to focus on something that provides more value then if you farmed by yourself.

Your goal as a child

Now that we have defined what society is, lets define what your end goal as a child is(from a societal perspective). As a child, your end goal is to become an adult and learn to produce value. Lets break down the goal into smaller, digestible goals that you work towards.

1. Learn skills to make value
2. Develop responsibility and the ability to act like an adult

These two things combined are how individuals that produce value in society are made. Now, lets break down why working as a teenager in 2024 fundamentally works against both concepts, stunting future growth and education.

Growth and Development

Your teenage years are when you learn fundamental skills about professions and hobbies that you want to spend the rest of your life doing. Getting a job as a teenager provides no net benefit to this idea unless you work a job that is tied to your choice of career, and even then as a teenager you should be exploring more than 1 career path until and even when your in university. In the past, especially in the post World War Two landscape the job market was very open to teenagers and people without skills. The devastating conflict that was the second world war lead to amazing innovations and the creation of new fields, such as computer science and technology and since the fields were completely new and nobody had experience, youths with an open mind were ideal candidates. The job would teach them valuable skills that were transferrable across the markets, leading to a prosperous and open market for all. Now, the job market for teenagers are isolated to just menial labor and low skill jobs. The majority of corporations and companies focus on finding safe, experienced workers that know what their doing as the current job market is full of educated, experienced people, and there is no need to hire someone who could be a liability to the company until trained. The use of AI also causes problems, as the number of jobs in the market shrinks due to automation and the use of AI. This is a fundamental problem with society, but I will talk about this another day.

Responsibility and Accountability

One of the main reasons teenagers are pushed to get a job is to teach them responsibility and accountability, preparing them for adult life. However, this perspective is fundamentally flawed. Discipline and responsibility aren't skills you simply build; they're shaped by the choices you make. People work harder and put in extra hours not because they possess inherent discipline, but because they're invested, desire growth, or have a personal stake in the outcome. This investment drives their ability to work harder on tasks.

You develop responsibility and accountability by investing in your own identity and achievements. When you can reflect on your life and recognize your successes and failures, that's when you can motivate yourself to work an extra hour or tackle a project instead of playing a video game. Forcing discipline upon yourself often only depletes your mental energy for other tasks.

Many argue that jobs teach essential life skills like time management or navigating corporate environments. While true, these skills can be self-taught. Moreover, traditional methods of teaching time management and other soft skills are often flawed. With our improved understanding of psychology and neuroscience, we now know that each person processes and retains information differently. A personalized approach to organization and discipline would benefit most people far more than conventional teachings of soft skills.

What do I do then?

Learn to create value. Instead of working a job for outdated reasons, focus on things you're truly passionate about and excel at. Build a life you're proud of, one where you have the drive to work hard. If you haven't discovered your passions yet, keep exploring. I have plenty of resources available on my website, so feel free to browse. Personally, I run a business, Eglinton and Yonge Computers, and write fiction.

If you're looking to start creating value with your passions, there are many ways to begin. Seek advice from people you admire—don't be afraid to reach out. Many people hesitate to contact their idols, but you might receive life-changing advice if you do. I've gotten guidance from many greats I look up to, including Louis Rossmann and Mark from GMTK.

Another approach is to simply share your work online. Information is key to unlocking your potential. Keep searching, and you'll find ways to make your passions both profitable and sustainable. If you have any questions, concerns, or criticisms, don't hesitate to reach out! After all, that's how we grow and develop.