



SUMMER JOBS OFFER AN IMPORTANT OPPORTUNITY to explore career options and master basic work ethic skills. Seemingly simple job skills, such as getting up, being on time to work, and remembering and following directions, are important skills for any teenager to learn, especially if he or she has ADD or ADHD. Administrative and organizational skills may also be learned on the job. In addition, working during the summers can help students obtain firsthand knowledge about various careers.

Exploring vocational interests is an extremely important benefit of a summer job. For example, some teenagers, especially boys, may be drawn to jobs that don't require a post-secondary education. Once a teenager actually does the work eight hours a day, some of the appeal may wear off. He may realize that he doesn't want to spend the rest of his life doing that kind of work.

It is important for your teenager to select a job that she enjoys so that she will want to go to work. You may need to help teach her responsible work habits. Make certain she has her own alarm clock. Wake her up if she oversleeps. If sleeping late becomes a major problem, discuss it with her and develop a plan to solve the problem.

Russell Barkley, PhD,

has found that teenagers with ADHD do as well with summer jobs as teenagers who don't have ADHD. Perhaps the short duration of the job, the nature of the job (usually relatively active, unskilled work), having a job they like, and novelty make it easier for them to hold summer jobs successfully.

Here is one parent's testimony about her teen's summer employment experiences. "Steven worked as a lifeguard during the summers. Even with his ADHD, he did an excellent job. He loves being the boss and was really good at his job. He had to open and close the pool on his own, watch all the children, monitor the chemicals, schedule the other lifeguards, and relate to the homeowner association president and members. He passed difficult lifeguarding, first aid, and CPR classes. His ego was boosted by this experience. This was great management training for him."

Five Tips for Parents

1. Keep your teen busy during the summer.

Regardless of whether your teen gets a job, volunteers, or participates in sports or other activities, the primary goal is to keep him or her busy with some activity. The old adage, "Idle hands are the devil's workshop," is especially true for our teens with ADD or ADHD.

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SUMMER JOBS and ADHD

2. Consider your teen's maturity. When guiding your child toward a specific summer job, don't forget his or her delayed maturity and factor that in the final decision. For example, some of our teens have been excellent lifeguards; however, lifeguarding can present life-or-death situations. So if your teen is immature and inattentive, you may decide to guide him or her to another job.

3. Help teen match strengths with job skills.

Try to match the job requirements with your child's skills and interests, keeping in mind his or her challenges. One summer I had the brilliant idea that working at a popular electronics store would be the perfect job for our son. After all, he was amazing with computers and electronics. From a positive perspective, he enjoyed and was really good at problem solving with clients and helping them find solutions to their electronic problems. However, the downside was that the company imposed quotas that created a lot of anxiety for him, reminiscent of being graded in school. Plus, he hated dealing patiently with customers who were trying to return equipment that had not been purchased recently. Bottom line, by the end of the summer he was ready to be done with the job. He did not reapply the following year.

4. Establish realistic expectations for your teen's ability.

Although my son was sixteen, developmentally he was more like a thirteen-year-old. Because he was smart, I often overestimated his abilities. Ultimately, it became clear that he was not ready to work long hours with expectations to function as an adult.

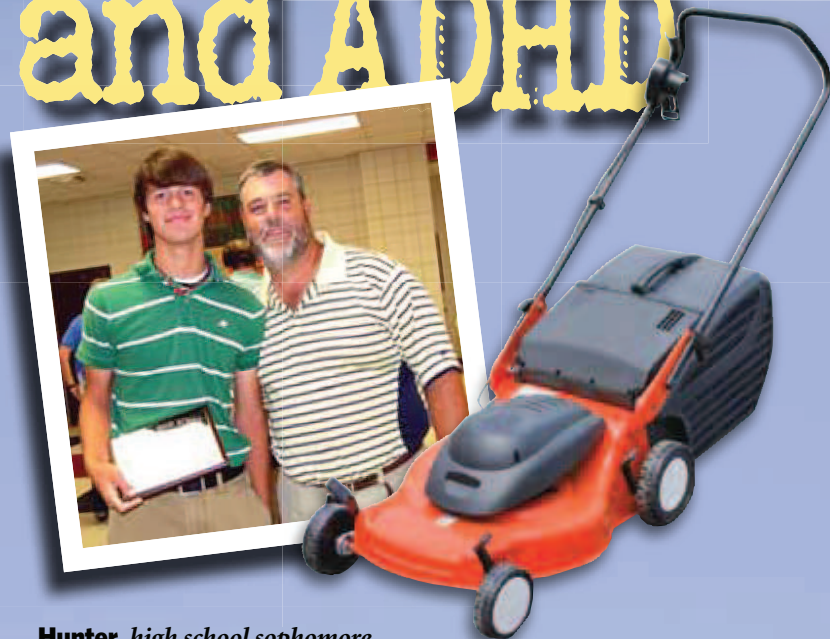
5. Why do you want your teen to get a summer job?

The motivation behind your encouraging your teen to get a job is also important. Does he have to work to earn money? Or are you trying to teach him responsibility and the satisfaction that comes from a job well done? If it's the latter reason, volunteering somewhere may help to accomplish the same goal, plus it may provide a less stressful and more sheltered, positive work experience.

One final piece of advice: Remember that it's critically important for our teens who are affected by ADHD to like a job and be successful, rather than making the mistake of pushing them prematurely into a more demanding job for which they are unprepared.

Interviews

I interviewed several teens and young adults for their perspective on their summer or first jobs, whether paid or volunteer. Note: Some of these teenagers and young adults appear in my new DVD, *Real Life ADHD!*



Hunter, high school sophomore

Although Hunter is not yet sixteen, he has developed a network of people for whom he does yard work in Andalusia, Alabama. Mainly he mows their yards, edges sidewalks, and disposes of the grass clippings. For one family, he also cleans their swimming pool. When asked about jobs he didn't like, he explained that the most pointless job he had was when someone had him picking up sticks that had fallen in their heavily mulched pine straw areas.

This summer he'll do yard work again but will also volunteer at the country club. He is on the high school golf team, so this is a perfect match for him. He'll work in the pro shop, run the cash register, pick up range balls, and drive the carts to the front for players then return them later to the cart barn. Next year, when he's sixteen, he hopes he'll get paid for his work.

CHADD REGIONAL CONFERENCE

Hear Chris Zeigler Dendy present the keynote, **Executive Function: Why Does It Matter?** during CHADD's Regional Conference at the Hyatt Regency Long Island in Hauppauge, New York, on May 14, 2011. Learn more at chadd.org.





Nathan,
college sophomore

Nathan's favorite summer job was probably working as a lifeguard at a swimming pool in Glasgow, Kentucky. He really enjoyed the kids, being outside in the sun, being able to swim everyday and socializing with friends. This past summer he worked at a local boat marina; the pay was higher, but the job wasn't as much fun. The bad news was that he had to work every weekend so missed out on going places with his friends. He had to be at work by eight o'clock every morning, so had to leave his house by seven-thirty to be on time. His work days lasted ten hours and involved doing things like pumping gas, cleaning docks, running the cash register, and renting boats out and then checking them in later.

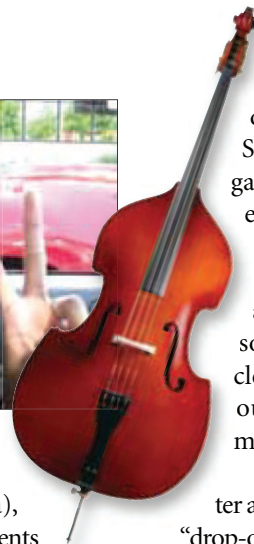
Robert, college freshman

In his summer job with the Chicago Loop Alliance (CLA) Robert feels like he's the luckiest guy alive. CLA is a business alliance that promotes activities to bring people to downtown Chicago. For example, this past summer they displayed a thirty-foot eyeball on a downtown street. Another time, statues of pirates in full costume were placed up and down the main street. Robert's job was to lug the pirate statue to various local businesses so that customers could come and have their pictures made with them. Another promotion involved calling all the local cabs to come to Dunkin Donuts, where Robert gave them free coffee and donuts. More importantly, he gave them flyers to share with passengers about the pirates, eyeballs, and other downtown activities and businesses.



Alyssa, college freshman

As a member of a high school orchestra (Alyssa plays the viola), working at a store in Atlanta that rents musical instruments to students was a perfect match for Alyssa. She was so impressive in her interview that she was hired to manage the store plus supervise two other people. Alyssa developed her leadership skills through years of participating in Girl Scout programs. Her job responsibilities included renting the orchestra and band instruments, writing up rental contracts, showing them all the necessary accessories, and telling them how to care for their instrument. The store's corporate office was impressed with her work and offered her a job as an assistant manager locally or in Virginia. The previous summer, she worked at an amusement park that served children ages four through twelve. She worked at the front desk and was given many different jobs, including redeeming prizes, working in the arcade, selling tokens, and handling admission to the park.



Steve, 24, manager of the main dry cleaning "drop-off" store in West Chester, Pennsylvania

Steve really enjoyed his first job working at McDonald's. Although he goofed off at times, he was a really good worker and his manager liked him. Steve also recalls perhaps the worst job he ever had as a



dishwasher at a retirement village. Supervisors had very rigid rules regarding their four-hour shifts. The employees could never sit down and take a rest break. The heat from the kitchen was unbearable at times, plus they had to clean up some pretty nasty messes as they cleaned up the dirty plates. Obviously a job like this is not a good match for students with ADHD.

Steve started out at the front counter and cash register at the dry cleaning "drop-off" store. His supervisor recognized the excellent work he has done for the last seven years and promoted him to the manager's job at their largest store.

Katie, 20, college student

One of Katie's favorite summer jobs was working at a Baskin Robbins ice cream shop in Appleton, Wisconsin. As she explains, this job was a good match for a person with ADHD. Katie loves meeting new people and prefers to stay busy. Thanks to her mom's early instruction, Katie understood her ADHD, so knew she'd much rather be active. Several characteristics of the job made it easier for her: She was always busy, she was working hands-on creating the ice cream treats, and she thrives on responsibility. She also showed an uncanny insight into her ADHD because she always took her medicine before she went to work so she could stay focused. Her boss liked and trusted her, so she and another student basically ran the store at times. One of Katie's responsibilities was to close up at night. Right now she is taking a course in college as she prepares for her future career. At one point she thought she might like to be a medical assistant, but her mother reminded her that sitting at a desk all day would drive her crazy. ●

