

"ADULTING". The word has been around for about ten years; however, it wasn't until about five years ago that it exploded on social media. It means to behave like an adult and do the things that adults regularly have to do. Believe it or not, there are now classes in "adulthood". You might think, really? How is it that a young person may not know how to do common tasks like cook a meal, do laundry, wash dishes, manage a checking account, or do simple home repairs? Some would say that this phenomena happened because high school classes that once taught practical life skills such as home economics, "shop", and personal finance are no longer required or may not even be offered. Another possible culprit that has been blamed for a lack of critical adulthood skills is the overuse of technology. Regardless of why some young people appear less competent or confident completing these types of tasks, it's important to make sure they leave the nest with these skills in place so that they can lead successful lives!

Many of these life skills are earned at home. Perhaps, as a child or teen, you remember helping out in the kitchen, working on the family car, or doing chores around the house. Or maybe, like my eldest son, you remember taking a class like consumer math, which he says was the best course he ever took. He learned about insurance, investments, budgets, and had to set up a checking account during his senior year so that he would be comfortable managing his finances after high school graduation. I would love to see a variety of "adulthood" courses return to school curriculum as a complement to the rigorous, advanced academic coursework that is currently offered. If, indeed, technology is part of the problem, the question is how can we encourage kids to use their tech skills while building critical life skills?

*Give your kids chores. The Learning Habit Study showed that kids with the highest GPA's did more chores, had less than 30 minutes of daily screen time, and spent more time with their parents. Another study showed that preschoolers who did chores at age 3 or 4 were more likely to be more self-sufficient. You could use technology to create weekly job charts, mark completion, and if allowance is earned, track income and spending.

*Instead of hours on Snapchat and Instagram, encourage your teens to use technology to build future “adulting” skills. Ask them to show you how they use technology so they see you are interested. Maybe they can make a creative, electronic presentation for the next family celebration. This way you can find out more about what they are doing, they end up feeling competent, and technology will help build important family connections. There are many ways to use technology while enhancing communication skills now to build marketable skills and reduce future anxiety when they are thrown into the real world later.

Some other “adulting” ideas include:

- *Internet research for upcoming family vacations or purchases and then have your teen make any necessary follow-up phone calls to finalize plans
- *research a recipe, shop for the required ingredients (online or in store), and prepare a weekly and/or special occasion meal
- *complete an ATM transaction and track banking activity/bill paying online with own account prior to graduation
- *make appointments (doctor's, hair, dog grooming, etc.) on the phone to enhance critical communication skills
- *teach your kids how to politely order from a menu at a restaurant
- *have your teen call tech support when there is a problem in the home so you don't get a frantic phone call from college
- *participate in real life activities and troubleshooting problems WITH your teens. It's easier to help them fumble through and offer suggestions while they are still at home. Don't assume they don't want to spend time with you just because they are older. Older teens actually crave parental attention and closeness even when they seem like they don't.

In our book, *A Student's Guide to Communication and Self-Presentation*, we also offer other reflective “adult building” activities that are worth doing early on with your teens, well before they ask for recommendations, need to complete college and job applications, or prepare for interviews. For example:

- *ways to clean up one's social media presence

*how to ask a teacher for a recommendation and what information to provide them with to secure the strongest possible letter

*how to prepare for an interview including what questions might be asked and what interviewers are looking for the answers

*a self-reflection checklist about "soft skills"- those skills that admissions counselors and employers are now looking for

As grandparents, parents and educators, our goal is to raise successful and thriving human beings. Our future generations have so many gifts to offer. They deserve to be taught the necessary skills to achieve their dreams and reach their potential.