

# How to Stop Stressing Over Your Child's Job Search

**In a daunting market, don't let their quest for work become your issue**

By Jeanne Dorin | June 30, 2014



Her son recently completed his sophomore year at New York University (NYU) with impressive grades, but Barb F. is already anxious about his job prospects.

Yes, that's two years down the road when he graduates.

But having read a spate of articles about unemployment rates among [college grads](#), the Los Angeles working mother is terrified that Daniel's \$250,000+ college degree won't guarantee him a job, much less a bright professional future and high salary.

So to assuage her *own* anxiety, Barb relentlessly pushes her offspring to compete for summer internships and orchestrates his [resumé](#) to appeal to future employers. Her modus operandi: He (or she) has to do everything possible *now!*

**(MORE: [When Parents Go Too Far to Help Their Kids Land Jobs](#))**

"Even with a degree from NYU, I'm worried that that he won't be able to get a foot in the door," frets Barb, who asked that her name be withheld. "We've spent so much money on college. What if he can't support himself... ever?"

### **Discouraging Stats**

Although Barb's anxiety may be a bit premature, she is hardly alone in her concern. Plenty of parents of college students shudder at the reality that their children are facing. That's partly because their own 401(k) and retirement reserves can't withstand years more of child support.

(MORE: [6 Ways to Help an Adult Child Without Going Broke](#))

In the 1960s and '70s, boomers graduated into an economy that offered countless opportunities. Today's forecast is considerably less sunny.

According to a report released in April by [InternMatch](#), a San Francisco-based website that lists internships and entry-level jobs, only 16.6 percent of college seniors this year have received a single full-time job offer.

Some new college grads [struggle to find work](#), while others accept jobs for which they are overqualified.

Unemployment for recent grads was still higher than the 9.6 percent rate for all Americans ages 20 to 29 last October, and the Labor Department reports that 260,000 college graduates were stuck last year working at or below the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour.

### **The Boomerang Effect**

But the stress that parents like Barbara are experiencing, and inevitably conveying to their children whether overtly or in thinly-veiled ways, often eclipses what their children feel. Parents' worry can also exacerbate their children's already-existing concern.

"I always ask one question: Who's most worried about this? Is it you or your kids?" says California-based psychotherapist [Debra Brunsten](#), who treats numerous young adults and boomer parents.

(MORE: [Advice to Parents from a Boomerang Kid](#))

"Nine times out of 10, parents are [more worried](#) than kids," Brunsten says. "My second question: How is it useful to worry? In fact, it only adds to your child's feeling that 'there might be something wrong with me in addition to the culture. How come I'm not getting a job but my friend did?'"

### **Live in the Moment**

A more constructive approach for parents is to hold onto hope and positivity on behalf of your college grad.

"You have to be able to tell your kids that it's all going to be OK, that they will figure something out and to have faith," says Brunsten.

Similarly, rather than tell your child your concerns and anxieties about his or her future, find out about theirs. Ask them what their hopes and dreams are. Given the job market, ask them how they plan to challenge the statistics.

"Increasing their worry only creates dread," says Brunsten.

### **Offer Resources, Then Butt Out**

At the University of California Los Angeles Career Center, director Kathy L. Sims is often invited to speak to parents' groups whose No. 1 concern is their offspring getting a job after graduation.

(**MORE:** [How I Learned to Stop Pushing My Children](#))

"We tell them what they can do to make sure their child is on the right track to being most prepared," says Sims. This includes making sure their children know all of the job-finding resources available to them — but never doing it for them.

"I've had parents actually tell me that they insisted their child in college give them the password to the system to find the jobs and apply for them," says Sims. "We heard of one parent who came to a career fair on campus without his child. All that does is make your son or daughter seem like someone who's not grown-up enough to be offered a job."

### **Cultivate Resilience**

Moreover, the job market is as changeable as the weather, and a hot employment sector when your college student is a sophomore may be flat when he or she graduates.

The best strategy for finding [post-graduate employment](#), says Sims, is to help your college student cultivate the resilience to transfer skills if a chosen college major turns out to be a wasteland after graduation.

"It makes students flexible and nimble and diminishes the anxiety factor," Sims says.

This approach is ultimately more beneficial to your college grad and your own blood pressure than panicking over a discouraging job market and shrieking about securing an impressive internship.

"Nobody has a crystal ball," says Brunsten. "Helping parents be grounded enough to stay in the moment about their child's future serves them better. Parents need to explore their own relationship with the sense of optimism that everything will work out. Sadly, many boomers have lost faith, themselves, that things will work out and are not transmitting the optimism they once had to their kids."

*Jeanne Dorin is a Los Angeles-based writer who often covers health and wellness.*