

How to Talk with Youth About Careers in the Age of AI

Join youth where they are. Build career literacy & network strength:

- Express interest in **self-discovery**.
- **Listen** to concerns youth may have about AI's possible impacts on career opportunities.
- Show **confidence and hope** in them for their future careers.
- Value **relationships**, both online and in person.
- Share tips and **resources** supporting career exploration.
- Provide opportunities for **new experiences and network connections**.

Connect with their **challenges**, **changes**, and **choices**:



CHALLENGES

Notice common challenges for many youth: knowing how to achieve their career goals; maintaining hope and resilience in an environment where messages that they are hearing about AI could cause them to disengage.

Engage the disengaged. One in four youth aren't thinking about their career futures. Meet them with authentic interest.

Bridge the knowledge gap. Most youth are confident they'll reach their goals but aren't sure how. Help make the path concrete.

Acknowledge AI anxiety. Nervousness about AI's impact on careers is real and widespread. Recognize concerns that some past paths may narrow or close.



CHANGES

Acknowledge that the future is uncertain, but balance negative narratives. Dominant messages about AI could cause some youth to lose hope and disengage. Provide real, credible information about opportunities.

Build career literacy. Stronger career knowledge and networks help youth build resilience to AI pessimism. Skill-building provides practical and psychological protection.

Reach young women. Young women are less likely to see AI bringing opportunities and more likely to be disengaged from preparing for its impacts.

Recognize dangers of complacency. Confidence about the future can be an asset, but some youth may need help understanding coming changes and how to prepare.



CHOICES

Help broaden their views of career paths. Build sense of empowerment by sharing time and technologies to aide exploration of career options and preparation that fit their strengths and interest

Honor self-discovery. Young people want to understand their own strengths, which is a key starting point for them to make progress toward their career futures.

Help build capability to use AI as a tool for career exploration. Interest in AI tools to find jobs and explore careers is high, but most youth do not feel confident they can use AI effectively for these purposes.

Prioritize connection. Network strength is among the strongest predictors of a hopeful AI outlook. Help youth build relationships with people in careers of interest.

KEY FINDINGS

To learn more about How to Talk with Youth About Careers in the Age of AI, visit www.DeBruce.org



1

Most youth are engaged in building skills and thinking about careers — but a substantial minority are not.

79% of youth agree or strongly agree that they are actively working to improve their work-related skills. Most either know their desired career or spend time thinking about it. But 25% of youth are not thinking about their career futures.

2

Most youth are confident about reaching their career goals, but they have real knowledge gaps about how to get there.

85% of youth are at least somewhat confident they will ultimately achieve their career goals. But 44% say they have little or no idea what they need to be doing to prepare for a career and only 11% say they have a "very clear" idea.

3

AI is causing significant concern among youth about their career futures.

Three times as many youth agree that AI is making them more nervous about future career prospects than disagree. And 60% expect AI to shrink or close career opportunities of interest, while only 36% expect it to open new ones.

4

Concern about AI's impact on careers is broadly shared.

Regardless of background or current status in or out of school, youth are consistently more likely to expect AI to close career opportunities than to open them. Young women are somewhat more likely than young men to be disengaged or pessimistic.

5

Youth vary in how much they've heard about AI's likely impacts — and the more they've heard, the more pessimistic they tend to be.

94% of youth have heard at least something about how AI might affect jobs and careers. Those who have heard a lot are 2.5 times as likely to strongly agree that AI makes them nervous about career prospects than those who have heard less.

6

Strong career literacy and network skills help buffer the pessimism resulting from messages about AI's threats to jobs and careers.

Among youth who have heard a lot about AI's possible impacts, those with above-average career literacy and network strength are significantly less likely to strongly agree that AI makes them nervous (33% vs. 45%), and more likely to expect AI to open opportunities.

7

Most youth are interested in AI-enabled tools for career exploration, but many will need help using them effectively.

Over 63% of youth say they already use AI tools for job searching or career exploration. And 76% express interest in AI tools for at least one specific career exploration task. But only 32% say they both use AI tools and feel confident they can use them well.

8

Interest in using AI tools for career exploration is strongly tied to whether youth expect AI to open new opportunities.

Whether youth expect AI to open new career opportunities is the key driver of interest in AI tools for career exploration. 93% of youth who expect AI to open opportunities are interested in AI career tools, compared to only 66% of those who do not.