

So you're not doing what your parents wanted you to do

Do you feel torn between your own aspirations and the career path your parents would prefer you to take? This is a common issue experienced by a large proportion of millennials who feel pressure from all angles, according to Nikki Opit, Psychologist at Headspace Bondi Junction.

But the good news is, there are clear solutions to overcome this issue and help you forge the life you want for yourself. Here's how.

- **Believe in your choices.** Before you go and fight for your ideals, it's a good idea to have a clear picture of your goals and aspirations. It's far more common to finish school or university and feel uncertain about your next step, so start reflecting on what it is you really want to do, your strengths, your passions, as well as practical aspects such as your earning capacity and the likelihood of landing a job in your chosen field. Only then can you sell your choice to your parents.
- **Have an unemotional and constructive conversation.** While it can be easy to default to heated arguments with your parents on your differing views, the most positive outcome will likely come from a calm and considered conversation that has been planned in advance, says Opit. "A lot of the time, people expect the outcome will be worse than it really is. When approached from an unemotional standpoint, often parents are a lot more understanding and willing to be open to their child's ideas."
- **Enlist the help of a third party.** If you don't feel like you have the confidence to have a calm and considered conversation with your parents, seeing a psychologist or career counsellor can equip you with useful techniques. While Opit typically consults with people one-on-one, she also sees the value in combining her clients with their parents in the one room where she acts as the mediator. "Sometimes all people need is an experienced third person who can help facilitate a conversation in a safe and contained manner."

- **Get ‘educated’ in multiple career paths.** There’s loads of truth to the saying ‘knowledge is power’ and in your case, having a good understanding of the various roles that exist in the industry you’re most interested in can be the key to a good compromise. For example, if you want to be an artist and your parents insist on something more stable, knowing about other careers that incorporate creativity but with a commercial backbone, such as graphic design, can help you make a decision that pleases both parties.
- **Consider the ways you can do both.** So you want to be a gardener because you love the outdoors and are good with your hands, but your parents would prefer you to have an office job where the salary may be higher. Is there a way you can pursue a related career such as landscape architecture or urban planning and do gardening on the side? Consider offering gardening as a service to your friends and family on the weekend, or keeping it as a hobby.

At the end of the day, pursuing a career you’re not passionate about or even interested in for the sake of your parents will lead to a great deal of unhappiness, says Opit. Instead, she advises to trust your gut, weigh up your options and make an informed decision. “In most cases, when people are happy, their parents are too.”

At the end of the day, pursuing a career you're not passionate about or even interested in for the sake of your parents will lead to a great deal of unhappiness, says Opit.