

Lesson 1 Grow Up!

**Weekly Words of Wisdom:** "If I had known that I would lose my job and have to start over, I never would have allowed myself to get in trouble."

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Tom looks over at Alan's empty desk and remarks, "I can't believe he's late again."

"He was probably out partying last night as usual. I don't know how he does it," Margie shakes her head.

Craig adds, "I don't know *why* he does it. Partying gets old after a while."

"Well, if he's not careful, he's going to lose his job," Tom sighs.

Grinning, Craig asks, "Are you kidding? The way Alan talks, you'd believe he is headed for a big promotion. He admires himself a little too much!"

"Come on! You're kidding," Margie says. "He can't really believe he'll get a promotion. He still can't run the copier or the FAX machine by himself. He needs to grow up,"

Alan is over 18 and has a full-time job, but his co-workers don't view him as an adult. List three adult characteristics that Alan can develop to change his co-workers' opinions.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## What Makes an Adult?

In the U.S., you automatically have the rights and responsibilities of an adult on your 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. But what does it mean to be an adult? What does it feel like? How is being an adult different from how you are now?

Express your views on adulthood by filling in the blanks below.

An adult is someone who \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I'm looking forward to being an adult because \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I'm not looking forward to being an adult because \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I'll know I'm an adult when \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## What Makes an Adult? (Continued)

The kind of work I do as an adult will affect the following areas of my life:

1. Economic independence

2. Self-image

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

Three obstacles that could damage or ruin my chance of a successful career as an adult are:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Three of my adult role models and the reasons they are role models are listed below:

1. Adult's name or relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## What Makes an Adult? (Continued)

2. Adult's name or relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Adult's name or relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What adult qualities do you already exhibit that will help you be successful in a career and in your day-to-day activities? What qualities do you exhibit that others would consider childlike, ones that would endanger your career?

My adult qualities that will help me in a career include \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

My childlike qualities that will endanger my career if I don't change include \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## One Mistake, One Doomed Career

Will most mistakes be overlooked when you're an adult? Can all obstacles be overcome?

Teens and children usually get many chances to correct their mistakes. Even the courts are lenient on first-time, second-time, and, occasionally, third-time youth offenders. That changes when you become an adult. One serious mistake or error in judgment can make a dramatic change in your adult life.

Read the following example about Mark, whose life was sidetracked by bad judgment. At the end, write your answer to each question.

Mark, who is now 23, pictures himself climbing back into his big rig one day. His high school diploma and excellent driving skills once made him a popular driver. Like all truckers, he loves traveling the country with no one looking over his shoulder. He enjoys the company of other truckers, and he makes a good living. Last year, he bought a house and a pickup truck. He also met a new girlfriend he's crazy about.

Mark has always known that to earn and keep a Commercial Drivers License (CDL), he must use good judgment and self discipline. Drivers with CDL's are subject to random drug and alcohol testing at all times.

## One Mistake, One Doomed Career (Continued)

One weekend, Mark's new girlfriend introduced him to marijuana. She persuaded him to join her and her friends when they smoked pot. The very next day he was chosen for a random drug test and tested positive for marijuana. His life changed overnight.

Here are the consequences of Mark's actions:

- He had to stop driving immediately and could not return to duty until he completed a Department of Transportation (DOT) substance abuse evaluation and treatment program.
- Although Mark's employer thought highly of him, there was no non-safety sensitive work available for him with the company. He lost his truck driving job, and he had to find other work to provide income until he completed the required program.
- The DOT program cost Mark over \$1000 and took four months to complete. Now that he is finished he has to be randomly drug tested 12 more times during the next year and pay for the tests himself.
- Although Mark was legally allowed to return to duty after completing the program, no trucking or transportation company is likely to hire him after he has failed a drug test.
- A year later, Mark is still trying to get back into trucking. He works as a day laborer, but the work is seasonal and doesn't pay as well as truck driving.

## One Mistake, One Doomed Career (Continued)

- Mark was not able to keep up the payments on his home or new truck and lost both. He still has his girlfriend.
- Mark's trucking friends are shocked. They all know that a failed drug test means that his trucking days are probably over for good.

1. Commercial drivers know that one failed drug test can destroy their careers. What do you think of this consequence of Mark's single mistake? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. Mark's mistake cost him more than just a good income. List five things that Mark lost in addition to money. One example is provided for you.

a. Satisfaction in his job

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

d. \_\_\_\_\_

e. \_\_\_\_\_

## One Mistake, One Doomed Career (Continued)

3. Peer pressure doesn't end when you become an adult. Although Mark knew better, he still wanted to feel like part of the group. What is the best way to deal with negative peer pressure?

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4. Mark's career skills are related to truck driving. Going back to school at this point in life is possible, but he lives a long way from the nearest community college. He also has to continue to earn an income to support himself. What is the best way Mark can acquire new skills for a different career?

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5. What three steps do you recommend to Mark to help improve his current situation?

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

## Love Won't Feed the Baby

Like some adults, many teens who fall in love allow their emotions to trump their better judgment. For both adults and teens, this can lead to a sexual relationship, especially if they are involved with a special girlfriend or boyfriend.

The one big difference between adults and teens involved in a relationship is that adults often have the income, education, and experience to help them get past hurdles and obstacles that life throws their way. For teens, the obstacles and hurdles can become almost impossible to overcome. Read Rob and Katie's story below.

When Katie discovered she was pregnant, she and Rob decided to keep and raise the baby. They hadn't planned on being teen parents, but they were in love and didn't like the alternatives.

Katie dropped out of high school and planned to get her GED after the baby was born. Rob completed high school and began working at a friend's service station. He hoped to learn to be a mechanic while he earned money. Even with overtime, though, Rob's pay check wasn't enough to support a family.

When the baby was four months old, Katie took a full time job as a receptionist at a hair salon. With both Katie and Rob working at low income jobs, they decided to live with Rob's family and depend on his mother to take care of the baby during the day.

## Love Won't Feed the Baby (Continued)

Now, Rob and Katie work most of the time. They're always tired, and they have regular arguments about money and responsibilities. After one serious fight, Katie decides to take the baby and move home with her mother.

Katie tells her best friend, "I can't believe we fight. Rob still loves me, but he wants to be with his buddies more than with the baby and me."

She sighs, "My mom is tired at night, and she says it's my job to look after the baby, so I can't go out with Rob. He doesn't like it when I bring the baby along. I didn't think it would be this hard. Now, I don't know what to do."

Here are the consequences of Katie's and Rob's actions:

- Katie and the baby live with her mother who also works. Katie now pays for day care which takes a big slice out of her pay check.
- Child support payments are taken out of Rob's pay check automatically and sent to Katie. This will continue for the next 18 years, until the child is 18 years old.
- Rob's pay is low, so the amount for child support isn't much. Even so, Rob can't afford to live on his own. He's decided to move in with his brother.
- Katie plans to make time between working and caring for the baby to take a GED course. But, so far she hasn't found the motivation or energy to accomplish this goal.

## Love Won't Feed the Baby (Continued)

- Rob learned there is no shortcut to becoming a mechanic. It's going to take time, more education, and certifications before he'll earn a good income. Now that he knows how hard and dirty the job is, he's not sure he likes the work. It also takes more of his time than he likes.
- Katie looks for better paying jobs, but she doesn't have the required experience or skills.
- Katie dreams of continuing her education after she gets a GED and a better job, but she has to plan for a career that will be limited. Having to care for the baby is something that will interfere.
  - She won't be able to travel for her job.
  - Working long or odd hours will be a problem.
  - She will need unexpected time off for child sick days.
  - She must work in an area where child care is available.
- Katie doesn't see much of her high school friends. She no longer seems to have anything in common with them, and she already feels older. Sometimes a girl friend calls her to go out, but she doesn't have free time or money to spend on herself any more. Katie is becoming more isolated and lonely.

## Love Won't Feed the Baby (Continued)

- Rob is attracted to another girl, a friend of his brother's. She's fun to be around and she can go out anytime he wants. It's a relief to spend time with someone who doesn't depend on him for anything and who doesn't complain all the time. But he feels guilty about Katie, and he knows he is failing his responsibilities.
  - Rob and Katie's existence seems out of control. Life is controlling them instead of their controlling life. Both are disillusioned, anxious and sad.
1. In your opinion, what is the most important thing a teenager should think about before deciding to become a parent? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  2. Teen parents must cope with harsh realities about adulthood. Working to survive day to day becomes very important, and often teens aren't prepared for the demands. One reality Rob and Katie face is shown below. On the next page, list four others.
    - a. Katie and Rob didn't realize that working full time and raising a family would be so hard. Without an education, they can only get entry-level jobs where they do the same tasks for eight hours every day for very little money. That can feel more like slavery than independence.

## Love Won't Feed the Baby (Continued)

b. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

d. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

e. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Active and Passive Decision Making

Active decision making means choosing goals and taking steps to reach them. Passive decision making means going along with whatever happens in life. Rob and Katie are passive decision makers. They didn't choose to be teen parents; they let it happen. They didn't choose careers; they took jobs they could find. Katie is thinking about obtaining a GED but not following through.

List three active decisions Katie and Rob can make to improve their career outlook, overcome their negative feelings, and balance their work and family life.

Rob and Katie can do these things:

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_