

GOLDEN



CELEBRATING AGES 13 AND BEYOND

Nothing Gold Can Stay

Robert Frost, 1923

Nature's first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leaf's a flower;
But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf.
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay.

If you're even cracking this open, you must have the well-being of teens in mind. Can we just say, "Thank you"? We thank you. Teens thank you. The future of our world thanks you!

Resources on teen development are everywhere. A quick online search reveals pages and pages of titles on the topic of teen development (including *How to Deal with a Neighbor's Difficult Teenage Son. Whaaaaaat?*). So, why did we feel inclined to make one more?

Because time after time in those titles we saw the words "how to." Our passion for maximizing young peoples' development compels us to dig deeper and equip you with the "WHYS" behind teen development. We think once you connect (and SERIOUSLY, for most of you, it's a reconnection) why teens act and interact as they do, your natural instincts will kick in, and you'll find new ways to support the young people around you.

You'll notice our title, **GOLDEN**. Some consider the teen years as a period of time to get through or endure – a bridge from childhood to adulthood. But we believe it's golden! When we think of the word, we envision a time that is blissful, brilliant, flourishing, joyful, promising, rich, shining and **VALUABLE**.

At the Dekko Foundation, we want all young people to gain the character, skills and knowledge they'll need to pursue a life of **economic freedom** (our mission). To reach that end, teens need interaction with intentional and caring adults who can help them build strong relationships, see beyond the moment, and navigate safely through ups and downs.

Here, we present seven ideas related to teen development. As we dug into these ideas, we found that they could be refined into principles that govern teens' growth and development. We didn't make these principles up. They are unchanging truths unearthed over time by the people who study teen development. We're pretty sure that these principles will complement what you've already experienced through your own interactions with young people.

This quick read was designed to start a conversation. We hope you'll talk about these concepts with friends, family, co-workers and, of course, the teens in your life. We expect you'll be curious and want more depth. We'd love to hear your ideas and receive your grant proposals for supporting teens' growth through deeper study, mentoring, the creation of engaging learning environments and more.

One more huge THANKS to you for what you do!

- Your friends at the Dekko Foundation





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teen BRAIN

BASICS

We feel like we don't REALLY need to tell you this, but here it goes: Teens' thinking and behavior are sometimes quite mature but, at other times, can be illogical, impulsive or emotional. (We feel you resisting the urge to say, "**Duh!**" out loud right now.)

Did you know that the natural development of the human brain explains this puzzling behavior?

It's true. Although their bodies are quite mature, and growing more so, **teens are operating with brains that are still under construction.**

Inside teen brains, the unused connections in the thinking and processing area are being naturally pruned away. At the same time, teens' frequently used connections are gaining strength and speed. Basically, teens' brains are employing the "use-it-or-lose-it" principle and are becoming more efficient as they prepare for the challenges of adulthood.

This period of intense change and growth is much like what occurs in the brains of very young children.

As adults, we give youngsters a pass on their mood swings, messy play spaces and inappropriate responses because, in our opinion, they're not capable of more. Yet, we seldom offer the same grace to teens. Essentially, we expect teens to be more mentally mature than their developmental state allows.

Teens' brain construction (or reconstruction) process begins deep in the brain's core and extends outward toward the prefrontal cortex. According to researchers, these changes are neither linear nor methodical – rather, they're messy and unpredictable. The prefrontal cortex is the reasoning part of the brain. It is responsible for our ability to plan, think about the consequences of our actions, solve problems and control impulses. Changes in this part of the brain continue into early adulthood.

Because their prefrontal cortex is not fully developed, teens' decision making occurs in the amygdala, or brain core. This part of the brain is associated with instinct, emotion, impulse, desire and aggression. Our adult brains consider these responses too, but we also have a fully developed frontal lobe that **(usually)** helps us regulate what we say and do.

Teens are wired for novelty, risk and peer authority.

– Dr. Tim Elmore

HERE'S HOW IT PLAYS OUT:

The brain core is central in teen decision making, so, teens tend to be:

- Responsive
- Reactive
- Reward-focused
- Irrational in their reasoning

The frontal lobe is central to adult decision making, so, adults tend to be:

- Measured
- Reflective
- Risk-focused
- Logical in their reasoning



recognize teens as **EQUALS**

If you set out to make friends with teens just to get something in return, they'll see right through you. However, if you take time to get to know teens as individuals and care enough to see them as equal human beings, your relationships with them will be caring, long-lasting and enrich you both.

The benefits of recognizing teens as equals go far beyond simple relationship building.

Through equal relationships, caring adults serve as mentors for teens as they push away and pull back again for security through their developmental years.

By showing mutual respect, we not only build strong bonds, but we also model healthy interactions for teens to follow in all their future relationships.

ubuntu

oo'boon(t)oo · noun

a quality that includes the essential human virtues; compassion and humanity.

A person with ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming to others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he knows he belongs to a greater whole that is diminished when others are treated as if they were less than who they are.

– Desmond Tutu



HERE'S THAT "WHY":

Teens are capable thinkers. Consider this: Mozart wrote operas at age 14, and Joan of Arc led a nation at 16. Braille was invented by a teenager; so was Facebook. Rockefeller started his first business as a teen, as did Bill Gates and Steve Jobs. Many believe almost all of Jesus' disciples were teenagers. Authors of great novels like *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *Frankenstein* and *The Outsiders* were teenagers. Hip-hop was created by a teenager. The Colt .45 was designed by a teenager; so was the first snowmobile.

TEENS THRIVE IN ENVIRONMENTS WHERE ADULTS:

- Show appreciation for their contributions.
- Are curious about their interests.
- Celebrate their accomplishments.
- Ask questions rather than supply answers.
- Listen.

WARNING:

Be careful what you watch on TV or stream from online sources. Media often fails to focus on the positives teens bring to their families, communities and the world. Teens need us to champion the fact that what they lack in life experience they make up for in energy, optimism, humor and friendliness.

TAKEAWAY:

In his book, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Dr. Stephen Covey introduced this concept: “Seek first to understand, then to be understood.” Many of us, in our rush to be understood, may ignore the other person completely...

because we listen with the intent to reply, not to understand.

The impact of listening to understand may be especially relevant in our interactions with teens whose life experiences are vastly different from ours. If we don’t listen intently, we filter everything we hear through our own life experiences, our own frames of reference. “Oh, I know just how you feel. I felt the same way.” “I had that same thing happen to me.” “Let me tell you what I did in a similar situation.” Dr. Covey offered a challenge that is profound overall, but seems especially important as we think of interacting on an equal basis with teens.

His challenge? Allow yourself to be influenced by others. Allow ourselves to be influenced by teens? Hmmm. Seems like Dr. Covey raised the bar.

IN ACTION:

We know a family that worked together to plan their vacation destination and budget – then their two teenage children researched lodging and travel options to make the most of their vacation dollars (and to be sure they got to do as many of the things on their list as possible). That was one GREAT family vacation. Way more, “Thanks, Mom and Dad!” Less, “Are we there yet?”

INTERESTING:

The Heartland Center for Leadership Development is tasked with saving small Midwestern towns from population loss and economic decay. Its leaders state, “Young leadership is more the rule than the exception in thriving rural communities. It’s typical for a successful community to have a formal or informal means for established leaders to bring new recruits into public service.” Young people have so much to contribute! **Why wait until a community (or project or school or business) is in trouble to tap into teens’ talents?**



Mutual respect underlies EVERYTHING.

A photograph of three teenagers sitting on a rocky cliff, looking out over a vast mountain landscape. The teenagers are seen from behind, sitting on a large, flat rock. The landscape is filled with green trees and distant mountains under a clear sky. The title 'prop open DOORS' is overlaid on the left side of the image.

prop open DOORS

It's remarkable that so much of teens' days (an average of six to eight hours) is spent in front of screens. That's nearly 3,000 hours a year. What a missed opportunity! To thrive, teens need to be out in the real world doing real things!

All young people need family members, teachers, mentors and decision-makers who will stick their toe in the door and encourage them to go out into the world. Some teens will dance into the world. Some will belly-flop. Some will strut. Some will take small, cautious steps. But all teens will want a peek.

Once through the door, what happens will be different for every teen. That's life!

As adults, we are the door propper-openers.

Our role is not to control or orchestrate (think helicopter parent). We simply need to prop open the door. We offer teens information, introductions and resources. They figure out how to use their talents and skills and contribute to society.

HERE'S THAT "WHY":

After years in even the best classrooms, teens are a little tired of formal learning. They're developing reasoning skills. They're beginning to consider their sense of purpose and even to think of a career and what they want to do in life. They're ready to take everything they've learned and put it to work—real work in the real world.

And why not? Teens are ready, and our world can certainly use a fresh, optimistic take on things—not to mention their energy, their adventuresome spirits and their joy. Experiences help teens connect:

- A Junior Achievement survey showed that 88% of students said job shadowing helped them to see the importance of staying in school.
- A study of 11,000 teens revealed that those engaged in service learning had significant gains in academics, civic engagement, social learning and positive attitudes toward themselves, their school and their studies.

TEENS THRIVE IN ENVIRONMENTS WHERE ADULTS:

- Cheer for them and celebrate their successes.
- Give them permission to learn from their choices.
- Support them as they process through disappointments.
- Help them realize they can do things that are hard.
- Let them know they are loved no matter what.
- Prop the door open for another try.



**We ARE respecting
our parents' wishes...
They didn't want to
shelter us from the
world's treacheries.
They wanted us to
survive them.**

— Lemony Snicket, *The End*



Real really matters.

TAKEAWAY:

In any interaction with teens, the closer the experience mirrors the real world, the more lasting and profound it will be.

IN ACTION:

Consider the fact that most activities in school are unlike activities in the real world. (Where else do you have to raise your hand to go to the bathroom?) Be an advocate for experiential and authentic learning. Teens will thrive with apprenticeship programs, job-shadowing experiences and internships—almost anything beyond the school walls and out from under the direction of a hovering parent or a traditional teacher.


INTERESTING:

We know a teen who was faced with a big decision. Here's the story her loving mom told her. "You know, Sarah, when you were a baby, I carried you. You couldn't walk yet and you needed me. Carrying you was the right thing to do. When you were a toddler, you were bigger and stronger, and I put you down and expected you to walk—because you could. It was the right thing to do. Now, you have a hard choice to make. I could make the decision for you and carry you like I did when you were a baby. But you're more experienced and stronger now, and you can do it on your own. It's the right thing to do."

Her daughter replied through her tears, "I know. That's why I'm crying."



get PHYSICAL



Think back to a time when you did something physically hard. Maybe you ran a 5K or split and stacked the wood from a fallen tree. Maybe you cleared a snowy driveway or hiked straight up a sand dune. Remember how good it felt to fall into bed physically tired? Your muscles ached, but you'd *done something*. Sleep felt wonderful!

Did you know that your brain got a workout too?

It's true! Plato advocated 2,400 years ago, "Let us build up physical fitness for the sake of the mind and soul." Maria Montessori observed 100 years ago, "The work of the hand becomes the work of the mind." Recent brain research confirms the long-held belief of a direct connection between physical activity and strong, healthy brains.

Yet, with the ease of modern life, it's possible for young people to go through their teens without doing anything physically demanding. When this happens, teens are robbed of physical exertion, brain development and the feeling of accomplishment. They don't know how strong they are. They have no idea of how strong they **COULD BE!**

**Both tears and sweat
render a different
result. Tears will get
you sympathy; sweat
will get you change.**

– Jesse Jackson



HERE'S THAT "WHY":

- Brain imaging now shows how physical activity positively impacts both the speed of one's thoughts AND one's ability to stay engaged.
- A Swedish study of more than a million people found a direct correlation between aerobic fitness at age 18 and people's socioeconomic status and educational attainment later in life.
- More than 30% of American teens are overweight. These rates have tripled since 1970. Correlations can be drawn from these statistics to increased physical, mental and emotional stresses (such as childhood diabetes, depression and low self-esteem).

TEENS THRIVE IN ENVIRONMENTS WHERE ADULTS:

- Act as role models for activity and fitness.
- Build breaks and movement into traditional schedules.
- Ditch traditional desks and chairs for standing desks and alternative seating (like exercise balls) that require balance.
- Champion community amenities like walking trails and disc golf courses.
- Poke holes in tradition by asking things like, "Why do schools spend so much of students' PE time teaching them how to score volleyball?"

TAKEAWAY:

Physical activity is like medicine for the brain. It has no harmful side effects. It's free. And teens are ready, willing and able!

IN ACTION:

We know a coach who tells his soccer teams that the last round of his workouts is not to grow muscles, but instead to grow men. He tells them, "Men have to be able to finish the job even when every muscle in their bodies and thought in their minds want to quit."

The students love the way this coach pushes them toward excellence — in sports and life.

INTERESTING:

A foundation that invested in a dance program for inner-city teenage girls noticed something intriguing over time. While some of their peers got pregnant, the girls in the dance program did not. The dancers expressed a feeling of pride, care and ownership of their bodies. Their attitudes conveyed, "I feel good when I dance. NOTHING is going to stand in the way of me and my dancing!"

A teen we know shared this thought that surprised her: "Boys and girls are just different. Boys' weight is centered in their shoulders, girls' in their hips. That's why we do different push-ups." (*Who knew that was the reason? We looked it up and found everyone's center of gravity is a little different, but overall, women's is lower than men's, so this teen is mostly correct.*)

A little sweat builds a lot of equity.





engage HANDS, MINDS and SOULS

Recently, we got to know a high schooler who was at the top of her class. When the time came to think about college, she considered teaching but moved on. She thought about medicine but was queasy at the sight of blood. Her focus sharpened one day when she heard a presentation by her local vocational school. That night, she went home and told her parents she wanted to learn how to weld. Fast forward a bit, and now that same young lady is off to college to study engineering with a focus on metallurgy.

By using her mind in a new way, getting her hands dirty, failing (probably for the first time in her life) and meeting different people, she discovered a new area of interest AND her future career.



**Tell me and I forget.
Teach me and I
remember.
Involve me and I learn.**

– Benjamin Franklin



HERE'S THAT "WHY":

To realize their full potential, teens need to be challenged and physically involved in their work, AND they need to understand why they should care.

Consider:

- Researcher Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi recognized and named the psychological concept of "flow." Flow is a highly focused mental state that occurs when there is an alignment between a student's skill and the challenge in front of her. If an activity surpasses a student's skill, she may become anxious and adopt a defeatist attitude. On the other hand, if a student's skill and her challenge are well-matched, engagement (flow) occurs.

TEENS THRIVE IN ENVIRONMENTS WHERE ADULTS:

- Help them experience reality by sharing the world's complexities and ambiguities.
- Include them in discussions about unexpected job losses, illnesses, the imperfections of a political leader or how to get along with a crusty neighbor.
- Show appreciation for their ideas.
- Use news stories or movies as opportunities for discussion. "How would you solve this?" "If this happened to you, how would you move forward?"
- Encourage them to work. Young teens can reap the benefits that come with learning responsibility and earning a wage when they mow yards or pet-sit for neighbors. Older teens can work out in the community. The combination of new experiences, responsibility and spending money makes a powerful impression.
- Advocate for vocational opportunities.
- Hire teens to help do hard things, even when help isn't needed.

TAKEAWAY:

Many people believe that the teens enrolled in schools and youth programs are captive audiences. We believe those teens are volunteers. They volunteer their attention and begin to learn when an intentional adult helps them to care about the subject. The opposite is also true – when teens don't care or engage, their bodies may be present, but their minds are somewhere else. As adults, we want to create environments that invite students to volunteer their attention and commitment.

IN ACTION:

A parent we know bought an old pickup truck and promised to pay for parts if his son could learn to do the repairs on his own. The boy worked for two years, trying to finish by the time he earned his driver's license. He didn't hit that milestone, but he did finish! He now owns – and treasures – a beautiful, one-of-a-kind truck.

INTERESTING:

Know a teen who loves to invent or build, or take things apart and fix them? If so, their future is very bright! A Harvard University study stated that in the future only 33% of jobs will require a college degree, 57% will require skills training and 10% will need unskilled labor. What does this mean for teens? Not all successful people must go to college. There are so many interesting and rewarding ways to contribute to society and make a living!

*Attention and commitment
come from within.*



emphasize COMPETENCY over PACE

We know a teen who's obsessed with making slime. She makes colored slime, glitter slime, scented slime and magnetic slime. She researches slime and spends her hard-earned babysitting money on slime-making materials.

Her parents silently question, "Shouldn't she be doing something more serious, like exploring chemistry or early childhood education?" She says, "I want to be a hair stylist or work in a CSI lab or both." We say, "It seems like she's practicing persistence, building a work ethic and getting pretty good at doing something she loves!"

We're known as the economic freedom people. (Remember? It's our mission!) Our focus is on building character, skills and knowledge in teens so they have a foundation for financial independence.

But even we don't recommend directing or narrowing teens' areas of interest!

Instead, we say, the more choices a young person has, the more chances are he'll eventually produce more than he consumes. That's economic freedom!

By deeply exploring a variety of things (serious or not) that interest them, teens learn a great deal about themselves and discover more about how the world works.

Think back to a time when you really wanted to learn a new skill. Maybe it was dancing the Cha Cha Slide, parallel parking or setting a volleyball. Regardless, you watched others, read about it and practiced the skills over and over and over until you got it just right. When you nailed it, you felt competent and proud of your effort. That feeling of accomplishment also helped you later as you approached other challenging things (like public speaking and home repairs) because you had already developed stick-to-itiveness and knew how to work hard. You just needed to apply your great skills in a different area.

HERE'S THAT "WHY":

Once a teen identifies a passion or hones his talent, there's plenty of time to go fast, deep and far.

Consider:

- Refer to our comments on “flow” on page 29 – they apply here too!
- Brain research shows that while the “emotional brain” (amygdala, hippocampus and hypothalamus) is supercharged during the teen years, the “rational brain” (prefrontal cortex) is still maturing. The emotional brain trumps the rational brain. This means that natural development could be stymied in environments that are overly competitive.

TEENS THRIVE IN ENVIRONMENTS WHERE ADULTS:

- Balance traditional graded tests with opportunities to explore deeply.
- Replace day-to-day school schedules with the chance to dig deeply into the subject of their choice.
- Offer to mentor, invite job shadowing and plan events like a teen *Shark Tank*.
- Seize the day! When life presents a teachable moment, ask teens to discuss and help.
- Expect teens to do challenging tasks around the home. They can pay bills, change the car's oil and figure out where the ants are getting in.



Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world.

– Harriet Tubman



Patience is faith in action.



TAKEAWAY:

The teen years are a time when young people explore and uncover passions. Through exploration, teens often find the springboard to who they are and what they want from life.

IN ACTION:

- Teens can get lost in music, thought, art or any favorite activity. They want to be good at something and appear competent doing it.
- Think about how many hours teens are willing to practice their foul shot or rewire a motherboard!

INTERESTING:

This is another story told by Dr. Stephen Covey. He wrote: *In everything you do in your family, keep in mind the miracle of the Chinese bamboo tree. After the seed for this amazing tree is planted, you see nothing, absolutely nothing, for four years except for a tiny shoot coming out of a bulb. During those four years, all the growth is underground in a massive, fibrous root structure that spreads deep and wide in the earth. But then in the fifth year, the Chinese bamboo tree grows up to eighty feet!*

Many things in life are like the Chinese bamboo tree. You work, and you invest time and effort, and you do everything you can possibly do to nurture growth, and sometimes you don't see anything for weeks, months or even years. But if you're patient and keep working and nurturing, that "fifth year" will come, and you will be astonished at the growth and change you see take place.

Did you ever know a young child who reported whenever others swore, littered or snuck a late-night candy bar? No one goes unnoticed by these little enforcers.

When they're young, children are tremendously influenced by what adults do and say. By modeling the positive actions, words and atmosphere we personally value, we can effectively show children what we believe and set expectations for their behavior.

This works well for about twelve years.

During the teen years, friends' influence naturally increases. As adults, we must realize that for teens to mature, they must develop social independence. Social independence grows as teens distance themselves from their parents and form close relationships with peers. Seeing increased peer influence for what it is – a healthy part of teen development – can help adults get past the emotion involved. (“**We used to be SO close, and now it’s as if I’m nothing!**”) Then, we can thoughtfully and intentionally provide teens the positive example they still need.

refine CHARACTER



HERE'S THAT "WHY":

Developmental psychologist Erik Erikson identified the importance of peer interaction as part of his theories on psychosocial development. He said that identity is formed through interpersonal relations that help a young person figure out who she is and how she can be loved.

TEENS THRIVE IN ENVIRONMENTS WHERE ADULTS:

- Model honesty, integrity and forgiveness.
- Promote positive peer interaction.
- Consider smaller class sizes, schools within schools and teachers as coaches rather than lecturers.
- Offer opportunities for peer tutoring, Socratic seminars and project-based learning.
- Ask them what they think they should do or how their actions might affect other people.
- Offer the luxury of learning from mistakes.

TAKEAWAY:

Adults often despair as they see teens cast away their sweet, young personalities and mold themselves in the image of their friends. But, through mutually respectful relationships and by stepping back to consider teens' needs, adults can act as powerful models of character and integrity.

IN ACTION:

While teens' character is under development and open to outside influences, it is important that they can encounter excellence.

Excellence can be experienced in many forms, including:

- Participation in a marching band under the direction of a disciplined director.
- Spending time with a strong leader who can help teens see beyond themselves.
- Working with a boss who expects first-rate results.
- Observing as parents offer loving care for their own parents.
- Learning from a teacher who's flexible with rules but inflexible on quality.
- Once teens are exposed to excellence, they can begin to refine their actions and choices so that they can experience excellence again and again—this time under their own direction.

INTERESTING:

A famous psychologist, Lawrence Kohlberg, is known for his study of the stages of moral development. He viewed the passage through each stage as “necessary trouble” in order to differentiate a higher level. One of the highest levels is being able to make noble choices based on respect for one's fellow man. Even most adults struggle to get to that level. Kohlberg's six levels of moral development include fear and reward, personal exchange, peer approval, order of the law, respect for fellow man and wisdom from the ages.



You need to see it to be it.

There is more in us than we know. If we can be made to see it, perhaps for the rest of our lives we will be unwilling to settle for less.

– Kurt Hahn



expect TRANSFORMATION

Nearly everyone can relate to this story. A teen redecorates her room, disposes of everything babyish and/or purchased by her parents and then disappears into that room. She reappears seemingly years later, beautiful, more mature and surer of herself than ever. *What in the world* happened in that room?

Self-construction, that's what!

To dig deeper, we'll use the example of a chrysalis. As you probably know, a chrysalis is the third, and last, stage of a caterpillar's journey toward becoming a butterfly. In this stage, the caterpillar creates a hard outer shell of protection, retreats inside and completes the change into an entirely new being. The shell gives the caterpillar the safety it needs to mature and transform. Adults often describe the teen years as difficult, kind of like the terrible twos. We're guilty of characterizing teens as full of angst, hormones and rebellion. (OK, we admit all of that is in the teenage mix from time to time.) However, we propose that, given a supportive environment, the teen years can be a time of beautiful transformation.

HERE'S THAT "WHY":

It is not the natural changes in teens that are difficult. What is difficult is that we so often place teens in environments that work against their very nature.

Just as a caterpillar must have a temporary period of inward growth, focus and separation, teens must also separate and turn inward to complete their journey into adulthood. As adults who understand how teens are growing and developing, we're OK with teens' tough shell because we know it's necessary and we understand that the butterfly isn't far off.

Native Americans and many other cultures knew this to be true. Their teens were sent out on vision quests. Our culture sees this period of transition as an act of **endurance or tolerance** versus as a time of incredible growth, development and awakening.

Interestingly, the Greek word origin for "chrysalis" is gold. Remember the poem by Robert Frost on Page 2? It captures the very essence of this brief, but critical, period of life.

TEENS THRIVE IN ENVIRONMENTS WHERE ADULTS:

- Help them understand what to expect.
- Provide them with facts about what is happening to them – their brains, bodies and emotions.
- Never offer them a pass on their potential.



**There is nothing
in a caterpillar
that tells you it is
going to be a butterfly.
Every child is
born a genius.**

– Buckminster Fuller



There is more in us than we know.

TAKEAWAY:

We do not prepare teens to become something. Instead, we prepare the environment so that teens have the place – and space – they need to undergo their natural transition into adulthood.

IN ACTION:

We overheard a mother reflect on her two teens' artistic talent. "My husband and I have no artistic or musical talent, yet our children excel in both areas. How did this happen?"

Was it the environment in which the children were raised? Might the children have special talents? Or could it be that these two parents have more in them than they know?

Picasso completed his first celebrated artwork at age nine and Michelangelo at age twelve, but Grandma Moses did not even pick up a brush until she was 76 years old. There was more in her than she knew about for a very long time!

INTERESTING:

A second definition of the word chrysalis is: a transitory period.

launch ECONOMIC FREEDOM

We wouldn't be who we are if we didn't include some thoughts about teens and economic freedom.



"Chet" Dekko during his teen years.

Mr. Chester E. Dekko, our founder, left us with the mission to *foster economic freedom through education*. Our board defines economic freedom as the ultimate liberty to make choices about one's own life.

After struggling through the lean years of the Great Depression, Mr. Dekko emerged with a burning desire to start a business so that he could gain greater control of

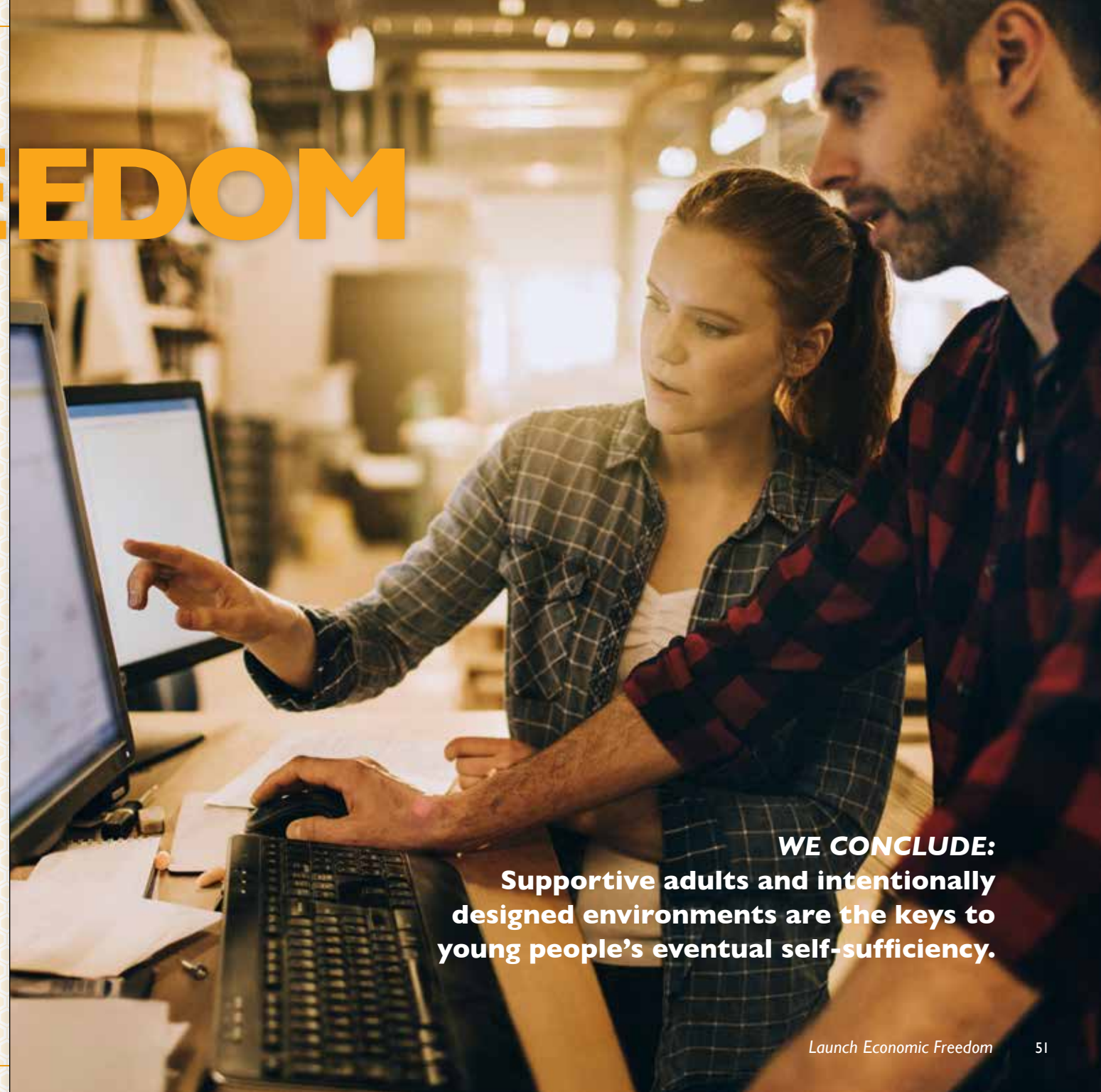
his destiny. A lifetime later, that same desire drove him to start the Dekko Foundation. Through its work, the Dekko Foundation extends the promise of economic freedom to people in the places Mr. Dekko held dear.

We believe the foundation of personal economic freedom is laid during the years from birth to age 18. Every experience a young person has impacts that foundation, making it

stronger or weaker. Supportive environments offered by caring and intentional adults help young people build the skills, knowledge and character they need to eventually become self-sufficient. Poorly designed environments allow young people to remain reliant on adult support and set the stage for a lifetime of dependence.

The teen years provide especially good opportunities for young people to begin their own quest for economic freedom. That's why we made this resource on teen development. That's why we help teens explore a variety of vocations and appreciate their civic responsibilities. It's why we support experiences in youth philanthropy.

We believe that by offering teens increasing levels of freedom and responsibility, varied real-world experiences and thoughtful exposure to the possibilities that lie before them, we help them along the path of discovery of their own economic freedom.



WE CONCLUDE:
Supportive adults and intentionally designed environments are the keys to young people's eventual self-sufficiency.



teens are golden

Mutual respect underlies EVERYTHING.

Real really matters.

A little sweat builds a lot of equity.

Attention and commitment come from within.

Patience is faith in action.

You need to see it to be it.

There is more in us than we know.





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