

THE MOMENTUM GUIDE

**A Calmer Way to Help Your Teen Move
Forward After High School**

Name: _____ Date: _____

CUT RIVER FARM



A Note for Parents

If you've been feeling a quiet pressure to figure out what comes next for your teen — you are not alone.

Most parents carry some version of the same worry.

Shouldn't they have a plan by now?

Shouldn't they know what they want to do?

Are we behind?

The honest answer is probably not in the way you think.

For most young adults, direction doesn't come from a single big decision made at eighteen. It doesn't come from picking the right major, the right school, or the right career on the first try.

It comes from movement. From real experience. From doing something — and learning from it.

This guide isn't a plan. It's a framework.

A simple, calm way to help your teen begin moving forward, even when the bigger picture isn't clear yet.

You don't need all the answers.

You just need a starting point.

The Momentum Framework

Most families feel like they're supposed to have a plan after high school. A clear direction, a decision, something that answers the question, "What's next?"

But when that answer isn't there yet, it can feel unsettling.

Here's what we've seen — direction rarely comes from sitting down and figuring everything out ahead of time.

It comes from movement.

From trying something. From showing up somewhere. From doing work that teaches you something about yourself.

If your teen doesn't have a clear plan right now, that's not a problem to solve. It's just a starting point.

The framework is simple:

1. Start with a job.

This is the foundation. It's where responsibility, consistency, and real-world awareness begin.

2. Pick two Momentum Starters.

Add a couple of real things that help them move forward — a skill they're building, an area they're exploring, something that gets them closer to understanding what fits.

3. Give it real time and effort.

Part of their week should be spoken for. Not just thinking about it. Not just researching it. Actually doing it.

4. Add more as you go.

As things become routine, layer in something new. Adjust. Keep going.

That's the whole framework.

It doesn't have to be perfect. It doesn't have to be permanent. It just has to be real.

Direction doesn't come from choosing the perfect path. It comes from trying one — and continuing to move forward.

Why a Job Comes First

Before anything else, a job.

Not because the paycheck is the goal — though that matters. But because of everything a job teaches that nothing else can.

A job teaches your teen how to:

- Show up on time, even when they don't feel like it
- Follow through on commitments they made to someone else
- Work with people they didn't choose
- Handle money they earned themselves
- Be accountable to someone outside the family
- Take direction, ask questions, and solve small problems
- Manage their own time and energy across a week

These are the lessons that carry over into everything that comes next — trades, college, military, business, travel, anything.

A job doesn't have to be impressive. It doesn't have to be related to a long-term career. It just has to be real.

A retail shift. A restaurant job. A warehouse role. A landscaping crew. A front desk position. A coffee shop. A grocery store. A movie theater. A summer camp.

The work itself isn't the point.

The habits are.

Once those habits are in place, everything else stacks more easily on top.

How to use THE MOMENTUM STARTERS LIST

Using your job as a foundation, now, Pair 2 Momentum Moves from the following list

Once a job is in place, the goal is simple:

Choose (or pair) 2 things from the list.

Not randomly—intentionally.

You're not just doing activities... you're combining them to create direction.

What “Pairing” Actually Means

A good pair does one of two things:

1. Skill + Exposure

Learn something → then get closer to using it

2. Experience + Direction

Try something → while building awareness or stability

THE MOMENTUM STARTERS LIST

- 1 Learn an AI tool (ChatGPT, Claude, Grok)
- 2 Take an online course (AI tools, Excel, marketing)
- 3 Earn a short-term certification (Google, CPR, trades, etc.)
- 4 Learn tools used in real jobs (spreadsheets, CRM, design tools)
- 5 Get licensed (real estate, notary,)
- 6 Take a community college class
- 7 Start an associate's degree (keep it practical and flexible)
- 8 Look for a job that's even loosely connected to a field of interest
- 9 Work for a company that helps pay for education (example: Taco Bell, retail, healthcare systems)
- 10 Shadow someone in a field they're curious about
- 11 Help a small business (social media, website, admin tasks)
- 12 Work a seasonal job with housing
- 13 Travel + work through platforms like Workaway or WWOOF
- 14 Try a structured program (domestic or international)
- 15 Start a simple side hustle (lawn care, detailing, reselling)
- 16 Offer a local service (cleaning, tech help, tutoring)
- 17 Try freelancing (Examples: Fiverr, Upwork)
- 18 Build a small online project (blog, niche page, directory)
- 19 Sell something and learn how money actually moves
- 20 Start a Roth IRA
- 21 Set a savings goal (first \$1,000, etc.)
- 22 Learn basic budgeting
- 23 Find a mentor
- 24 Talk to 3 people about their jobs
- 25 Attend a job fair or industry event
- 26 Visit real workplaces
- 27 Start an internship
- 28 Step into something that builds independence
- 29 Look into the skill trades
- 30 Look into a silver tsunami business takeover

1

Start with a job

2

Pair 2 momentum moves

REMEMBER

3

Give it real time and effort

4

Add more as you go

BUILD YOUR FIRST MOMENTUM PAIR

1 YOUR FOUNDATION (JOB)

Where are you working (or planning to work)?

What do you want to learn from this job?

2 BUILD YOUR FIRST PAIR

Choose 2 items from the Momentum List that work together.

MOMENTUM MOVE #1

What did you choose? _____

Why this one? _____

MOMENTUM MOVE #2

What did you choose? _____

Why this one? _____

3 HOW THESE WORK TOGETHER

This is the most important part.

How do these two steps connect?

Example: "I'm learning a skill → and trying to use it in the real world."

NOTES

Use this space for any ideas, reminders, or thoughts as you build momentum.

What a Real Week Looks Like

The framework only works if it takes real time. Here's what that can actually look like in practice.

These are sample weekly rhythms — not rules. The point is to show that meaningful momentum doesn't require an extreme schedule. Just consistent, real effort.

The Hands-On Explorer

For a teen drawn to trades, building, or working with their hands.

- 20–25 hours: part-time job
- 4–6 hours: working through a short certification online
- 3–5 hours: small side project (lawn care, handyman work, reselling)

The Curious Connector

For a teen who's people-oriented and figuring out their direction.

- 20–25 hours: part-time job
- 3–6 hours: one community college class
- 2–3 hours: shadowing, mentoring, or networking conversations

The Still-Figuring-It-Out

For a teen who genuinely doesn't know yet — and that's okay.

- 20–25 hours: part-time job
- 3–4 hours: one short online certification or course
- 2–3 hours: working on a financial foundation (budgeting, tracking, savings goal)

None of these schedules are extreme.

But each one builds something real — every single week.

Start Somewhere. That's Enough.

Most parents feel like they need to help their teen figure everything out before they begin—a plan, a direction, a clear path forward. But the kids who gain traction aren't the ones who had it all figured out early. They're the ones who started.

They got a job, tried something, followed a small thread of interest, and kept going. This guide isn't about finding the perfect answer. It's about removing the pressure to have one.

If your teen takes one thing from this, let it be this: they don't need to map out the next four years. They just need to build momentum—through a job, a skill, an experience, or even a simple conversation. Something real.

Because once they begin, things start to change. They learn what they like and what they don't, what fits and what doesn't. Confidence builds, and over time, direction shows up—not because it was chosen perfectly, but because it was experienced.

There's no perfect path waiting to be discovered. There are only paths that get clearer once you start walking them.

Build skills. Build experience. Build direction.

Come Join Our Community — It's Free

This guide gives you information. Our community gives you the people.

Our Facebook group — CRF-Life After High School: Real World Paths for Teens — is where parents and young adults share what is actually working, ask questions without judgment, and support each other through the decisions that follow graduation. Search for us on Facebook or visit thecutriverfarm.com to join directly.

And if you are not on Facebook, come find us where you spend your time.

We are on TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook — all under Cut River Farm.

We share real stories, practical tips, and the kind of specific guidance that does not make it into the algorithm anywhere else. If something in this guide sparked a question or an idea, chances are we have already talked about it. Come be part of the conversation.

Get Our Free Resources — Join the Email List

When you join our email list at thecutriverfarm.com, you'll get access to free guides like Life 101 - What No One Taught You - Until Now and 27 Real World Skills Every Young Adult Needs — practical, no-fluff resources we wish we had when we were starting out.

You'll also be the first to hear about new guides, tools, and resources.

No spam. Just useful content.

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About Cut River Farm Guides

A simple path from uncertainty to real-world direction.

Cut River Farm guides help families take practical steps forward after high school with more clarity, confidence, and direction.

Some guides focus on building a thoughtful plan for what comes next. Others explore real-world opportunities that help young adults gain experience, build skills, and find direction.

Find them all @ thecutriverfarm.com/shop

Foundational Guide

The Post High School Plan

Your complete roadmap for life after high school

More Paths Than You Think

A Career Discovery Guide for Life After High School

The AI Guide for Life After High School

A Simple Guide to the New Rules of Careers, AI, and Building a Future That Lasts

Free Starter Guides

Life 101: What No One Taught You - Until Now

27 Real-World Skills Young Adults Need Before Leaving Home

Core Guides

The Complete Guide to Living and Working Abroad

The Complete Guide to the National Park Work Program

The Complete Guide to the Disney College Program