

# 18 is NOT a Magical Number

From our video on our [YouTube channel](#)

**Sam:** Good morning, welcome to ***Sunday Snacks with Sam and Ellie***. So today we're going to talk to you about something near and dear to my heart. In the perspective of, I used to teach this age demographic, and it's really about the idea that 18 is not a magic number that suddenly a light bulb goes off and all the answers in the world are

**Ellie:** I'm suddenly an adult with all the skills required.

**Sam:** Yeah, it's not, it never has been, never will be. And you know, when I taught high school, I taught from nine through 12 and I taught a bunch of 18 year olds. And many of them were very ill prepared for life. And that's not the school's fault, it's not the kid's fault. You know, I don't know if it's the parent's fault. I can't point any blame to anybody, but I do think that as a society, we have to stop assuming we all know what that means.

It makes an ass out of you and me. So, we have to stop assuming that at 18, these kids are going to be fully vetted, understanding everything that's going on in the world and how to do it themselves. We don't have programs like home-ec in school anymore. We don't have programs like woodshop anymore, or even programs that would teach you basic, housekeeping, housekeeping, or if you have a pipe that, that gets clogged or something, what to do, like how to plunge it or anything.

None of those life skills are taught in the schools anymore because they're so test driven. And again, I can say that as a former teacher, it's still very much active in test-driven today.

So, what do we do instead of just pointing blame, saying, it's your fault, my fault, school's fault, parent's fault. What do we do to help our kids? What do you think Ellie?

**Ellie:** Well, I think there's a bunch of things. I know we think they don't act responsibly and sadly, we don't expect a lot from our kids until they're adults and we've not taught them what that means.

So, if we want them to wisely spend money, okay. Then I think growing up, they have to learn, how to plan for things, that thing they want that's expensive, they should have to help earn it and they should be able to save for it until they have it,

Not get in the habit ... I don't think we should start them out with credit cards and things like that.

**Sam:** That's terrifying.

**Ellie:** You know, although I know there are several apps you can get that are supposed to help your kids. And I suppose that works, but I don't think it works without the guidance of a parent. Yeah. You know, you, you may be able to go into the present age with the tools, but it still requires somebody to help them understand why they're doing that.

You mentioned earlier, like even cooking.

**Sam:** Oh yeah. Cooking is not taught in schools. I remember when I was in middle school and again, this is the early nineties, so not that long ago. (Right). We had home-ec and in home-ec we learned some basic skills that I already had known from my grandmother and from being at home. But we did basic cooking, like how to cook an egg make an orange Julius, which I thought was really funny, and boil water.,

We did sewing. I think we made a pillow if I remember correctly, which I had already done multiple times with my grandmother, but it was just reinforcing to me when I was in middle school that these are skills that I would need throughout life.

**Ellie:** I'm sure there were kids in your class though that had never done any of these things.

**Sam:** Bingo! There were a ton of kids in my class that had never done anything. Then it was only half a year - the other half of the year, I would hop to wood shop where I built a variety of different things.

I can't even remember, I think, but one of them was a bench. No, actually that was a pretty big project. We had a really amazing shop teacher. But these are things that I know if my kids were in middle school right now - well, my daughter technically would be, if she wasn't being homeschooled, she wouldn't get that opportunity.

But I know she does through Scouts. With one of the amazing volunteers that we have, she does woodworking with them and my son's doing the same thing. They're learning life skills. Even though these are things that I'm teaching at home, these are also things that they're experiencing in other clubs and activities.

**Ellie:** Cool.

**Sam:** So, what are some life skills that you think that our 18 year-olds who are going off into the world and being expected to be adults ... What should they have to help them be more ready for the real world, Ellie? Because they're not. And that it's no fault of their own.

**Ellie:** Well, one of the things that I noticed is I don't think any of these skills anymore are gender related.

**Sam:** No, no.

**Ellie:** I think knowing how to make your bed, of course, anybody who's ever been in the military knows that you learn that really well. But learning, learning how to just keep your house clean, learning, like you say, learning how to cook and make a meal.

Both girls and boys, everybody I think, general maintenance. If they have an opportunity to learn that, how to use a screwdriver and a hammer and how to know what those tools are. It's interesting.

Cause I think you - weren't you the one who posted that somewhere they're teaching girls how to change a tire?

**Sam:** Oh Yeah. In the middle of Australia, one of their biggest programs is teaching women self-independence through mechanics and making sure that if they're ever caught on the side of the road, that they can take care of the vehicle themselves from start to finish - like a popped tire, to oil changes and things like that. That is crucial.

And that was one of those things that my parents - not my parents - my dad made me do before I even was ever allowed to drive. I had to be able to change my tire, change my oil at home. Know where all the fluids were in my car and be able to top them off, and make sure that I could get under the hood and in the trunk without problems.

**Ellie:** Well, yeah. And I think there's, there's some discrepancies there now because the way cars are made, some of that's not the same anymore, but just whatever you own learning how to care for it, whether it's skates or a skateboard or a bicycle or any of those things, just learning, how to take care of the things around you.

You know, cleaning up the bathroom. You're not the only one who uses it. And I think just parents, I know it's easier to just do it yourself, but your kids aren't learning anything that way. So, I think we have to take the time to explain our expectations and then give them some space to learn.

I think that the real key is not to criticize early in the game, but, but just keep encouraging them to improve. I just think being involved with your kids and your everyday life, so that they're learning what it takes, budgets - being involved with, like right now, supply chain issues, with inflation, with credit rates going up. If you're not talking to your kids about what's happening, their expectations are "life is going to go on as normal."

And for many families that normal is going to be very restricted for a while. So, share with them the choices you're making in your household budget so that they can understand a little better why something may have changed in what they're used to having or what they're used to asking for. Maybe you don't go out to eat as much or whatever, but if we don't share those day-to-day things, it doesn't make sense to them automatically at 18.

**Sam:** Yeah. Everything you just said is a perfect example. So, right now my kids started going back to the grocery store with me. We went and our normal family budget was X - and it's almost doubled, same amount of groceries - everything just because of sheer inflation and price.

And my kids were shocked at the receipt and they're like, "Oh my goodness, what the heck happened?"

And yeah, we are very active with our kids with explaining budgets and things like that. And listening to podcasts about inflation and what's going on in the world and how that impacts our family.

So, our kids went, "Oh, crap. We need to not eat out as much." And my daughter has a massive sweet tooth, she was like, "Can we go to the Duncan's and have donuts?"

And I'm like, "Nope. You know, that's now more of a special kind of activity." I mean, those kinds of things are relevant for them.

I remember when I was younger, one of the ways I learned how to budget was with envelopes, and I know they have tons of apps now, so that's really great because my daughter is getting to the age where she can push a lawn mower and she can help out our neighbors, which would be advantageous because I know that our neighbors have already said that they would pay her to do it.

So, she wants a video game and I told her straight up, you're not getting it before Christmas because you saw the grocery bill. Like we need to be conscious of what we're spending. So that was one of those incentives for her to (a) be more responsible, (b) to also start learning that skill with us helping her - being like, okay, so if you're going to spend an hour mowing this person's lawn, we're going to have to spend X amount in gas. You're going to have to get X amount for the weed eater and wear and tear on our lawn mower. Then what's that going to look like at the end of the year, when we have to take our lawn mower to get serviced.

I don't have a knife - blade sharpener and things at home, how do we put those costs together to make it a budget for her to be able to actually earn money while mowing lawns? It's a learning experience and relatively simple that many of us forget that by doing that, we are teaching our kids those life skills.

You know, my husband's notorious for what you were saying earlier. He'll say, "I will do it. I'll just do it." He's like, "I will just set the table so that we can eat on time.:"

I'm like, "No, no, stop it. It's fine to put all the materials on the table but make them set the table so that they know where the knife and the fork go. So that when they go to someone else's house. they're polite. They're respectful. They can offer to help. They can know what those skills are."

With all of that said, and none, and we recognize that not everybody's perfect. Life skills are crucial: budgeting, how to do your own laundry, how to cook for yourself, how to keep a tidy home, keep a kempt appearance.

Those are like five core things that we truly think that the children who are turning 18 should know how to do by the time they leave the house or by the time they turn 18. And that comes from someone else teaching them. If you don't feel confident in that, there are tons of programs out there that you can lean on.

You know, like Scouts is helping me with my kids with more of those safety protocols - with knots and fire etiquette. Like, I know what that looks like for me, but I don't know how that looks in a community setting. So, they're learning all those kinds of programs.

So, we would question you, "What do you think is important?"

**Ellie:** You know, what skills - or what skills maybe do you have trouble teaching?"

*I think the key is constant reminders are **not** teaching. If a kid doesn't have to think for themselves, and mom or dad will just say, "Oh, don't forget this. And don't forget that." Sometimes we have to allow them to be uncomfortable and fail – like you forget something when you go camping. Sometimes allowing them to be a bit uncomfortable is how they learn to think ahead.*

**Sam:** Yep.

**Ellie:** And without these various things happening, it won't make sense at 18 just because they *magically* had their 18th birthday.

**Sam:** Yep. So yeah. Let us know what you think is important or what skill maybe you have trouble coming up with a good solution. And we'll try to answer.

**Sam:** We'll try to help you out with that one. So have a good one. See you Later. Bye.

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