

# Parenting the boss: How parents can support their entrepreneurial kids

Parenting is not an easy job. Most parents want to raise children who grow up to become respected members of society and adults that are passionate about serving their communities. So, for many parents, a successful career, especially within commonly respected fields such as medicine, engineering and perhaps a job in the public sector, is one way of attaining respect from their communities. And, entrepreneurship as a career on the other hand is generally not seen as a viable choice because of the risks associated with it.



Josh Adler. | Source: Supplied

Yet, entrepreneurship is just as important a career choice as any other, for some people. When a child decides to take an entrepreneurial leap, they'll need constant motivation from themselves and those around them.

## Parenting contributes positively to the journey of entrepreneurship

According to the executive director of the Anzisha Prize, Josh Adler, parents and guardians are actually integral to this, playing an important role that contributes to the success of the journey of entrepreneurship.

“But unfortunately, most parents do not know exactly how to support their entrepreneurial children in their journey. This is because of decades of societal conscientisation around the idea of basic education and employment, which are systematically designed to favour job-seeking rather than job-creation.

“It is also the fear of the risk of financial losses that makes parents more likely to encourage their children to go through school and find a job, instead of opting for entrepreneurship as a career,” Adler says.

He emphasises that this way of parenting simply does not cut it anymore, saying that the labour population in Africa “grows faster than the economy is able to maintain jobs or create new opportunities”.



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So, how should African parents play this role? Adler borrows from the Anzisha Prize’s recently published book [Think Like a Parent, Act like a Coach: Parenting the Boss](#), to provide ways to support your child’s entrepreneurship dreams.

Once a teenage entrepreneur himself, he believes that it was the support of his own parents that helped him start and build his own business: “My very first business venture was started while attending university and living at home. By the time I left home, I had no need to look for a job because my business had secured me and my colleagues a regular income. The business grew and so did we, just like any other career.”

As a parent today, Adler shares the tips below for parents to help their children’s entrepreneurial ventures in this day and age.

## 1. Understand entrepreneurship for yourself

The concept of entrepreneurship means a number of different things to different people, but it is commonly associated with the idea that it is an alternative solution for people struggling to secure employment. And as a parent, you do not want these difficulties for your child, but when we look at entrepreneurship differently, these fears fade.

Entrepreneurship is in fact our inherent ability as humans to identify societal needs and “socio-economic challenges and therefore apply innovative thinking to address them and generate revenue and employment opportunities while at it. So, if your child demonstrates any such characteristics of entrepreneurship, show them that it is okay to choose this path as a career choice,” Adler says.



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## 2. You should care about entrepreneurship

The continent’s unemployment rates continue to rise unabated. The labour population of the African continent is growing faster than the economy is able to generate jobs. This is not necessarily due to stagnation, because African economies have been growing faster than the rest of their global counterparts in recent years. It is rather because the economies were not job-generative.

“This phenomenon points to the need for an entrepreneurial population capable of growing businesses and creating jobs”, stresses Uzo Agyare-Kumi, dean of global programmes and parents at the Africa Leadership Academy, adding: “Entrepreneurship, therefore, offers the continent the best and most sustainable solution to ending high unemployment rates.”

### 3. Do not let fear of the unknown dim your child’s entrepreneurial light

Many parents to this day consider certain careers a safer bet to a secure future. Careers in engineering, medicine, law and education, for example, are seen as such. But what if the economy is no longer able to create any new opportunities in these fields? Shouldn’t children be taught to create their own income opportunities instead?

“While the fear of the challenges and uncertainties that come with entrepreneurship is understandable, it should be acknowledged that the potential rewards are equally massive. And for children being raised to become important members of society, a career in entrepreneurship creates that opportunity in this day and age”, says Nolzwe Mhlaba, community and project manager at the Anzisha Prize.



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Lastly, while it is expected that these fears will at some point set in due to the concerns around instability, uncertainty and hardships, it is important to also remember that entrepreneurship offers more independence, freedoms and flexibility. Parents should also, therefore, where possible, find ways to demonstrate to their children by being entrepreneurial themselves.

“Your actions should show them that it is okay to choose this as a viable career path”, Mhlaba concludes.

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