



## How To Motivate Your Teenagers

If you're a parent of a teenager, you may have seen the title of this article and had one of two reactions. The first, my child is motivated, no need to read. Or you may have had this second response, how fast can I read and consume this material. Below is an excerpt from an Empowering parents interview that fully captures a healthy strengths based approach to motivating your teen. The interview is with Josh Shipp also known as the Teen Whisperer. Josh was an at-risk foster child who has gone on to become a motivational speaker, author and world renowned youth empowerment expert.



**Empowering Parents:** Josh, some kids give up easily because they feel that everyone else is better—that they'll never be the best. I think sometimes kids give up because they feel like other kids are better at something than they are. What would you say to them?

**JS:** What I always tell kids is that it isn't about who's the best, it's about who works the hardest and who's the most dedicated. When I spoke at Harvard University, kids came up to me afterward and talked about how challenging it was to come to Harvard. They were the smartest kid in their school, but now they've come to a place where everyone is the smartest kid in school.

I think you need to be careful about complimenting your child and simply saying things like "You're so smart," because it's a relative term. It's much better to encourage and compliment them on how hard they worked—ultimately, that's what matters. It's not, "Do you have good ideas?" It's "Will you do something with your ideas?" Remember, there are a lot of people who are smart or athletic or musically talented, but all they do is sit around and think about it. It's really not about intelligence or even natural talent. It's about applying those things in your life.

So as a parent, I think it's important to know what your kid's goals are—because then you can use that as a tool to motivate them. Your child's goals may be really good and realistic, or they may be really bizarre. I don't think you should criticize them if this is the case, however—at least they're dreaming about something. They might say something like, "I want to be a computer programmer." At least there's something there that you can use as incentive when they're unmotivated. You might say, "Stay on target. Remember your goal of becoming a computer programmer requires that you get good grades."

With teens, I think it's best to remind them of things they themselves have said. To a certain degree, you're allowing them to co-author certain things. It's effective for you as a parent to say, "Remember your goal is to become a computer programmer. But let's be honest, you're not going to be able to pull that off if you don't have a high school degree, at least."

Another thing I would say to kids is, "It's not how talented you are that matters, it's how dedicated you are that counts." Everybody is talented in some way. Most people are smart. So what? But if you're dedicated and smart, you can do amazing things.

Excerpt from [Empowering Parents](#)

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