

TOOLS4TEENS.NET

Youthful Motivation

A Motivational Guide Designed
for Teens & Their Parents





TOOLS4TEENS.NET

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Table of Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	5
<i>Youthful Motivation</i>	7
Motivation means you work harder	8
Motivation means you accomplish more	8
Motivation helps you to see things you usually wouldn't	9
Motivation impacts the world around you	9
Motivation helps to create positive habits	9
Motivation is what makes the process fun	9
Motivation is what gets you where you want to go	10
<i>The Unique Struggles Facing Teens</i>	11
You have a lot going on in your head	12
The Incredible Hulk does lie just beneath the surface	13
Abstract reasoning gets a boost	14
Your ventral striatum is lit up like a Christmas tree	15
Your circadian rhythms screw everything up	16
What's the Solution?	17
<i>How to Stay Motivated</i>	20
For Teens:	21
Find your calm	21
Reduce overload	21
Clarify the goal	22
Research options	22
Refine the action plan	23
Brainstorm solutions	23
Ask what this means to you personally	24
Accept failure	24
Get organized	24
Break down milestones into smaller tasks	25

Reward yourself	25
Take ownership of what you're doing	25
For Parents:	26
Get involved but know when to step back	26
Suggest a brainstorming session	26
Sometimes you need to listen	27
Teach them to see failure as an opportunity	27
Empathize	28
Refocus on the problem	28
Try an incentive plan	28
Laugh	29
Talk about the future	29
Put your organizational skills to the test	29
Where do you go from here?	30
<i>Conclusion</i>	31

Introduction

To the teens of the world, think about this: You are unique. You are powerful. You're going to do great things.



The teen years are full of possibility. You've probably heard that before without having a clear understanding of what it means. Think about it. It's during these high school years that you come into your own. You're learning not just the basics in school, but who you are and what you like.

You're figuring out the things that are important to you.

You're in that strange place where you not only have the time, but the passion and energy to accomplish things that no one else in any other age group does.

Just think about this:

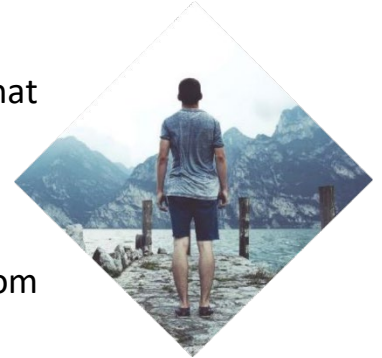
- Laura Dekker sailed around the world – by herself – at the age of 14.
- Flynn McGarry started making a name for himself as one of the world's top chefs by creating a pop-up restaurant that food critics raved about at the age of 13.
- Saira Blair became the youngest ever elected official when she was elected a Delegate in West Virginia at the age of 18.

- Jordan Romero made it to the top of Mount Everest at the age of 13.

A quick search online will yield dozens of similar examples, telling you one significant thing: **a motivated teenager is unstoppable.**

If your life involves too much downtime, and you're wondering just what your limits are, then this book is for you.

We'll start with looking at the benefits of living a motivated life and from there start removing the roadblocks that get in the way.



Finally, you'll learn how to **stay motivated** so that you can keep that energy going.

Whether you want to achieve great things in sports like Wayne Gretzky (who signed on to play professional hockey at the age of 17) or your dreams are more modest, it all starts here. The process is the same for all success: making a goal and then doing what it takes to get there.

The world is waiting for you to show us who you are.

Parents? Hang on; it's going to be an exciting ride!

Let's get started.

Youthful Motivation

Nobody dreams quite so extravagantly as a teenager.

When we're young, everything is still possible. There's no goal too lofty, whether you desire to get into a particular school or change the world by designing the next greatest app.

The sky is the limit.



That's because teens see the world in terms of possibility, without being bogged down by cynicism or impossibility.

However, without motivation, it's impossible to set plans into motion.

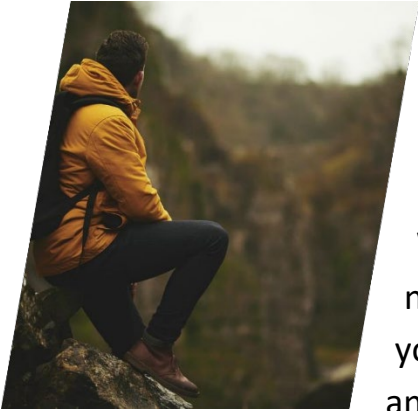
As a teenager, it becomes critically important to learn the benefits of motivation.

These are the skills you'll take with you into the rest of your life. Learning how to harness this energy and apply it to your goals now, will lead you on to success and accomplishing great things. At the same time, you will be making your life a whole lot easier than others who never find that motivation.

Let's look at some of the reasons that motivation can be so special:

Motivation means you work harder

Without motivation, the temptation would be to throw yourself down on the couch and play video games all afternoon (though it can be argued that you might be motivated to get to that next level).



Motivation is what kicks you into gear to buckle down and get a task done.

Without it, you're not accomplishing anything. While that might sound nice initially (who doesn't like a little relaxation from time to time?), you're never going to change your situation if you don't get up and *do* anything. Sadly, that also means never reaching your goals.

With that in mind, think of motivation as the fuel that you've put into the car. When you put your foot down on the accelerator, something happens, and the car starts moving.

Motivation means you accomplish more

Even an unmotivated person can get something done from time to time. But it's a guarantee that the motivated individual will far surpass the unmotivated one.

Think of it as the difference between having a bite of dessert or enjoying the whole thing. When you want to get something significant done, you're going to need to tap into motivation to get there.

Motivation helps you to see things you usually wouldn't

When you're motivated, you'll work harder to find a solution when you come up against a problem. This means thinking outside the box and finding those creative alternatives that are going to take you to the next level. This is where you get ahead, as the unmotivated tend to quit when going gets rough.



Motivation impacts the world around you

People love hanging around someone with a lot of positive energy. The very motivation that creates that enthusiasm is contagious, meaning where you have the motivation, motivation follows. This makes the world not only a better place but one where you have influence. Think about that a moment. Wouldn't you like to be a positive change for the better?

Motivation helps to create positive habits

Creating positive habits without motivation is impossible. Habits are hard to instill, mostly because you're trying to change a behavior that's already ingrained. Motivation is what forces you to overcome your previous programming and to push through and repeat that behavior every day until it becomes a habit. Without motivation, you'd never get there at all.

Motivation is what makes the process fun

Have you heard the saying, "It's about the journey, not the destination"? Motivation keeps things jumping. When you're motivated to do things, everything looks possible and exciting.

There's no room for boring in the world of motivation! That makes the part where you work to make your goals reality every bit as exciting as getting there. Imagine if you had that feeling of



fulfillment at the end of every day and couldn't wait to get up in the morning to do it all over again.

Motivation is what gets you where you want to go

This one should go without saying. Unless you're motivated to get there, you're never going to realize your goals. Motivation is what keeps you in motion when you'd generally quit. It's what reminds you to press on when things get difficult or when you hit obstacles that would have otherwise tripped you up. **Without motivation, there is no success.**

After a list like that, it seems clear that living a motivated life isn't only a good idea; it's good *for you* as well.

That's why it's so important to learn the skills that will make motivation a daily part of your life while you're young. Motivation is going to be the most critical tool in your toolbox as you move forward in any aspect of your life. It's what's going to help you get into college, find that first job, or even discover that perfect relationship. Motivation is going to give you the life that you dream of having.

The trick is not to let yourself get derailed before you even get out of the gate. Keep reading to see how motivation gets you past the challenges that are so unique to teens.

The Unique Struggles Facing Teens

The battle cry of the teenager seems to be, “You don’t understand what I’m going through!”

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“You don’t understand what I’m going through!”

The problem with adulthood is that once we grow up, we tend to forget just how hard it is to be a teenager, especially in today’s fast-paced world. Not only is change and progress hard when you’re a teenager, sometimes it can feel downright impossible.

That’s why it’s so important to address those issues here and learn how finding your focus will give you the motivation you need to push past the things that keep you frozen in place.

DID YOU KNOW?

A lot of the problems that you’re going to find so frustrating as a teenager stem from the fact that you’re not done growing yet. Literally.

Your brain goes through a massive period of change starting from the time that you’re 11 or 12 that will carry on until you’re 25. And it won’t stop there!

Throughout your lifetime, you’re still going to experience changes in your brain, a constant stream of learning and development in the neural network. But one of the highest periods of growths comes right now, during the teen years.

How does that affect you?

While most growth is relatively easy to see (you get taller, your body goes through the physical

changes associated with puberty), what's going on in your head isn't quite so obvious. The easiest way to tell where you are in brain development is by looking at your emotions, thought processes, and actions.

Let's look at that in more detail.

You have a lot going on in your head

When you're a baby, you develop an overabundance of neural connections that are 'pruned' over the next several years as you learn how to think and reason. This happens again with the onset of puberty.

What this means, is that you're starting to get the reasoning skills that adults have and starting to think about things in entirely new ways.

The problems come when you start to ask who's driving the bus. Initially, all these decision-making processes are traveling through the limbic system, where all the emotions are, rather than the prefrontal cortex, which is dedicated more to logic and reasoning.

What does this mean for you?

Typically, that implies that you're making decisions based in the heart and not the head. So not everything you do makes logical sense. What's worse, by reacting with emotions first, that's where you get into trouble. The teenager who gets into a fight might do so because they're reacting with emotion to a situation, rather than sitting down and talking things out.

This affects motivation too. A teen might rationally know, on some level, that doing homework is what's going to get them into a good college someday. But it's hard to feel motivated when

you're up against the emotional response of "I don't feel like it" or "That doesn't sound like much fun."

Instead, the teen might look for something that gives more instant gratification, like the rush that comes from beating that level in a video game or hanging out with friends.

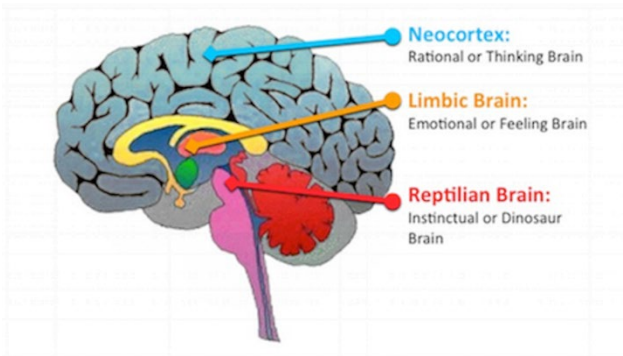
The Incredible Hulk does lie just beneath the surface

While we're talking about the limbic system, you must understand you have another thing going on there.

As the rest of your brain develops so too does the amygdala. The amygdala is an essential part of your limbic system. Think of it as the watchman whose primary purpose is to keep you safe. The amygdala acts the way a smoke detector would. It sees the threat and sends up a scream that you're going to hear in the rest of your body. This translates into the most primal of emotions: Fear, Rage, Anger.

What does this mean for you? With all the hormone fluctuations going on, and the way things are still growing and developing, your amygdala gets a little bit trigger happy. In other words, it gets activated very quickly, on minimal provocation. This is the reason why you started yelling when your mom told you to clean your room. Chances are you didn't even understand the anger at the time and might have even felt helpless to stop it. This is one reason why teens react so passionately to the world around them.

In the world of setting goals, it's the amygdala that will derail you every chance it gets. It's



what tells you that you're going to fail, someone else is doing it better, makes you feel helpless when you think about even trying. It's trying to do its job and keep you safe, even if it's emotionally safe.

Abstract reasoning gets a boost

As a teen, you're finally able to start realizing that the world is, in fact, separate from you. You know that your parents are people with hopes and dreams of their own. You start seeing that other people have thoughts and feelings. And you also become aware of what others think of you.

This last is a double-edged sword. While it's great to be able to walk in someone else's shoes, the realization that people think about you can be downright terrifying. You start to worry about *what* they're thinking about you. And who they're repeating those thoughts to. Welcome to social anxiety and a whole lot of worry that feeds right into peer pressure and the desire to not stand out in any way whatsoever.

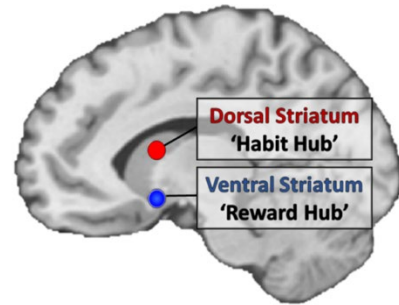
It's hard to become ambitious and set goals in this kind of mindset, especially when your peers are not only setting different goals from you but don't understand why you're choosing the goals you have.

It's that social anxiety that derails motivation as you become so caught up in trying not to look bad in front of everyone else, that you're no longer comfortable with taking risks or pressing on into new territory. Which is a real shame, because it's those abstract reasoning skills that wire you toward success by giving you the ability to think outside the box and to do things in ways no one else ever has before.

Your ventral striatum is lit up like a Christmas tree

Welcome to the pleasure center of the brain.

Various studies have shown that there's a whole lot more activity in the ventral striatum of teenagers than in that of adults. What makes this interesting is this is where the brain responds to rewards.



Rewards take on many forms. Whether you've just scored a hot deal at your favorite clothing shop, felt the adrenaline rush of bungee jumping, or taken your car past 80 mph for the first time. That rush you feel is what your brain interprets as a reward. Your mind likes this feeling and is going to seek it out every chance it gets.

Unfortunately, what it takes to build up that feeling of satisfaction tends to stop working over time. You need more of the good stuff to get the same result.

So while one reward give you a pleasant feeling when you experience it, eventually you need more and more of that reward. That surge of adrenaline you felt while rock climbing the first time, now takes bigger rocks, higher up, with a lot more risk to get that same thrill.

Because teens react so favorably to rewards, in the world of motivation you can find this helpful. Setting up a system of rewards to get things done will be more useful here now, at this age, than it will be when you're an adult.

On the other hand, that desire for a reward can just as easily derail you. If you feel like you're not making progress, or if things get hard, this is where the ventral striatum starts angling you over to what does. This is the point where projects get abandoned in favor of what's more short-term and immediately rewarding.

Your circadian rhythms screw everything up

The teen years are naturally going to call for more sleep. While adults typically need between 7 – 9 hours of sleep at night, teens need from 9 – 10 hours

...and are known to sleep even longer than that.

Now if only teens would respect that part of the equation. Your body needs sleep, but most teens will grab as little rest as possible and then crash and burn hard on the weekends. I know I did!

That's because your typical teen has a busy life. Between school and a social life, they're already using up quite a few hours of the day. Add in a lot of homework, maybe a part-time job, extracurricular activities, and the constant availability of social media and you'll be lucky if you're getting between 4-5 hours of sleep at night, or roughly half of what your body needs.

It's no wonder you slept like the dead for 14 hours last weekend!





The problem is, when you're sleep deprived, it's impossible to motivate yourself to do anything. Willpower is a finite supply, made even scarcer by exhaustion. Having the gumption to get up and get stuff done when you're dragging along is just not going to happen. Even if you summon enough motivation to start, you're likely to lose it long before you reach the end. The solution to this one seems simple: get more sleep!

What's the Solution?

What do you do when it feels like even your brain is against you?

The good news is, things will get better with time. Your prefrontal cortex will start to take over more and more of the heavy lifting when it comes to making decisions. The brain chemistry balances out, and your amygdala calms down and starts waiting for an actual disaster before throwing you into a tailspin.

In the meantime, you need to give yourself a lot of time and patience (and this goes for your parents too!) Learn how to stop and ask yourself what's going on when you feel that wild emotional response. Ask yourself if you are thinking clearly and if this is the logical response. In short, think before acting. And if you mess up (and you will) be patient with yourself and accept that as part of the process.

The trick is not to lose your motivation.

And for parents wanting to help?

You guys need to take a breath and quit freaking out so much when things are going wrong. Take the time to talk to your kid. Ask what's going on. Understand that their reasoning isn't going to look like your own. Your job is to guide your teen through this entire growing up process and becoming a nag or indulging in lengthy lectures aren't going to cut it. Here are some quick tips:



Be the one to show them how it's done

Your child is in the process of becoming an adult. Show them the kind of adult they should become by being the best version of yourself you can be. This speaks louder than any lecture ever would.

Communicate, not just with them but also with their teachers and mentors

By staying in the loop, you'll better understand what's going on in their lives and what they're going through.

Give support

Let them know you understand what they're going through, and that you've been there yourself.

Give opportunities

Growth comes from being allowed to spread their wings. Help your teen to find classes, activities, and opportunities that give them a chance to practice their newfound reasoning skills (and have fun while doing so).

Show your kids how to hang in there

That urge to quit when the going gets tough is hard to combat. Hold your teen accountable for seeing things through, but then offer them encouragement instead of lectures when they're flagging.

Be reasonable

Maybe your child is never going to live up to your expectations in some area. You might have wanted your son to be the quarterback, but does that make his desire to pursue ballet instead any less valid? Help your teen to find their strengths through this period and set your expectations to what's possible given their abilities.



Above all, be patient! This too will pass. Your kids will be grown before they know it. While helping your teen through this time, also enjoy having the opportunity to go through this portion of their life with them.

Now that we know what's going on let's set some goals and find the motivation to pursue them.

How to Stay Motivated



The goal part of things is easy. Everyone has dreams they'd like to do someday.

Even getting started is usually not all that hard. Once you've chosen a task to accomplish, the very act of choosing has a certain level of excitement that carries you well into things before motivation peters out.

But eventually, life sets in.

Other interests start taking you away from your project. Maybe you have something new that captures your time. Or you haven't had success for a while, so things aren't as interesting, and the project that was thrilling to you (or at least mildly interesting) has turned into so much drudgery. Now you're stuck between the abandoning everything you've accomplished so far or finding some way to slog onward.

Right?

It doesn't have to be that way.

Excitement comes from enthusiasm and enthusiasm follows motivation. That project of yours can become the thrilling adventure it had been at the start if you re-motivate yourself.

That sounds easier than it is. Motivation sometimes comes under the guise of hard work. On occasion, you're going to need someone else to give you the little push needed to get back

into action. That's why this chapter is set up in two sections. In the first, we'll look at some ways to get your motivation back. In the second, we'll talk to the parents about ways that they can help their teen find motivation all over again.

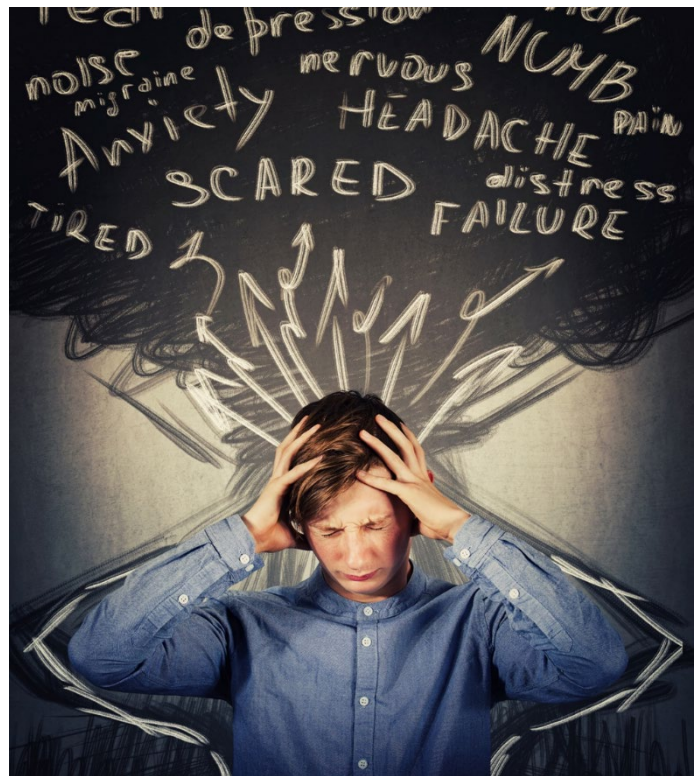
For Teens:

Find your calm

When things are going badly, and you've not only lost motivation but have no idea why you were pursuing this goal in the first place, then it's time to take a step back before you do anything else.

It's time to get Zen.

Unplug, take a walk, play with your dog. Do whatever it takes to make yourself out of that emotional headspace so that you can come back and look at things rationally and not emotionally. You're not going to get anywhere while you're still upset.



Reduce overload

If you're like most teens, you believe you are the world's best multitasker. Here's where it becomes a good idea to reduce your focus down to one thing.

Neuroscience has disproven the old notion that multitasking helps you get more done. The exact opposite is true. Turn off the music, get off social media, shut down whatever is extraneous and look at your project without all the other distractions.

It might be you need some time to focus. If you need some help with this, choose one of the apps available that force you to focus on one task at a time by making it impossible to access certain websites during specific times.

Clarify the goal

It might be that you've lost sight of the big picture. Ask yourself what the end goal is. Why do you have that goal? What was important enough about it that you started on this journey? Is that still important to you? You might need to clarify things.

Typically, once you're working on something, you start seeing aspects that you never saw before. Have you shifted your thoughts regarding the outcome? What do you need to do now that reflects those shifts? Remember it's okay to change your mind. It's much better than continuing with the plan even though you know it's not going to work for you anymore.



Research options

Motivation disappears when you get stuck. Ask yourself why you're not moving forward. Do you lack information or skills? What can you do to get those? Maybe you need to spend some time on the internet researching things.



You might need to ask someone for advice such as a teacher, mentor, or parent. Make a list of possible solutions to the problem you're experiencing and then weigh those options. Which one will get you closest to your goal?

Refine the action plan

The problem with starting on something new is that you might not always know enough to know what questions to ask when you start.

As a result, you might have made a game plan that is not practical to meet the goal. With the knowledge you have now, what do you need to do to make that roadmap a little clearer? Are there new steps you need to add that you hadn't thought of previously? Add them in. The plan isn't written in stone. It needs to be flexible with the changes in your life.



Brainstorm solutions

Sometimes the best way to get past the problem that's killed your motivation is to go to the hive mind for ideas. Create a group you can count on to brainstorm. Add people with experience in what you're doing, or who you know always has good ideas.

Keep out negative influences! Don't be afraid to include trusted adults such as parents or teachers. Keep it a closed group so you can control who responds.

Ask what this means to you personally

You chose this project for a reason. Why?

For example, are you studying solely to get good grades or is there a deeper, more personal reason for doing so, like getting into the college of your choice? Find what makes this project matter to you personally, and the motivation will return.

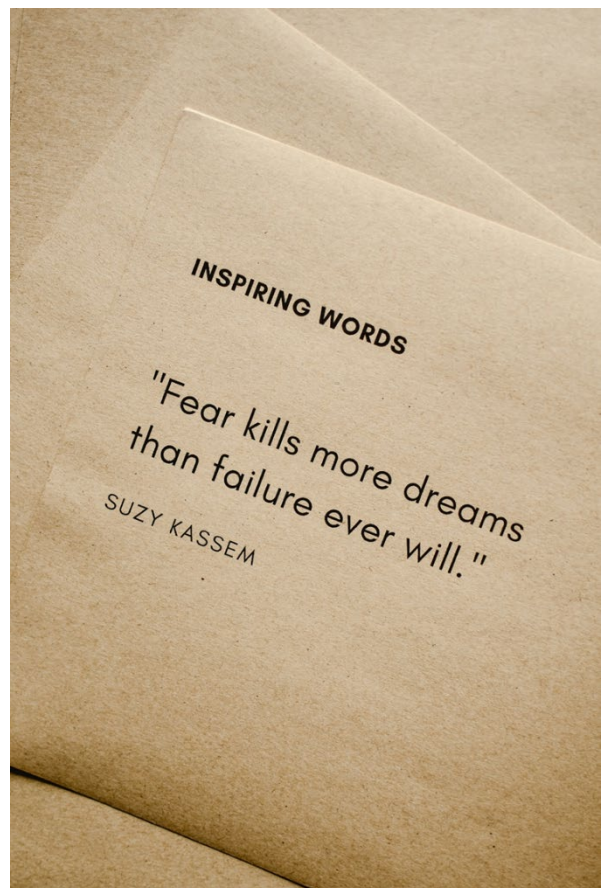
Accept failure

Failure has that ability to stop you cold. Keep in mind it's okay to be upset when things don't go right. The problem comes when you start dwelling on it. There comes a time when you need to remind yourself that it's time to move on. By accepting the failure as having happened, you can let it go. You can take it to the next level when you stop and ask yourself what you can learn from the experience. What can you do differently next time?

Get organized

It's easy to lose motivation if you're spending too much time trying to figure out what you're supposed to do next, or worse, looking for critical components for your project.

By taking an hour to organize your desk and gather your materials, you make it much easier to get things done. With everything you need near at hand, motivation rises. Let's face it, it's hard to function if you're so cluttered you can't think.



Break down milestones into smaller tasks

It's easy to get overwhelmed when you have a lot of big things to do. But breaking down those items into smaller lists makes the project manageable. Knowing you can get through what you need to for the day makes motivation rise.

Reward yourself

It's always good to have something to look forward to, even if it's so small as your favorite snack or a round or two of your favorite video games.

Remember, we are all wired for rewards, so by making your reward choices meaningful, your motivation should stay high. Treat yourself well, and you'll find the tasks less tedious.

Take ownership of what you're doing

You're in this project because it's yours. By taking ownership, you accept that not only are the decisions and actions yours to make, but the accomplishment is also solely your own. This is part of growing up, and it's a great feeling when you know you've accomplished something that was all you.

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All of this is part of that learning / growing process that is unique to this point of time in your life.

While it might seem easier at the offset to have someone else make all the decisions for you and then lay out exactly how you're supposed to go about doing things, finding the motivation to do these things for yourself is immensely satisfying.

These are your first steps toward adulthood and taking charge of your destiny. It's a great feeling!

But that's not to say you're entirely on your own. This next section is for the parents (and teens, you're welcome to keep reading so you can pass this information along to the adults in your life). The other side of this equation is a reminder that you're *not* an adult just yet. It's never wrong to ask for help. And having the support of guidance of someone who loves you is a great thing. It's like having a safety net as you venture out into the world.

Parents? Let's talk about what you can do to help your teen stay motivated:

For Parents:

Get involved but know when to step back

It's good to be part of the goal-making process for your teens, but this is also a learning / growing time for them. Start by talking to them very honestly. Ask them what they need from you before telling them what they should do instead. They might have a good idea of how to get there that you hadn't even thought of.

Suggest a brainstorming session

By tackling problems together, you can bounce ideas off each other, in ways that inspire creative solutions. With roadblocks dispensed with, motivation returns.

Again, remember you're trying to foster independence and ownership of the project, so give your teen final say on which direction to go. That doesn't mean you don't get to put in your two cents. Far from it. Remember, the goal here is not to tell your teen what to do but to encourage them in finding solutions for themselves. It's not just for this project; it's a way to instill a lifetime of critical thinking.

Sometimes you need to listen

Occasionally your teen doesn't need suggestions so much as a sounding board. In this situation, your job is quite simple. Listen to what they have to say. Ask the occasional question to help clarify the situation, or maybe to guide them along another path if they're getting too far astray. Ideally though, you want to let them work through this on their own.

Teach them to see failure as an opportunity

When your child stumbles and falls, it's natural to want to fix things for them, but as they grow, they also need to learn how to pick themselves up.

When you see motivation flagging in the wake of failure, it's time to step in and help them see things for what they are. Praise the attempt, and then together look at the reasons for failure and discover what can be learned from the experience.

Once they have this in perspective, it's easier to find the motivation to get out there and try again, especially if they know they have you in their corner cheering them on.

Empathize

Frequently all it takes for motivation to come back is just knowing that someone is out there rooting for them; someone who has been there before and knows what they're going through. Share your own relevant experiences. Discuss times you set similar goals, what difficulties you came across, and how you worked through them.

Let your teen know they're not alone.

Refocus on the problem

If your teen has just run out of steam, there's a series of questions you can use to help them to get back on track. Try asking:

- Why were you passionate about this project in the first place?
- Has there been a disconnect between expectations and reality?
- Do you need to re-evaluate the goal?
- Do you need to re-evaluate your means in getting to that goal?
- Is it time to step back and take a breath?



Then when they answer, really listen. These are the moments when your teen needs you to come alongside more than ever, to partner with them to create a game plan that propels them forward again.

Try an incentive plan

Knowing that teens work well when rewards are involved, work with them to find the incentives they need to keep going.

Make a list of possible rewards, and then set goals to earn those rewards. Believe it or not, nearly 75% of teens polled said they still like having just some one-on-one time with mom and dad. Rather than coming up with a material object as a reward, consider offering a special outing instead.

Laugh

Finding the humor in the situation can take a lot of the sting out when disappointed or struggling with a goal. Find what's funny. The release of chemicals in the brain that comes with laughter lead to a more positive mindset that enables your teen to get in there and keep trying.

Talk about the future

A teen's brain is still wired for thinking of things in the short-term. What you need to do is help them to see beyond tomorrow into next week, next month, and next year. Talk about future plans together and get them in the habit of looking further than what's happening over the next 24 hours. This helps them to visualize better and larger goals.

Put your organizational skills to the test

It might be that your teen is struggling because they're having difficulty in prioritizing things or understanding what the next step is.

Sit down with them and help them to make some lists, starting first with a sheet of goals, numbered in order of importance, and then a schedule so



that you can sort out the deadlines. It might help to get them to break down larger goals into smaller and more manageable chunks.

Don't forget to look around their room while you're at it. Is their workspace cluttered and disorganized? Is there something you can do to help them organize a space that's easier to work in and has fewer distractions?

As a final note: Sometimes your teen is having difficulty in motivation due to issues with anxiety or depression. While a certain amount of both is reasonable to expect, teenagers live so strongly in the world of emotion that there comes a time when the levels of either or both are no longer considered what is healthy. Don't be afraid to talk to your teen about the things that are bothering them, or in getting them help when those issues become too great to handle alone.

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Where do you go from here?

In all of this, the key is to give your teen a say in what's going on. They need to feel like they're part of the decision-making process and that they have some control in how they handle their lives.

By allowing them to create their own goals and then giving them the tools to work, you're setting them up for future success.

The main thing to remember is to keep highlighting the values you want them to have as they push forward. Teach them about patience, dedication, and persistence. Model these traits and be there to encourage them when they're feeling down and out of sorts.

Overall, let them know when they're doing it right. Compliment your teens. There's never any reason to be stingy with your praise, and honestly, don't they deserve it? Look at what they're not only trying to accomplish but the effort they're putting in to get there. **That's pretty amazing!**

Conclusion

A motivated teenager in action is impressive to watch.

Teenagers have so much passion, energy and enthusiasm when it comes to taking on the world. Couple that with a strong sense of social justice, an inherent love of fun, and the ability to dream in grand ways there seems to be no limit to what they can accomplish when they set their minds to it.

The goal of the teenager should be to get motivated and live a life of motivation.

Moving from one goal to the next, taking that same zest for living with them into each project will enable them to reach their goals and set themselves up for a lifetime of achievement.

For the parents of teens, giving their child the autonomy to act on their own in creating goals and then following through with them, enables them to grow and prepares them for adulthood in ways that will far outstrip their peers.

Together, parent/teen is an unstoppable combination.



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Table of Contents

Introduction 34

Youthful Motivation 36

The Unique Struggles Facing Teens 39

 And for parents wanting to help?45

How to Stay Motivated..... 47

 For Teens49

 For Parents53

Conclusion..... 57

Introduction



To the teens of the world, think about this: You are unique. You are powerful. You're going to do great things.

The teen years are full of possibility. You've probably heard that before without having a clear understanding of what it means. Think about it. It's during these high school years that you come into your own. You're learning not just the basics in school, but who you are and what you like.

You're figuring out the things that are important to you.

You're in that strange place where you not only have the time, but the passion and energy to accomplish things that no one else in any other age group does.

Just think about this:

- Laura Dekker sailed around the world – by herself – at the age of 14.
- Flynn McGarry started making a name for himself as one of the world’s top chefs by creating a pop-up restaurant that food critics raved about at the age of 13.
- Saira Blair became the youngest ever elected official when she was elected a Delegate in West Virginia at the age of 18.
- Jordan Romero made it to the top of Mount Everest at the age of 13.

A quick search online will yield dozens of similar examples, telling you one significant thing: **a motivated teenager is unstoppable.**

If your life involves too much downtime, and you’re wondering just what your limits are, then this book is for you.

We’ll start with looking at the benefits of living a motivated life and from there start removing the roadblocks that get in the way.

Finally, you’ll learn how to **stay motivated** so that you can keep that energy going.

Whether you want to achieve great things in sports like Wayne Gretzky (who signed on to play professional hockey at the age of 17) or your dreams are more modest, it all starts here. The process is the same for all success: making a goal and then doing what it takes to get there.

The world is waiting for you to show us who you are.

Parents? Hang on; it’s going to be an exciting ride!

Let’s get started.

Youthful Motivation

Nobody dreams quite so extravagantly as a teenager.

When we're young, everything is still possible. There's no goal too lofty, whether you desire to get into a particular school or change the world by designing the next greatest app.

The sky is the limit.



That's because teens see the world in terms of possibility, without being bogged down by cynicism or impossibility.

However, without motivation, it's impossible to set plans into motion.

As a teenager, it becomes critically important to learn the benefits of motivation.

These are the skills you'll take with you into the rest of your life. Learning how to harness this energy and apply it to your goals now, will lead you on to success and accomplishing great things. At the same time, you will be making your life a whole lot easier than others who never find that motivation.

Let's look at some of the reasons that motivation can be so special:

Motivation means you work harder

Without motivation, the temptation would be to throw yourself down on the couch and play video games all afternoon (though it can be argued that you might be motivated to get to that next level).

Motivation is what kicks you into gear to buckle down and get a task done.

Without it, you're not accomplishing anything. While that might sound nice initially (who doesn't like a little relaxation from time to time?), you're never going to change your situation if you don't get up and *do* anything. Sadly, that also means never reaching your goals.

With that in mind, think of motivation as the fuel that you've put into the car. When you put your foot down on the accelerator, something happens, and the car starts moving.

Motivation means you accomplish more

Even an unmotivated person can get something done from time to time. But it's a guarantee that the motivated individual will far surpass the unmotivated one.

Think of it as the difference between having a bite of dessert or enjoying the whole thing. When you want to get something significant done, you're going to need to tap into motivation to get there.

Motivation helps you to see things you usually wouldn't

When you're motivated, you'll work harder to find a solution when you come up against a problem. This means thinking outside the box and finding those creative alternatives that are going to take you to the next level. This is where you get ahead, as the unmotivated tend to quit when going gets rough.

Motivation impacts the world around you

People love hanging around someone with a lot of positive energy. The very motivation that creates that enthusiasm is contagious, meaning where you have the motivation, motivation follows. This makes the world not only a better place but one where you have influence. Think about that a moment. Wouldn't you like to be a positive change for the better?

Motivation helps to create positive habits

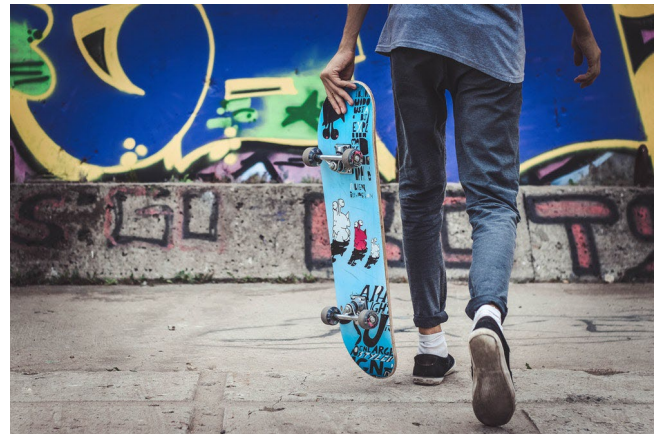
Creating positive habits without motivation is impossible. Habits are hard to instill, mostly because you're trying to change a behavior that's already ingrained. Motivation is what forces you to overcome your previous programming and to push through and repeat that behavior every day until it becomes a habit. Without motivation, you'd never get there at all.

Motivation is what makes the process fun

Have you heard the saying, “It’s about the journey, not the destination”? Motivation keeps things jumping. When you’re motivated to do things, everything looks possible and exciting. There’s no room for boring in the world of motivation! That makes the part where you work to make your goals reality every bit as exciting as getting there. Imagine if you had that feeling of fulfillment at the end of every day and couldn’t wait to get up in the morning to do it all over again.

Motivation is what gets you where you want to go

This one should go without saying. Unless you’re motivated to get there, you’re never going to realize your goals. Motivation is what keeps you in motion when you’d generally quit. It’s what reminds you to press on when things get difficult or when you hit obstacles that would have otherwise tripped you up. **Without motivation, there is no success.**



After a list like that, it seems clear that living a motivated life isn’t only a good idea; it’s good *for you* as well.

That’s why it’s so important to learn the skills that will make motivation a daily part of your life while you’re young. Motivation is going to be the most critical tool in your toolbox as you move forward in any aspect of your life. It’s what’s going to help you get into college, find that first job, or even discover that perfect relationship. Motivation is going to give you the life that you dream of having.

The trick is not to let yourself get derailed before you even get out of the gate. Keep reading to see how motivation gets you past the challenges that are so unique to teens.

The Unique Struggles Facing Teens



The battle cry of the teenager seems to be, “You don’t understand what I’m going through!”

The problem with adulthood is that once we grow up, we tend to forget just how hard it is to be a teenager, especially in today’s fast-paced world. Not only is change and progress hard when you’re a teenager, sometimes it can feel downright impossible.

That’s why it’s so important to address those issues here and learn how finding your focus will give you the motivation you need to push past the things that keep you frozen in place.

A lot of the problems that you’re going to find so frustrating as a teenager stem from the fact that you’re not done growing yet. Literally.

Your brain goes through a massive period of change starting from the time that you're 11 or 12 that will carry on until you're 25. And it won't stop there!

Throughout your lifetime, you're still going to experience changes in your brain, a constant stream of learning and development in the neural network. But one of the highest periods of growths comes right now, during the teen years.

How does that affect you?

While most growth is relatively easy to see (you get taller, your body goes through the physical changes associated with puberty), what's going on in your head isn't quite so obvious. The easiest way to tell where you are in brain development is by looking at your emotions, thought processes, and actions.

Let's look at that in more detail.

You have a lot going on in your head

When you're a baby, you develop an overabundance of neural connections that are 'pruned' over the next several years as you learn how to think and reason. This happens again with the onset of puberty.

What this means, is that you're starting to get the reasoning skills that adults have and starting to think about things in entirely new ways.

The problems come when you start to ask who's driving the bus. Initially, all these decision-making processes are traveling through the limbic system, where all the emotions are, rather than the prefrontal cortex, which is dedicated more to logic and reasoning.

What does this mean for you?

Typically, that implies that you're making decisions based in the heart and not the head. So not everything you do makes logical sense. What's worse, by reacting with emotions first, that's

where you get into trouble. The teenager who gets into a fight might do so because they're reacting with emotion to a situation, rather than sitting down and talking things out.

This affects motivation too. A teen might rationally know, on some level, that doing homework is what's going to get them into a good college someday. But it's hard to feel motivated when you're up against the emotional response of "I don't feel like it" or "That doesn't sound like much fun."

Instead, the teen might look for something that gives more instant gratification, like the rush that comes from beating that level in a video game or hanging out with friends.

The Incredible Hulk does lie just beneath the surface



While we're talking about the limbic system, you must understand you have another thing going on there.

As the rest of your brain develops so too does the amygdala. The amygdala is an essential part of your limbic system. Think of it as the watchman whose primary purpose is to keep you safe. The amygdala acts the way a smoke detector would. It sees the threat and sends

up a scream that you're going to hear in the rest of your body. This translates into the most primal of emotions: Fear, Rage, Anger.

What does this mean for you? With all the hormone fluctuations going on, and the way things are still growing and developing, your amygdala gets a little bit trigger happy. In other words, it gets activated very quickly, on minimal provocation. This is the reason why you started yelling when your mom told you to clean your room. Chances are you didn't even understand the anger at the time and might have even felt helpless to stop it. This is one reason why teens react so passionately to the world around them.

In the world of setting goals, it's the amygdala that will derail you every chance it gets. It's what tells you that you're going to fail, someone else is doing it better, makes you feel helpless when you think about even trying. It's trying to do its job and keep you safe, even if it's emotionally safe.

Abstract reasoning gets a boost

As a teen, you're finally able to start realizing that the world is, in fact, separate from you. You know that your parents are people with hopes and dreams of their own. You start seeing that other people have thoughts and feelings. And you also become aware of what others think of you.

This last is a double-edged sword. While it's great to be able to walk in someone else's shoes, the realization that people think about you can be downright terrifying. You start to worry about *what* they're thinking about you. And who they're repeating those thoughts to. Welcome to social anxiety and a whole lot of worry that feeds right into peer pressure and the desire to not stand out in any way whatsoever.

It's hard to become ambitious and set goals in this kind of mindset, especially when your peers are not only setting different goals from you but don't understand why you're choosing the goals you have.

It's that social anxiety that derails motivation as you become so caught up in trying not to look bad in front of everyone else, that you're no longer comfortable with taking risks or pressing on into new territory. Which is a real shame, because it's those abstract reasoning skills that wire you toward success by giving you the ability to think outside the box and to do things in ways no one else ever has before.

Your ventral striatum is lit up like a Christmas tree

Welcome to the pleasure center of the brain. Various studies have shown that there's a whole lot more activity in the ventral striatum of teenagers than in that of adults. What makes this interesting is this is where the brain responds to rewards.

Rewards take on many forms. Whether you've just scored a hot deal at your favorite clothing shop, felt the adrenaline rush of bungee jumping, or taken your car past 80 mph for the first time. That rush you feel is what your brain interprets as a reward. Your mind likes this feeling and is going to seek it out every chance it gets.

Unfortunately, what it takes to build up that feeling of satisfaction tends to stop working overtime. You need more of the good stuff to get the same result.

So, while one reward gives you a pleasant feeling when you experience it, eventually you need more and more of that reward. That surge of adrenaline you felt while rock climbing the first time, now takes bigger rocks, higher up, with a lot more risk to get that same thrill.

Because teens react so favorably to rewards, in the world of motivation you can find this helpful. Setting up a system of rewards to get things done will be more useful here now, at this age, than it will be when you're an adult.

On the other hand, that desire for a reward can just as easily derail you. If you feel like you're not making progress, or if things get hard, this is where the ventral striatum starts angling you over to what does. This is the point where projects get abandoned in favor of what's more short-term and immediately rewarding.

Your circadian rhythms screw everything up

The teen years are naturally going to call for more sleep. While adults typically need between 7 – 9 hours of sleep at night, teens need from 9 – 10 hours.

...and are known to sleep even longer than that.

Now if only teens would respect that part of the equation. Your body needs sleep, but



most teens will grab as little rest as possible and then crash and burn hard on the weekends. I know I did!

That's because your typical teen has a busy life. Between school and a social life, they're already using up quite a few hours of the day. Add in a lot of homework, maybe a part-time job, extracurricular activities, and the constant availability of social media and you'll be lucky if you're getting between 4-5 hours of sleep at night, or roughly half of what your body needs.

It's no wonder you slept like the dead for 14 hours last weekend!

The problem is, when you're sleep deprived, it's impossible to motivate yourself to do anything. Willpower is a finite supply, made even scarcer by exhaustion. Having the gumption to get up and get stuff done when you're dragging along is just not going to happen. Even if you summon enough motivation to start, you're likely to lose it long before you reach the end. The solution to this one seems simple: get more sleep!

What's the Solution?

What do you do when it feels like even your brain is against you?

The good news is, things will get better with time. Your prefrontal cortex will start to take over more and more of the heavy lifting when it comes to making decisions. The brain chemistry balances out, and your amygdala calms down and starts waiting for an actual disaster before throwing you into a tailspin.

In the meantime, you need to give yourself a lot of time and patience (and this goes for your parents too!) Learn how to stop and ask yourself what's going on when you feel that wild emotional response. Ask yourself if you are thinking clearly and if this is the logical response. In short, think before acting. And if you mess up (and you will) be patient with yourself and accept that as part of the process.

The trick is to try not losing your motivation!

And for parents wanting to help?



You guys need to take a breath and quit freaking out so much when things are going wrong. Take the time to talk to your kid. Ask what's going on. Understand that their reasoning isn't going to look like your own. Your job is to guide your teen through this entire growing up process and becoming a nag or indulging in lengthy lectures aren't going to cut it. Here are some quick tips:

Be the one to show them how it's done

Your child is in the process of becoming an adult. Show them the kind of adult they should become by being the best version of yourself you can be. This speaks louder than any lecture ever would.

Communicate, not just with them but also with their teachers and mentors

By staying in the loop, you'll better understand what's going on in their lives and what they're going through.

Give support

Let them know you understand what they're going through, and that you've been there yourself.

Give opportunities

Growth comes from being allowed to spread their wings. Help your teen to find classes, activities, and opportunities that give them a chance to practice their newfound reasoning skills (and have fun while doing so).

Show your kids how to hang in there

That urge to quit when the going gets tough is hard to combat. Hold your teen accountable for seeing things through, but then offer them encouragement instead of lectures when they're flagging.

Be reasonable

Maybe your child is never going to live up to your expectations in some area. You might have wanted your son to be the quarterback, but does that make his desire to pursue ballet instead any less valid? Help your teen to find their strengths through this period and set your expectations to what's possible given their abilities.

Above all, be patient! This too will pass. Your kids will be grown before they know it. While helping your teen through this time, also enjoy having the opportunity to go through this portion of their life with them.

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Now that we know what's going on let's set some goals and find the motivation to pursue them!

How to Stay Motivated



The goal part of things is easy. Everyone has dreams they'd like to do someday. Even getting started is usually not all that hard. Once you've chosen a task to accomplish, the very act of choosing has a certain level of excitement that carries you well into things before motivation peters out.

But eventually, life sets in.

Other interests start taking you away from your project. Maybe you have something new that captures your time. Or you haven't had success for a while, so things aren't as interesting, and the project that was thrilling to you (or at least mildly interesting) has turned into so much

drudgery. Now you're stuck between the abandoning everything you've accomplished so far or finding some way to slog onward.

Right?

It doesn't have to be that way.

Excitement comes from enthusiasm and enthusiasm follows motivation. That project of yours can become the thrilling adventure it had been at the start if you re-motivate yourself.

That sounds easier than it is. Motivation sometimes comes under the guise of hard work. On occasion, you're going to need someone else to give you the little push needed to get back into action. That's why this chapter is set up in two sections. In the first, we'll look at some ways to get your motivation back. In the second, we'll talk to the parents about ways that they can help their teen find motivation all over again.

For Teens

Find your calm

When things are going badly, and you've not only lost motivation but have no idea why you were pursuing this goal in the first place, then it's time to take a step back before you do anything else.

It's time to get Zen.

Unplug, take a walk, play with your dog. Do whatever it takes to make yourself out of that emotional headspace so that you can come back and look at things rationally and not emotionally. You're not going to get anywhere while you're still upset.



Reduce overload

If you're like most teens, you believe you are the world's best multitasker. Here's where it becomes a good idea to reduce your focus down to one thing.

Neuroscience has disproven the old notion that multitasking helps you get more done. The exact opposite is true. Turn off the music, get off social media, shut down whatever is extraneous and look at your project without all the other distractions.

It might be you need some time to focus. If you need some help with this, choose one of the apps available that force you to focus on one task at a time by making it impossible to access certain websites during specific times.

Clarify the goal

It might be that you've lost sight of the big picture. Ask yourself what the end goal is. Why do

you have that goal? What was important enough about it that you started on this journey? Is that still important to you? You might need to clarify things.

Typically, once you're working on something, you start seeing aspects that you never saw before. Have you shifted your thoughts regarding the outcome? What do you need to do now that reflects those shifts? Remember it's okay to change your mind. It's much better than continuing with the plan even though you know it's not going to work for you anymore.

Research options

Motivation disappears when you get stuck. Ask yourself why you're not moving forward. Do you lack information or skills? What can you do to get those? Maybe you need to spend some time on the internet researching things.

You might need to ask someone for advice such as a teacher, mentor, or parent. Make a list of possible solutions to the problem you're experiencing and then weigh those options. Which one will get you closest to your goal?

Refine the action plan

The problem with starting on something new is that you might not always know enough to know what questions to ask when you start.

As a result, you might have made a game plan that is not practical to meet the goal. With the knowledge you have now, what do you need to do to make that roadmap a little clearer? Are there new steps you need to add that you hadn't thought of previously? Add them in. The plan isn't written in stone. It needs to be flexible with the changes in your life.

Brainstorm solutions

Sometimes the best way to get past the problem that's killed your motivation is to go to the hive mind for ideas. Create a group you can count on to brainstorm. Add people with experience in what you're doing, or who you know always has good ideas.

Keep out negative influences! Don't be afraid to include trusted adults such as parents or teachers. Keep it a closed group so you can control who responds.

Ask what this means to you personally

You chose this project for a reason. Why?

For example, are you studying solely to get good grades or is there a deeper, more personal reason for doing so, like getting into the college of your choice? Find what makes this project matter to you personally, and the motivation will return.



Accept failure

Failure has that ability to stop you cold. Keep in mind it's okay to be upset when things don't go right. The problem comes when you start dwelling on it. There comes a time when you need to remind yourself that it's time to move on. By accepting the failure as having happened, you can let it go. You can take it to the next level when you stop and ask yourself what you can learn from the experience. What can you do differently next time?

Get organized

It's easy to lose motivation if you're spending too much time trying to figure out what you're supposed to do next, or worse, looking for critical components for your project.

By taking an hour to organize your desk and gather your materials, you make it much easier to get things done. With everything you need near at hand, motivation rises. Let's face it, it's hard to function if you're so cluttered you can't think.

Break down milestones into smaller tasks

It's easy to get overwhelmed when you have a lot of big things to do. But breaking down those items into smaller lists makes the project manageable. Knowing you can get through what you need to for the day makes motivation rise.

Reward yourself

It's always good to have something to look forward to, even if it's so small as your favorite snack or a round or two of your favorite video game.

Remember, we are all wired for rewards, so by making your reward choices meaningful, your motivation should stay high. Treat yourself well, and you'll find the tasks less tedious.

Take ownership of what you're doing

You're in this project because it's yours. By taking ownership, you accept that not only are the decisions and actions yours to make, but the accomplishment is also solely your own. This is part of growing up, and it's a great feeling when you know you've accomplished something that was all you.

All of this is part of that learning / growing process that is unique to this point of time in your life.

While it might seem easier at the offset to have someone else make all the decisions for you and then lay out exactly how you're supposed to go about doing things, finding the motivation to do these things for yourself is immensely satisfying.

These are your first steps toward adulthood and taking charge of your destiny. It's a great feeling!

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But that's not to say you're entirely on your own. This next section is for the parents (and teens, you're welcome to keep reading so you can pass this information along to the adults in your life). The other side of this equation is a reminder that you're *not* an adult just yet. It's never wrong to ask for help. And having the support of guidance of someone who loves you is a great thing. It's like having a safety net as you venture out into the world.

Parents? Let's talk about what you can do to help your teen stay motivated

For Parents

Get involved but know when to step back

It's good to be part of the goal-making process for your teens, but this is also a learning / growing time for them. Start by talking to them very honestly. Ask them what they need from you before telling them what they should do instead. They might have a good idea of how to get there that you hadn't even thought of.

Suggest a brainstorming session

By tackling problems together, you can bounce ideas off each other, in ways that inspire creative solutions. With roadblocks dispensed with, motivation returns.

Again, remember you're trying to foster independence and ownership of the project, so give your teen final say on which direction to go. That doesn't mean you don't get to put in your two cents. Far from it. Remember, the goal here is not to tell your teen what to do but to encourage them in finding solutions for themselves. It's not just for this project; it's a way to instill a lifetime of critical thinking.

Sometimes you need to listen

Occasionally your teen doesn't need suggestions so much as a sounding board. In this situation, your job is quite simple. Listen to what they have to say. Ask the occasional question to help clarify the situation, or maybe to guide them along another path if they're getting too far astray. Ideally though, you want to let them work through this on their own.

Teach them to see failure as an opportunity

When your child stumbles and falls, it's natural to want to fix things for them, but as they grow, they also need to learn how to pick themselves up.

When you see motivation flagging in the wake of failure, it's time to step in and help them see things for what they are. Praise the attempt, and then together look at the reasons for failure



and discover what can be learned from the experience. Once they have this in perspective, it's easier to find the motivation to get out there and try again, especially if they know they have you in their corner cheering them on.

Empathize

Frequently all it takes for motivation to come back is just knowing that someone is out there rooting for them; someone who has been there before and knows what they're going through. Share your own relevant experiences. Discuss times you set similar goals, what difficulties you came across, and how you worked through them.

Let your teen know they're not alone.

Refocus on the problem

If your teen has just run out of steam, there's a series of questions you can use to help them to get back on track. Try asking:

- Why were you passionate about this project in the first place?
- Has there been a disconnect between expectations and reality?
- Do you need to re-evaluate the goal?
- Do you need to re-evaluate your means in getting to that goal?
- Is it time to step back and take a breath?

Then when they answer, really listen. These are the moments when your teen needs you to come alongside more than ever, to partner with them to create a game plan that propels them forward again.

Try an incentive plan

Knowing that teens work well when rewards are involved, work with them to find the incentives they need to keep going.

Make a list of possible rewards, and then set goals to earn those rewards. Believe it or not, nearly 75% of teens polled said they still like having just some one-on-one time with mom and dad. Rather than coming up with a material object as a reward, consider offering a special outing instead.

Laugh

Finding the humor in the situation can take a lot of the sting out when disappointed or struggling with a goal. Find what's funny. The release of chemicals in the brain that comes with laughter lead to a more positive mindset that enables your teen to get in there and keep trying.

Talk about the future

A teen's brain is still wired for thinking of things in the short-term. What you need to do is help them to see beyond tomorrow into next week, next month, and next year. Talk about future plans together and get them in the habit of looking further than what's happening over the next 24 hours. This helps them to visualize better and larger goals.

Put your organizational skills to the test

It might be that your teen is struggling because they're having difficulty in prioritizing things or understanding what the next step is.

Sit down with them and help them to make some lists, starting first with a sheet of goals, numbered in order of importance, and then a schedule so that you can sort out the deadlines. It might help to get them to break down larger goals into smaller and more manageable chunks.

Don't forget to look around their room while you're at it. Is their workspace cluttered and disorganized? Is there something you can do to help them organize a space that's easier to work in and has fewer distractions?

As a final note: Sometimes your teen is having difficulty in motivation due to issues with anxiety or depression. While a certain amount of both is reasonable to expect, teenagers live so strongly in the world of emotion that there comes a time when the levels of either or both are no longer considered what is healthy. Don't be afraid to talk to your teen about the things that are bothering them, or in getting them help when those issues become too great to handle alone.

Where do you go from here?

In all of this, the key is to give your teen a say in what's going on. They need to feel like they're part of the decision-making process and that they have some control in how they handle their lives.

By allowing them to create their own goals and then giving them the tools to work, you're setting them up for future success.

The main thing to remember is to keep highlighting the values you want them to have as they push forward. Teach them about patience, dedication, and persistence. Model these traits and be there to encourage them when they're feeling down and out of sorts.

Overall, let them know when they're doing it right. Compliment your teens. There's never any reason to be stingy with your praise, and honestly, don't they deserve it? Look at what they're not only trying to accomplish but the effort they're putting in to get there. **That's pretty amazing!**

Conclusion



A motivated teenager in action is impressive to watch.

Teenagers have so much passion, energy and enthusiasm when it comes to taking on the world. Couple that with a strong sense of social justice, an inherent love of fun, and the ability to dream in grand ways there seems to be no limit to what they can accomplish when they set their minds to it.

The goal of the teenager should be to get motivated and live a life of motivation.

Moving from one goal to the next, taking that same zest for living with them into each project will enable them to reach their goals and set themselves up for a lifetime of achievement.

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OTHER RESOURCES

- Tools for Teens with Problematic Sexual Behaviors
- Teen Self-Awareness
- Teens Dealing with Depression
- Teens Dealing with Anxiety

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