16 KEYS

TO MOTIVATING YOUR TEENAGER



Daniel Wong

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I've got a few questions for you...

Do you feel like your teenager:

- Lacks motivation, focus, or direction?
- Doesn't work hard enough?
- Doesn't plan for the future?
- Hasn't taken full responsibility for his or her life?

If you said "yes" to any of those questions, then block out 30 minutes and read this e-book from start to end. It will be time well invested.

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A LITTLE BIT ABOUT ME

First, let me introduce myself. My name is Daniel Wong, and I specialize in helping teenagers to become motivated, resilient, respectful, and responsible.

I'm married to my wonderful wife, Michele, and we have three children.

I've spoken to and worked with more than 20,000 teenagers around the world. I've earned certifications in coaching and counseling, and I've written a bestselling book entitled *The Happy Student: 5 Steps to Academic Fulfillment and Success*.

I graduated *summa cum laude* (First Class Honors) from Duke University, USA. My work has been featured on The Huffington Post, Yahoo!, TODAY, and many more media outlets.

I don't say this to boast, really. I just want to assure you that I know how teenagers think and what motivates them. So keep reading!

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HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF THIS E-BOOK

In this e-book, I'll share with you 16 tips to help your teenager become more focused and motivated.

I have extensive experience working with teenagers, so I can guarantee that if you use these tips, you'll get results.

If you're already using all 16 tips, then keep up the excellent work! But if you're not, don't feel like you need to start practicing all the tips right away.

Instead, follow the steps on the next page:

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1 As you read through the e-book, write down which tips you want to apply.

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2 At the beginning of each week, choose one of those tips and practice it daily.

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3 If that sounds overwhelming, then pick one tip each month.

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4 Start with the easiest tip, and work your way through the more challenging ones.

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5 At the end of each week, take a few minutes to review your progress. Ask yourself these questions:

- What went well this past week?
- What should I continue doing?
- What didn't go so well this past week?
- What should I stop doing?
- Is there anything I should do differently in the coming week?

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There’s no rush. Start small and keep at it.

This isn’t a race; it’s a lifelong journey of empowering your teenager with the mindset and skills to become a successful, happy, and fulfilled adult.

I’m honored to join you on this journey.

Let’s get going!



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KEY #1

Focus on effort and progress, not performance

As a society, we're obsessed with performance metrics and key performance indicators.

So it's no surprise that we take a similar approach toward parenting.

Most of the parents I work with monitor their teenagers' performance more closely than they monitor the balance in their bank account. They track how their teenagers are doing in their exams, extracurricular activities, and physical development.

There's nothing wrong with this.

But when parents overemphasize performance, teenagers begin to think that only the outcome matters, not the process.

Parents must help their teenagers to understand that life is a continuous journey of learning, improving, and developing.

Results are important, but the growth process is far more important. Interestingly, research shows conclusively that when

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teenagers focus on the process, they achieve even better results!

For teenagers who believe that only the outcome matters, their self-worth can become based entirely on their performance. This hurts their development, and can lead to psychological problems down the road.

It can also cause them to become disillusioned and unmotivated.

So acknowledge the effort and attitude that your teenager demonstrates. This will encourage your teenager to concentrate on what he or she has control over – behavior and attitude – in reaching the desired outcome.

And when teenagers feel more in control, they become more focused and motivated.



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KEY #2

Involve your teenager in the process

Many teenagers feel as if their opinions don't matter, because their parents often make major decisions on their behalf.

When trying to resolve an issue, ask your teenager, "What do you think?"

Even if you don't use that exact phrase, find a way to involve your teenager in the process.

By doing so, you'll show your teenager that his or her thoughts and opinions count.

For example, some teenagers have trouble completing their homework on time. In response, parents might resort to nagging and scolding.

They might even impose a ban on TV-watching or phone/computer usage, but to no avail.

Instead, parents could first have a calm discussion with their

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teenager. There's a family where the parents asked their daughter this simple question: "What would help you get your homework done on time?"

The daughter replied, "I'm a morning person. So I'd like to go to bed early every night, and wake up at 4am to do my homework. Is that okay with you?"

Her parents agreed. She started doing just as she'd promised, and the problem was solved.

That's the power of involving your teenager in the process.



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KEY #3

Ask your teenager to make a commitment

If you want to be great at anything – a great musician, athlete, entrepreneur, technician, salesperson – you won't get there by *chance* or *coercion*.

You'll get there by *choice* and *commitment*.

In the same way, your teenager won't become a great student just because there's an elaborate system of rewards and punishments in place.

Your teenager must choose to be a great student, and commit to putting in the effort necessary.

How can you help your teenager do this?

As much as you can, allow your teenager to have the final say in matters that directly concern his or her life, e.g. which club or activity to join, which classes to take, which programs to apply for.

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You can – and possibly should – provide guidance, but you shouldn't make the decision for your teenager. In just a few years, your teenager will be an adult.

Adults need to make wise choices on their own, so your teenager needs to get some practice now.

When teenagers are allowed to chart their own course, they become more motivated, as they feel more in control of their life.



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KEY #4

Speak positively about your teenager in front of others

Some parents say the following in the presence of their teenagers:

- "My son is lazy. I doubt he'll ever succeed."
- "My daughter isn't ambitious enough to accomplish anything."
- "My son doesn't have perseverance."

Parents say these kinds of things to motivate their teenagers, but it doesn't work. Teenagers will just become bitter and resentful.

And how many bitter and resentful teenagers do you know who are also extremely motivated?

Not many, I'm guessing.

Teenagers have a strange way of becoming the kind of person their parents view them as.

If their parents say that they're "useless" or "good-for-nothing," they'll behave in line with this perception. But parents who give

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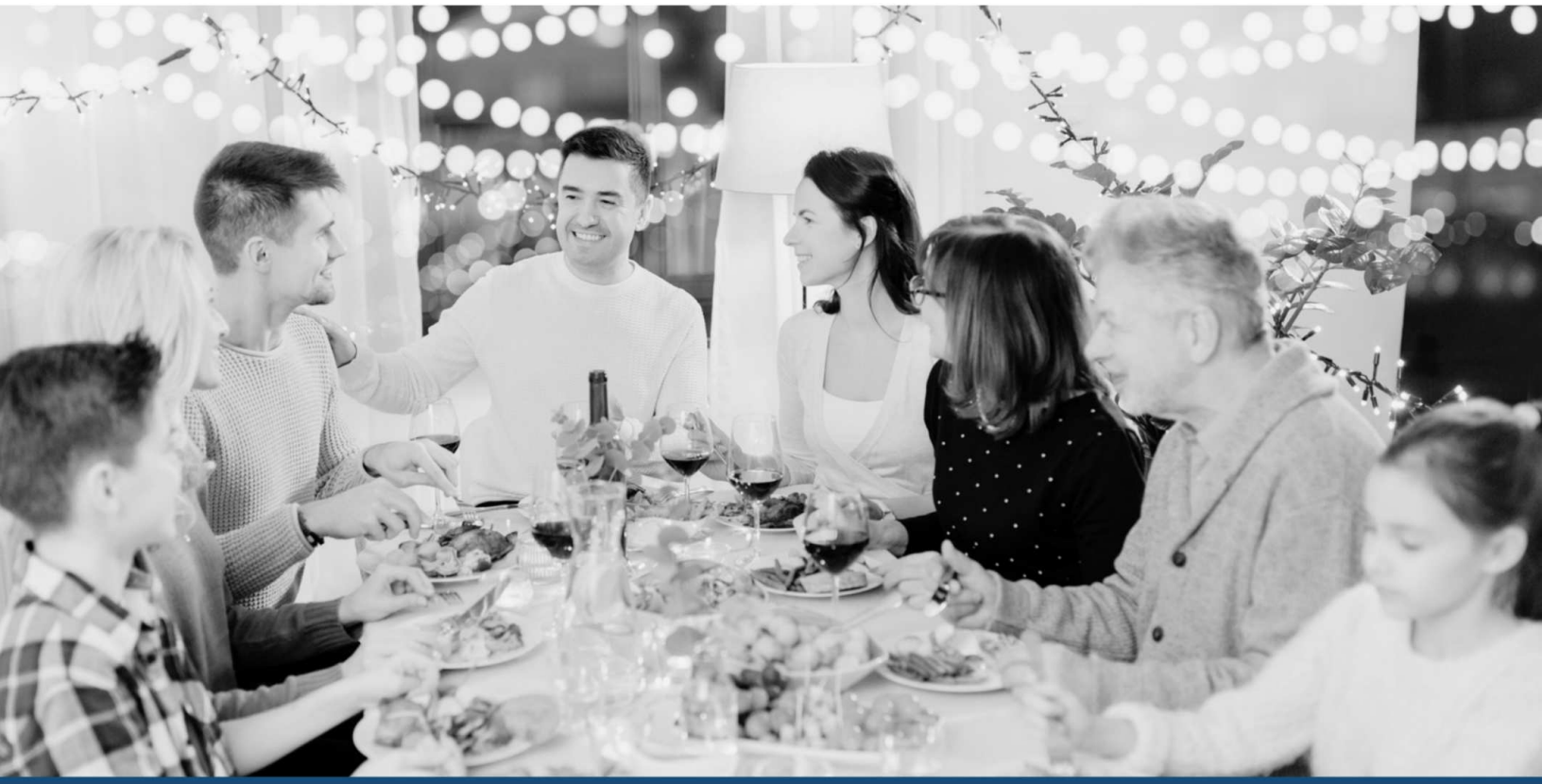
their teenagers a good reputation to live up to bring up teenagers who are self-motivated.

Think about some positive behavior that your teenager has been demonstrating. Mention this in front of your friends or relatives, when your teenager is present.

Don't go overboard with this suggestion, though.

Do it once in a while, not at every single opportunity that presents itself.

Don't apply this tip in an attempt to manipulate your teenager, but rather out of a sincere appreciation for him or her.



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KEY #5

Show your teenager that you love him or her the same, regardless of performance

Many teenagers I've worked with have said to me: "It seems like my parents love me more when I do well in school."

Teenagers who feel this way believe that they need to earn their parents' love, acceptance, and approval. This affects their self-esteem and self-worth.

Of course, parents should encourage their teenagers to pursue excellence and to always give their best effort.

But, at the same time, parents should display unconditional warmth and love.

Teenagers can only maximize their potential when they're assured of their parents' love.

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KEY #6

Say to your teenager occasionally, "I'm proud of you"

This is related to the previous tip. Many parents feel awkward about telling their teenagers that they're proud of them. But "I'm proud of you" is a phrase that teenagers need to hear periodically.

Some parents never say this. As a result, these teenagers question their self-worth, and often lack motivation.

It's common to hear teenagers say, "It seems like no matter how hard I try, it's never good enough for my parents."

So find a chance over the next few days to reassure your teenager that you're proud of him or her. Your teenager will appreciate it more than you think.

A word of caution: It's possible to tell your teenager too often that you're proud of him or her.

In the long run, you don't want your teenager to make choices just to gain your approval, or the approval of others.

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You want your teenager to make choices on the basis of values and principles.

So it's a good idea to say to your teenager occasionally, "I'm proud of you."

But the emphasis should be on helping your teenager to make choices that he or she can be proud of.



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KEY #7

Allow your teenager to make mistakes and experience discomfort

Which parent doesn't want their teenager to be perfect?

But no one's perfect, including us as parents.

When teenagers feel that they're expected to be perfect, they can become unmotivated. This is because they know they won't ever live up to that mark.

Through mistakes, teenagers learn and grow. So allow them to make plenty of errors.

The exception is if your teenager is about to do something that's (a) unethical/criminal or (b) physically dangerous. If this is the case, then step in.

Teenagers benefit from going through struggle, disappointment, and pain. The parent's role is to support and guide them, so that they'll respond well in these situations.

Difficult experiences shape teenagers for the better and encourage them to take complete responsibility for their life.

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KEY #8

Let natural consequences run their course

Many parents confess to me that they nag their teenagers. They do this not just once in a while, but all the time.

“Do your homework.”

“Clean up your room.”

“Don’t be late for school.”

“Stop using your phone.”

“Study harder.”

“Come home on time.”

Sound familiar?

If it does, rest assured that you're not alone. Many parents share with me that nagging is the only weapon in their arsenal to try and get their teenagers to comply.

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But whenever I ask them if the nagging works, I've only ever received one answer:

"No, the nagging doesn't work."

Teenagers who receive constant nagging won't be motivated to change their behavior. They might even ignore the nagging and choose to rebel.

So, instead of nagging, I recommend that parents allow natural consequences to run their course. This helps teenagers to own their choices and their life. This is the foundation of long-term motivation.

Natural consequences are often the best teacher. After all, in the "real world" your teenager will need to make choices and deal with the consequences of those choices.

For instance, if your son forgets to bring his completed homework assignment to school, don't bail him out. When his teacher punishes him, he'll learn the importance of being organized so he won't forget his homework the next time.

Here's another example: Your daughter leaves her dirty clothes lying on the floor, instead of putting it in the laundry basket. (It's great if she's learned to do her own laundry, because then you won't even have this issue!)

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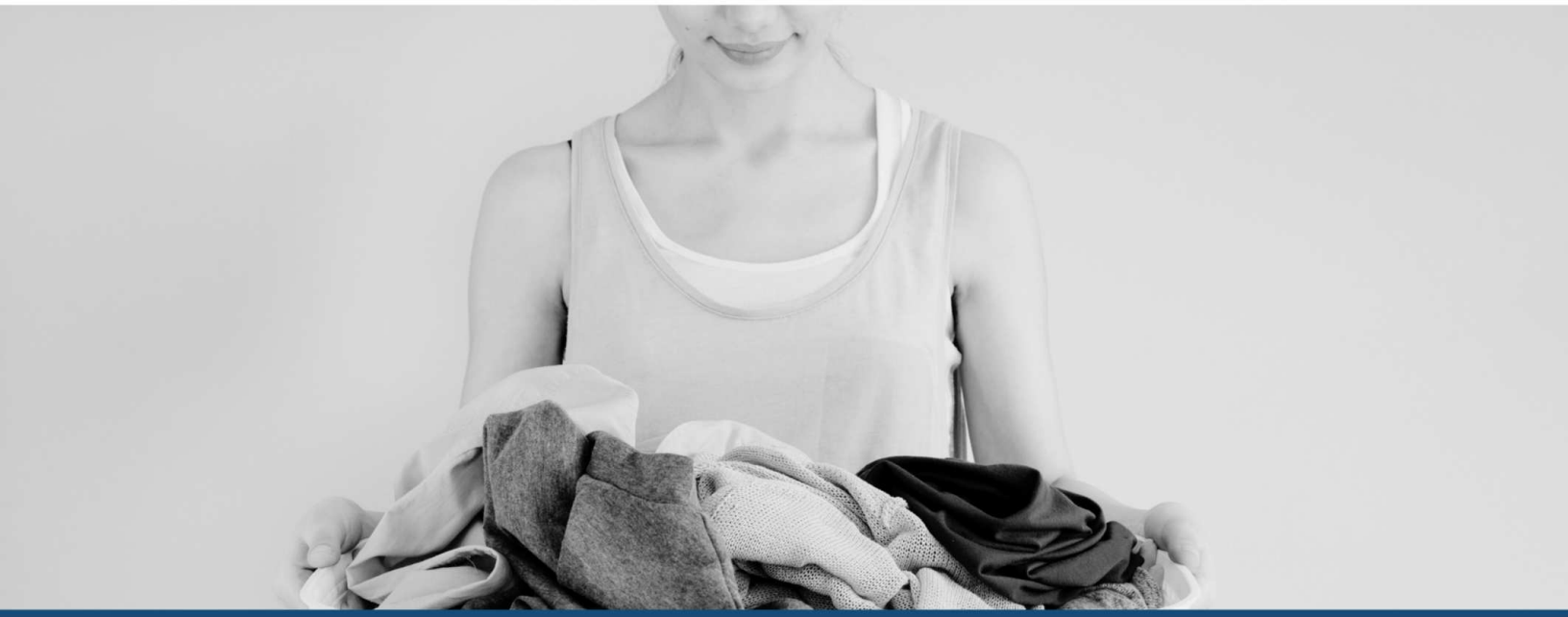
You might be tempted to nag her not to repeat this behavior, but you might still pick up the dirty clothes and put it in the laundry basket anyway.

I encourage you not to do this. Instead, leave the dirty clothes on the floor and allow the natural consequences to run their course.

Within a week or two, your daughter won't have any clean clothes to wear, and she'll be forced to re-wear the dirty ones.

Once the dirty clothes start smelling bad enough, her friends will notice and might not want to hang around her because of the stench.

Just like that, she'll learn that she should put her dirty clothes in the laundry basket. And you won't even need to nag!



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KEY #9

Don't say, "I told you so"

To follow up on the previous tip, when you allow natural consequences to occur, refrain from telling your teenager, "I told you so."

This simple phrase will cause your teenager to become annoyed and angry.

Teenagers often feel like they're at war with their parents. So what you need to communicate to your teenager is that you're all on the same team.

When teenagers understand that their parents are for them and not against them, they tend to be much more motivated.

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KEY #10

Have “no nagging” time every day

I know it’s hard not to nag your teenager, because you observe so many areas for improvement.

I’m not saying your teenager doesn’t deserve to be nagged. But I am saying that constant nagging is demotivating.

So the general approach should be to set boundaries together with your teenager, as far as possible. In addition, establish the consequences in the event that your teenager steps outside those boundaries.

I also recommend that you decide on a specific time period each day where you won’t nag your teenager at all.

You can even tell your teenager about this commitment you're making.

This “no nagging” time could be during dinner, or the first hour after your teenager comes home from school.

“No nagging” time creates an emotionally safer home

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environment, because your teenager won't feel as if he or she could be "attacked" by a bout of nagging at any moment.

When teenagers feel unsafe – especially at home – they can't focus or stay motivated for long.

Just by having "no nagging" time every day, you'll help your teenager to become more self-motivated.



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KEY #11

Don't say, "I know what's best for you"

You might feel like you know what's best for your teenager. And you're probably right!

But the phrase "I know what's best for you" isn't persuasive. In fact, it causes teenagers to disengage.

Teenagers aren't motivated when they feel as though other people are running their life.

Whenever your teenager needs to make a major decision, have a calm discussion with him or her.

Teenagers respond best when their parents listen to what they have to say, and try to see things from their perspective.

I encourage you to listen – *really* listen, not just wait for your teenager to finish speaking so you can express your views or exert your parental authority.

As you listen, don't make assumptions or jump to conclusions.

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It’s often hard to understand why teenagers think and behave the way they do, but they have their own logic.

So try to be patient with them.



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KEY #12

Show respect to your teenager

I'm not suggesting that you become a pushover or that you let your teenager walk all over you. What I *am* suggesting is that you set clear boundaries and expectations, but do so respectfully.

Parents tend to value obedience and feel like they aren't good parents if their teenager is disobedient.

But while obedience is important, it can come at the expense of the parent-teen relationship. Your teenager might be obedient when you're around but secretly resent you.

Parents can’t monitor their teenagers 24/7, so teenagers may completely change their behavior when their parents aren’t around.

The true test of parenting is how your teenager adapts to life in the "real world" once they leave home.

This means that the primary goal of parenting isn't to nurture children who are obedient. Rather, it's to nurture children who are mature and independent.

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Mature and independent teenagers are self-motivated teenagers!

Show respect to your teenager in the following ways:

- Give your full attention when he or she is speaking to you, instead of staring at the TV or your phone or computer screen
- Don't speak as if he or she is stupid
- Don't abuse him or her verbally, emotionally, or physically
- Ask for his or her opinion
- Show him or her basic courtesies
- Involve him or her in important family decisions

Establish the expectation that the respect should be mutual, meaning that your teenager should also show you due respect.



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KEY #13

Don't compare your teenager with others

"Why can't you be more like your sister?"

"Why can't you be more hardworking like Jane?"

"Why can't you be more well-behaved like Thomas?"

Most parents know it's unhealthy to compare their teenagers with others, but often can't resist the urge to do so.

When parents make comparisons, it causes their teenagers to feel as if they're not good enough.

I've worked with many teenagers who feel this way.

These teenagers are too busy wrestling with their emotions to concentrate on their tasks and responsibilities.

Once the comparisons stop, teenagers feel more secure. They can then focus on their own development, instead of trying to get out of someone else's shadow.

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KEY #14

Model the behavior you want your teenager to display

You have far more influence on your teenager than you might imagine.

Your teenager is watching your every move, so if you're being hypocritical, he or she is sure to notice.

As Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, “Your actions speak so loudly that I cannot hear what you are saying.”

For example, if you want your teenager to love learning, how do you show that you love learning?

Do you talk about the books you’ve been reading or the documentaries you’ve been watching?

Do you mention the interesting things you’ve been learning about at work?

It’s impossible to be a perfect parent, but it *is* possible to commit to personal growth, and to show your teenager that we should all strive for continual improvement.

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KEY #15

End every lecture with LOVE

When parents lecture their teenagers, the message of love doesn't always get through.

(Try to only lecture your teenagers very occasionally though!)

During the lecture, it's fine to express anger and disappointment over your teenager's behavior.

But why do you feel angry and disappointed? It's because you want the best for your teenager, and you don't want any unwise choices to prevent him or her from enjoying a promising future.

So if you end the lecture with anger and disappointment, your teenager may view the situation as a power struggle between parent and child.

Your teenager may rebel instead of changing his or her behavior.

But if you end the lecture with love, your teenager is more likely to commit to making a positive change.

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KEY #16

Don't try to achieve your unfulfilled dreams through your teenager

Many parents live vicariously through their children, but this can be unhealthy.

I know parents who want their children to become doctors, lawyers, or bankers, because that's what they wanted to become when they were younger, but weren't able to.

These parents tend to overlook their teenagers' interests, passions, and talents. Subconsciously, they want their teenagers to achieve the dreams that they didn't.

But teenagers won't put up with this for long.

Soon enough, they'll protest through their words and actions, and the situation won't be pleasant.

Angry and resentful teenagers aren't motivated ones, so I encourage you to support your teenagers as they dream their own dreams.

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THE BOTTOM LINE

Babies are curious, and they love to learn and discover. They're motivated to explore the world and take on new challenges.

But somewhere along the way – amidst the stress and competition as we're growing up – we lose that sense of wonder.

We start to focus on the outcome, instead of the process.

We focus on being better than others, instead of being the best we can be.

We focus on running the race that others want us to run, instead of running our own race.



So to help your teenager, it's less about doing things to motivate them, and more about removing obstacles so that they're free to be self-motivated.

That's why a number of the tips in this e-book focus on things *not* to do.

No matter how often your teenager procrastinates, or wakes up late for school, or refuses to complete his or her homework... remind yourself that there's a motivated teenager on the inside.

That motivated teenager is just waiting to come out, but the conditions need to be right.

As you apply the 16 tips in this e-book, the conditions will become ideal for that motivated teenager to reveal him or herself.

So keep persevering!

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WHAT TO DO NEXT

1 Give yourself a pat on the back. You've just finished reading this entire e-book.

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2 Go back to the "How to make the most of this e-book" section at the beginning. Follow the five steps outlined there, if you haven't already started.

Wishing you all the best,

Daniel Wong

P.S. I work with teenagers around the world 1-to-1 to enable them to become motivated, focused, resilient, and responsible.

Visit www.daniel-wong.com/coaching to find out more.