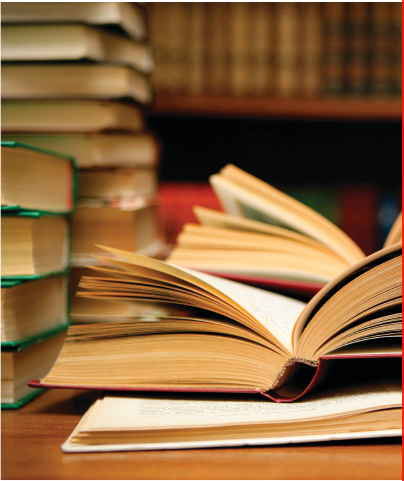


The background features a series of concentric circles in light gray, some solid and some dashed, creating a ripple effect. A large red speech bubble is centered on the page, containing the main title and subtitle.

Finding Your Spark

How to Be a Spark Champion



What is a Spark?

- A special quality, skill, or interest that lights us up and that we are passionate about.
- Something that comes from inside of us, and when we express it, it gives us joy and energy.
- It's our very essence, the thing about us that is "good and beautiful, and useful to the world."

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Why does Spark Matter?

- Because when young people know and develop a spark, with the support of several adults, they present a strong picture of health and wellbeing. Our research shows that they:
 - Have higher grades in school
 - Have better school attendance
 - Are more likely to be socially competent
 - Are more likely to be physically healthy
 - Are more likely to volunteer to help others
 - Are more likely to care about the environment
 - Are more likely to have a sense of purpose
 - Are less likely to experience depression
 - Are less likely to engage in acts of violence

When you were a Teen...

- What activity(ies) did you love most?
- Who else was involved in them? (Peers)
- Were there adults involved in leading, supporting or encouraging your participation in this activity? Who were they and how did they contribute to your full participation?

Three types of Sparks

Teens generally named three types of sparks:

- Something they are good at – a talent or skill
- Something they care deeply about – such as the environment or serving their community
- A quality they know is special – caring for others or being a friend

Sparks Categories that are most cited:

- Athletics
- Nature, ecology, the environment
- Animal Welfare
- Helping, serving, volunteering
- Spirituality or Religion
- Committed to living in a specific way (with joy, passion, caring, etc.)
- Learning a subject matter like Science or History
- Leading
- Reading
- Creative Arts



When youth know their spark and have several adults who support their spark, they are more likely to:

- **Have a sense of purpose**
- **Be socially competent and physically healthy**
- **Volunteer to help others**
- **Have higher grades in school and better attendance**

What Struck you
about how these
students
described their
sparks?

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bP89iBasyCE>

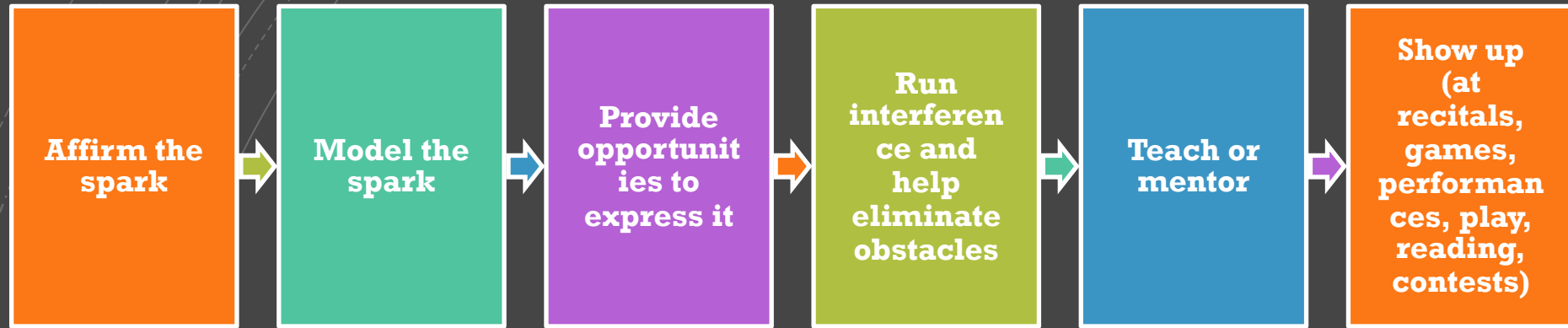
How to Talk to Youth About Sparks



- Watch for signs of sparks -
“You really seem to enjoy...”
- Share your own sparks -
“When I was your age, I was passionate about...”
- Ask open-ended questions, and then listen
– “What do you think your spark is?”

The Seven Essential Questions

- What is your spark?
- When and where do you live your spark?
- Who knows your spark?
- Who helps feed your spark?
- What gets in your way?
- How will you use your spark to make our world better?
- How can I help?



Be a Spark Champion

Final Tips for Spark Champions

- Sparks can change over time
- Young people need multiple champions;
- some to cheer , some to teach
- Expect “ups and downs” in your conversations
- A skill is not automatically a spark
- Our spark may not be our work



Resources

- **Sparks: How Parents Can Ignite the Hidden Strengths of Teenagers** by Peter L Benson
- **Spark Student Motivation** by Jolene Roehlkepar tian
- **Igniting Sparks: Out of School kit** (August 2012)
- **www.search-institute.org/sparks** Downloads, videos and more. See the Search Institute on-line store.
- **Research brief on Thriving/Sparks:** <http://www.search-institute.org/research/insights-evidence/november-2010>
- **www.parentfurther.com** Useful resources for parents, including video on talking to your child about sparks