

Helping Youth Find Purpose

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Adults who report having or feeling *a purpose* in life tend to be happier and more fulfilled. Purpose also helps to foster self-confidence, positivity, good relationships, and satisfaction with life and work. The same is true for children. When children find purpose, or a meaningful goal in life, they can better weather the tough times. Yet a Stanford psychologist found that only 20% of youth have found something meaningful to dedicate themselves to.

There are ways that we, as parents, can help our kids find their purpose. Modeling purposeful behavior is a place to start. They might not have the same interest, but kids will notice that their parents are motivated by something that has meaning to them.

Prompting conversations with your children, even when they're young, are important. This can include exploring with them about what makes them feel good about themselves, and sharing with them what makes you feel good about being in the world. Asking questions like: What did you do this past week that made you feel proud, was there anything you did that was appreciated by someone else, did you help someone recently and if so, what did you do? Praising kids for reflecting on and articulating what good they did, and then providing positive reinforcement for how they did it, can go a long way to helping them identify what makes them feel good about their unique way of being and contributing to the world.

In middle school, parents may want to encourage their children to reflect on what they see in the world that bothers them and what might have been done differently. Ask them if they see themselves doing anything to make the situation better, and what they think would happen if they took action. By high school, you can start small conversations about how your child would like to impact the world in some way, and whether you as a parent or someone else can help them achieve the impact they would like to make.

While you can't force your child to find their purpose, you can help them find it. While they may not want to talk about it, be persistent and find new ways to talk about it. They do listen!!