

What Does Your Child Love To Do?

What does your child love to do? A sport, art, acting, singing, playing an instrument, writing, designing computer or game software? Whatever the particular area of interest, it's probably safe to say that he or she pursues it with a zest.

The great majority of students who attend my SuperCamp programs are interested and involved in other activities. I've heard from many parents of our grads who say that many of the skills and character lessons they learn at SuperCamp help their kids perform even better in their other areas of interest.

What's also interesting is that when young people first apply this learning in pursuits in which they are passionate, it opens the door for them to use it at school with equally positive results.

In my work with teens and pre-teens, I focus on four specific ways they can take their performance to an even higher level in the activities they love to do.

1. Learn how to focus

At SuperCamp, we call it “**Q**” UP!, which means achieving a quantum level of focus.

When in the moment of practicing and executing, here's how to it:

- **Pull up & Picture:** Pretend there is a string attached to the top of your head. Pull on this imaginary string to straighten up your body, while you are picturing what you want (a successful outcome)
- **Breathe & Release:** Breathe deeply and release. Relax your jaw and shoulders.
- **Look & Listen:** Put all of your attention on the task/activity.
- **Give your best effort:** Do WIT (whatever it takes) every time and you will feel good about yourself.

2. Build your confidence to build results

Everyone can use more confidence. Even kids who are really good at something are going to run into bumps in the road. A good basketball player who can score 20 points a game may suddenly face a new team that can shut him or her down. That event can be a huge confidence blow to someone who has been unchallenged up to that point.

We address the confidence issue throughout SuperCamp because it is so critical to one's pursuit of excellence in school and any endeavor. Our approach is as follows:

Move out of your comfort zone: It's important to support a teen in moving beyond what is most familiar, what's safe, what they know is comfortable. Even someone who is naturally gifted in an area will reach the point where he or she will be required to try new ways of practicing, training, or executing in order to continue to progress. The basketball player may have to work on a new shot or new move in order to overcome tougher defenders. At SuperCamp, we do it with a series of confidence-building mini-success moments and the support of team members.

Failure Leads to Success: This is the second of our 8 Keys of Excellence that we teach at SuperCamp. It goes hand-in-hand with moving out of one's comfort zone because anyone who tries something new likely is going to fail before mastering it. Encourage your child to embrace the concept that failure provides the information necessary to learn and grow and, ultimately, succeed. Share that Thomas Edison failed more than 900 times before he perfected the light bulb, that Babe Ruth struck out 1,330 times, that the Beatles were told at their first audition session at Decca Records that groups with guitars were on their way out. As Michael Jordan said, "I've failed over and over and over in my life and that is why I succeeded." Michael Jordan, by the way, was cut from his high school varsity basketball team as a sophomore.

3. Take ownership for your results

I have addressed the concept of taking ownership in a previous Blend article from the standpoint of how one chooses to respond to unfavorable situations. In truth, all of life is about making choices. Teens, in particular, like to lay responsibility on the doorstep of others – parents, fellow students (in failed group projects or when caught doing something they shouldn't have been doing), teachers, coaches, teammates, etc.

Ownership (another of our 8 Keys of Excellence) applies to young people's extra-curricular activities in a number of ways, probably none more significant than in the area of practice. The decision to practice and the decision to practice with purpose are choices. Aspiring athletes, singers, actors, and artists all choose how hard they want to work to improve and excel. Legendary UCLA basketball coach, John Wooden, put it this way: "The only way of improving the team is by improving yourself."

4. Get motivated for success

Making the choice to work hard at one's craft is one way to take ownership. Another choice a young person makes is whether or not to be motivated. We know that confidence helps breed motivation. Another key component to becoming motivated is to set specific goals and to break through personal barriers.

A major breakthrough moment at SuperCamp occurs during a barrier-breaking exercise we conduct. It begins with each camper creating a specific goal and writing it on a board. On the other side of the board, each person writes what is holding him or her back from achieving that goal. One by one, the campers break through their boards and, in doing so, break through their barriers and become more motivated and more focused on achieving their goals.

For teens involved in an extra-curricular activity, their motivation could involve setting a goal of winning a competition, gaining a scholarship, or achieving a level of expertise that will allow them to pursue a career in that field. The bottom line, the more that kids can see "what's in it for them" in terms of a long-term payout, the greater the likelihood they will make the effort required to excel.

In summary, parents, you can use these tools to inspire your child to continue to develop in what he or she loves to do. In doing so, it will serve as a model for your son or daughter in terms of the results that can be achieved in school through the same focus, confidence, sense of ownership and level of motivation.