



## Breaking Barriers

### What It Takes To Motivate Teens

By Bobbi DePorter

Parents often complain that their sons and daughters aren't reaching their full potential. They know they're capable of much more, but they don't know how to motivate them to go for it.

Truth is, it's very difficult for parents to motivate their kids.

The single biggest reason why it's so hard for parents is that motivation is intrinsic; it comes from within. Parents, or teachers for that matter, can't force a young person to get motivated. The more they try, the more resistance they receive.

Of course there's the proverbial carrot approach. "If you get better grades, you can earn a \_\_\_\_\_." Incentives, or bribes, only go so far for so long.

So what does get a student motivated? Feeling passionate about achieving a goal is a big part of becoming motivated, as is feeling equally passionate about overcoming any obstacles that stand in the way.

At SuperCamp, we stage an event near the end of the 10-day session that helps students identify an important life goal and mentally break through their biggest barrier to achieving the goal.

We pass around 12-by-12-inch pine boards and markers. We tell campers that this activity is not about breaking a piece of wood. It's a metaphor about life. It's about how you can get what you want in your life. It's about breaking barriers to grab on to your goals — about going for it no matter what.

They have the power to break through any barrier. It has nothing to do with body size or physical condition. The skinniest, smallest teens will break through the board almost as easily as the hulking, muscular ones.

Campers can't just walk in off the street and accomplish this feat, no more than a parent can motivate their son or daughter with a pep talk. That's why we put it close to the end of the session. By then they have a much higher level of confidence and focus than they had before they arrived.

We talk to the campers about the reasons they might have had for not reaching their goals in the past. Maybe they got lazy and decided it wasn't worth the effort. Maybe they failed and let their fear of failure hold them back. But this exercise is about putting the past where it belongs. It's about making new choices.

By this point in the program, they've all chosen a goal to pursue. We ask them to think of the goal they've set for themselves. We ask them to envision achieving that goal, to make it a reality. Then they write their goals on the boards.

When they're finished, we ask them to flip the boards over. "Where is your goal?"  
"Under the board."



We tell them: "This board is the obstacle that has come between you and your dreams. What is it that's holding you back from what you really want? Get honest. Get real. What barrier, what fear has ripped you off over and over again?"

When they have their answers, they pick up their pens and write their obstacles on the board — on the opposite side from their goal. An inch of pine now stands between them and their dreams.

Now it's time to get in state. They're expert state-managers by this point, so when we tell them to get into a state of focused excitement, the energy builds at once. Powerful music swells loudly. They get into a powerful physical stance and repeat, "I am centered, focused, confident, and powerful."

"Be ready for success. It's yours... if you choose it."

When they can feel their commitment, they're ready.

The facilitators and their team mates gather around. The support is strong. One by one, they break through the barriers and grab their goals!

All around us teens are laughing, crying, hugging, and holding up the broken pieces of their boards. The confidence radiating from their faces is beautiful.

The camp session ends one day later and the campers head home with their broken boards in tow — and a level of motivation they've never before felt. It's a beautiful thing.

---

#### **About the Author:**

Bobbi DePorter, teen motivation and accelerated learning expert, has changed the lives of over five million kids through her SuperCamp and Quantum Learning school programs. SuperCamp is a learning and life skills summer program with more than 56,000 graduates in the U.S., Europe, Asia and Latin America. Quantum Learning is an accelerated learning-based teaching and learning methodology that has helped improve thousands of schools and districts across the nation. Bobbi is the author of more than a dozen books, including *The Seven Biggest Teen Problems and how to turn them into Strengths (An Insider's Look at What Works with Teens)*. For more information, visit <http://www.SuperCamp.com> and <http://www.QLN.com>. Contact Bobbi at [bdeporter@qln.com](mailto:bdeporter@qln.com).