

Sparks

Sparks Matter: Finding Your Spark Video Guide

This video is intended to provide any audience with a short and lively introduction to sparks. One of the ways you could use the video is to simply show it to an audience after telling them that it's about a new way of looking at positive youth development and helps kids grow up to be healthy, caring, responsible adults.

You might also preface the video with further remarks to give your audience a context for the video. Depending on whether your audience is mostly teachers or other education professionals, parents, youth workers, or young people—you can adapt your remarks to make them relevant. Here's an example of preface remarks that could be used for many audiences:

With the rise of new communication technologies, like e-mail, cell phones, texting, and mobile internet, you may think that modern relationships would be closer than those in the past, and that we'd all know more about each other's unique personalities, interests, and passions.

Unfortunately, that doesn't seem to be the case. According to Search Institute research, only 37% of young people say they are connected with caring adults at school who know them and their interests well. They tell us that few people in their congregation know them, and that youth-serving program staff members don't know them, either. Even in the age of "connectivity," our young people are more disconnected than ever.

It doesn't have to be this way, though. We can develop deep and significant relationships with young people—we can learn who they are, what they feel, what they think, and what they're interested in. Parents can build positive relationships with their kids, and mentors, neighbors, and teachers can start meaningful conversations with the kids around them. This video shows one way in which we can engage kids—through their sparks, the things that most excite them.

To make this preface more specific to your audience, you can talk about how positive youth development is relevant in their lives and their work, as well as the challenges they face in working for and with youth on a daily basis. It may also be helpful to provide a brief explanation of sparks before viewing the video.

Discussion Questions

Ask the following questions after showing the video:

- What did you learn about sparks from the first few comments in the video?
- What are some of the sparks that the young people in the video named? Several students named a sport or sports as their spark. What else did they say about those sparks?
- What were your sparks when you were a young person? What is your spark now?
- Can a spark lead to a career? Does it have to?
- What types of people did youth in the video say help them with their sparks? How did those adults help them to find and develop their sparks?
- How do some of the young people suggest that sparks could help kids make better choices?
- How does this video change how you view a young person close to you?
- In what ways can adults help kids explore, identify, and nurture their sparks?
- How can you use the idea of sparks in your own home? At work? In your community?

Take Action

After discussing some of the points above, challenge your audience to commit to taking action at home, in the workplace, in the community, or wherever they interact with children. You can use the following suggestions or come up with your own:

- Think of a young person in your life whose spark you don't know. Make it a point to begin a discussion with that young person and ask about his or her sparks.
- If you have young family members, ask what their sparks are, and talk about the sparks you had as a youth.
- For teachers, program staff members, or others in youth-serving organizations, take on the task of teaching others in your organization about sparks. Talk about why they're important and what every adult can do to help kids discover and develop them.

For More Information

To find additional resources, including free downloads, research, and further information on sparks, see the following:

- www.ignitesparks.com
- www.search-institute.org/thriving-and-sparks
- *Sparks: How Parent Can Help Find the Hidden Strengths of Teenagers* by Dr. Peter Benson (available from www.searchinstitutestore.org)

Note from Search Institute

This video contains a compilation of unscripted comments from young people on sparks, including their own. The views expressed do not necessarily all reflect those of Search Institute's research on sparks, thriving or positive youth development. For example, we do not consider sex in and of itself to be a "bad" thing; rather we consider it a healthy part of life, although it is clearly best if young people do not engage in sex prematurely.