

# Three Ways to Help Your Child Find Their Life Calling

At Acton Academy New Hampshire, we believe that each child is a genius who has the potential to change the world. We use the framework of heroes to describe this journey. Here are three concepts you can use in your family to help your child embrace their hero's journey to find a calling that will change the world.

## 1. Look for sparks and gifts in your child.

As parents, we often wonder how we can encourage our children to excel and develop talents. Are great athletes and musicians made or are they born that way? Science is indicating that it isn't simply natural talent that leads to accomplishments but rather it's the combination of pursuing your talents with grit. Angela Duckworth, a leading expert on developing grit, suggests that "The most successful people in life are both talented and gritty." Hal Elrod, author of *The Miracle Morning*, describes it as "Unwavering Faith + Extraordinary Effort = Miracles".

"It starts with a spark," Daniel Coyle, author of *The Talent Code* noted in an interview. Children begin to show interests at a very young age. If your child is passionate about making music, sign them up for piano lessons. If your budding entrepreneur is selling rocks in the driveway to make extra money, consider having them host a booth at the Acton Children's Business Fair or local farmers market. When your child continues to explore interests and try new things, this will help them develop important awareness of their strengths. Watching for what sparks your child's interest and fostering this awareness will help them find their life's calling.

Children's personalities and interests fluctuate considerably over time. With this in mind, parents are encouraged to not overwhelm their child with a particular activity simply because they show an interest. Encouraging diverse activities and experiences will help children have well-rounded opportunities to find their true talents and interests!

## 2. Parent with a growth mindset and encourage risk-taking.

Carol Dweck professor at Stanford University said, "If parents want to give their children a gift, the best thing they can do is to teach their children to love challenges, be intrigued by mistakes, enjoy effort, and keep on learning." We want to encourage our children to use their passions and skills to serve the world and encourage them to expect hardship and persevere when challenges come. Life is hard and a sense of entitlement only breeds disappointment. Creating a culture of accepting hard challenges with courage and learning from failures will produce a resilient child who is eager to find their life's calling. "Your vocation," wrote Frederick Buechner, "is that place where your deep joy and the world's deep need meet."

So what is a growth mindset? Here are three practical tips from author Mesilla Taylor:

"What did you learn today?"

"What mistake did you make that taught you something?"

“What did you try hard at today?”

Spanx founder and billionaire entrepreneur, Sara Blakely, tells the story about how her father asked her every day when she got home from school “What did you fail at today?” and if she didn’t have anything to say, he was disappointed. That takes celebrating failure and trying new things to a whole new level!!

**3. Help your child develop a concern for their community and world, while modeling what it means to live a calling yourself.**

Children begin to develop a curiosity about their future as they expand their gifts and explore their world. Bryan Dik Ph.D said “For children who are insulated from the world around them, their source of motivation may center around themselves. For those who visit unfamiliar places, build new relationships with peers outside their comfort zone, and experience the plight of those much less fortunate, their motivation will likely better account for the experiences of others.” Parents are encouraged to travel with their children and volunteer for local humanitarian efforts to help connect their children to a sense of world awareness.

As parents, our children likely learn more from what we do than what we say. Discussing your own life goals and motivation openly will help your child connect deeply with the process of working toward your life’s calling. Letting your child see you doing hard things, making mistakes, and rebooting, will give them firsthand experience with resilience. It’s often easy to forget that as parents we too are on a hero’s journey to find a calling to change the world!