



# Encouragement

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The Verdadera staff encourages you to discuss and explore the issues and stories, as the publication aims not only to offer an outlet for expression, but also to improve our lives. Keep in mind that the emotions that flow through the text and the feelings behind the words could be those of your child, your classmate, or your best friend.

## Things to Consider:

- What *is* encouragement?
- How do we encourage someone?
- What effect does encouragement have on us? How does it influence our choices?

## STUDENT SUBMISSIONS

ENCOURAGEMENT, at Monta Vista? Don't be funny. It's been a while since I've heard someone genuinely encourage me that wasn't a teacher. If I tell my friends that I have a test the next period or a big research project I have to do, they muster up some feigned "good luck!" or "you can do it!" but it's not like they really mean it. And I'm not saying my friends are bad people because they really aren't, they're simply victims of the Monta Vista Syndrome of hoping that you're better than everyone else, and there's nothing encouraging about that. And it's not like my parents are any better at it either, since their main approach of motivating me is the exact opposite - they ridicule my efforts in school and tell me that I'm not doing good enough. "A-? Why not A+?" Seriously? I'm already trying my hardest as it is, what more do you want from me?

"We live by encouragement and die without it - slowly, sadly and angrily."

– Celeste Holm

GROWING up, I never received much encouragement from my parents. They would always set goals for me to finish, and no matter what, I would have to accomplish them since they told me to do so. However, at school it was a totally different situation. I'll never forget my 1st grade teacher, Mrs. Hodge. Mrs. Hodge actually made me believe anything is possible. I was one of the slowest readers in the class when school started. I was extremely ashamed of this and usually never did my reading homework. But Mrs. Hodge wouldn't let this happen. While all the other kids were reading their books during reading hour Mrs. Hodge would take me to her rocking chair and let

me sit on her lap while she worked with me to decode the words that to me could have very well been hieroglyphics. I remember Mrs. Hodge would always tell me "I can do it". Every week she would choose a harder book for me and I would always protest, complaining it was too difficult but Mrs. Hodge would tell me she believed in me and that I could do it. By the end of 1st grade, I had moved up the ranks to the 3rd fastest reader in the class. By the end of 1st grade I was breezing through books at a rate I would never have imagined. I know that my improvement is solely due to Mrs. Hodge's simple words of encouragement. Just knowing that someone else believed in me made me want to learn to read faster even more. I knew that if I couldn't do it, I wasn't just letting myself down but also Mrs. Hodge. At home, when I fail a task assigned by my parents, they just yell and mark it off as something I'm not capable of. But I just wonder how many things that they've marked off as I'm not capable of I could actually do if I had the help of Mrs. Hodge.

"Words are singularly the most powerful force available to humanity. We can choose to use this force constructively with words of encouragement, or destructively using words of despair. Words have energy and power with the ability to help, to heal, to hinder, to hurt, to harm, to humiliate and to humble."

– Yehuda Berg

WHEN my friends give me encouragement, whether it is for an upcoming test, sports match, or an interview, they have never let me down. I have been surrounded by positive words that have helped me squeeze through my struggles. Once, my friend gave me a box of cookies and a little card attached to it wishing me good luck on my SATs. It really made me feel good about myself! I think it is the power of my friends that help me survive the tumultuous journey of my teenage years. I don't know what it is about encouragement, it can really lighten up someone's day. I wish everyone could be filled with heartfelt words so that the world will be a better place.

"Most of us, swimming against the tides of trouble the world knows nothing about, need only a bit of praise or encouragement - and we will make the goal."

– Robert Collier

ENCOURAGEMENT? That wretched word twists and turns like an untamable beast from the fiery depths of my solace. My ostentatious parents have

never supported any of my decisions. Throughout my high school career my parents have been condescending and masochistic, never failing to humiliate me for my failures or successes. The strange complexity of this arbitration, the fact that my parents and I cannot (and never will) get along, deprives me of the necessary support that a teenager needs. I wouldn't say I have the intellect of the common genius, but I am certainly not dim-witted. Every test/quiz/homework assignment that I receive high marks on, my parents refuse to acknowledge my accomplishments. And on the things that I fail to succeed in, there is no light at the end of the tunnel, only obscurities and gloom. As a student, the only thing I want most from my parents is a simple "Good Job" or "I'm proud of you", however, I have yet to hear such sweet words. There was once a time where my parents seemed to care about me and care about my problems. They pushed me through my troubles with kind words and heart-warming thoughts. That was a long time ago. There has been a void in my life that will haunt me till I rest my head upon my grave.

"If the wind will not serve, take to the oars. "

– Latin Proverb

I get a lot of encouragement.

Encouragement to get good grades from my parents.  
Encouragement to waste more time on 1channel that to do my homework.

Encouragement to give out my assignments to my friends who didn't bother doing it last night.  
Encouragement to drink so that I'm not the social killjoy at the party.  
Encouragement to drive my friends even though I don't have my year.  
Encouragement to be a man and just hook up with some girl, any girl.  
Not all encouragement is good. Its what we see in the world around us, it forces me to fit into this person, this character that I really am not ready to be. But I'm always scared, scared to disappoint my encouragers, scared to be the one to take that encouragement for granted, scared to know if saying no will make me lose them all.

"It is not the mountain we conquer but ourselves."

– Edmund Hillary

MY junior year, I had a friend that wanted to experiment with hard drugs. All he talked about was how Steve Jobs did acid, and how that made him famous and successful. Clearly he was oblivious to the

terrible things that drugs can do to people. Acid and heroin and cocaine are not petty things to be messed around with. I realized that I cared about him enough to not want him to sacrifice his future for the fleeting highs of acid and heroin-- I didn't want him to become an addict. From then on, I started talking to him about his future and about all the things he wanted to accomplish; all the things that he would be sacrificing for a drugged mind. It took months of talking and encouraging, but in the end he decided against experimenting, for the sake of his future. In those months, all his friends had left him because they didn't want to deal with the aftermath, but I stuck by him. Why? Because even a hopeless case can be saved with enough encouragement.

"It is time for us all to stand and cheer for the doer, the achiever – the one who recognizes the challenges and does something about it."

– Vince Lombardi

I think that encouragement can result in 2 things; it can be very rewarding, or it can make you face many consequences. In other words, encouragement can be good, or it can be bad. The good type of encouragement would be when you are motivated by your close friends and family to reach for your dreams and try your best. The bad type of encouragement would be when you are pressured from your peers to cheat on the next test, do drugs, ditch class, etc. Unlike most schools, at Monta Vista, we are encouraged to try our best in academics. And it's a good thing to be pressured in academics...right? The downside of this is the part when our trying at school makes all of us so competitive. Eventually, everyone becomes so motivated to get the Harvard/ Yale/ Stanford/ other Ivy's that we start to cheat on tests and do whatever to reach our goals; even by unethical means. So, in a sense, I think that encouragement should be looked down upon than encouraged.

"Get going. Move forward. Aim High. Plan a takeoff. Don't just sit on the runway and hope someone will come along and push the airplane. It simply won't happen. Change your attitude and gain some altitude. Believe me, you'll love it up here."

– Donald Trump

MY parents have never really encouraged me. Basically if I do something good like get an A they just act like that's what I was supposed to do and I

shouldn't expect any additional praise or anything. But if I do something wrong they get really upset and yell at me. They think it makes me want to work harder. The whole carrot and stick thing, but I guess they forgot the carrot. I don't want to try anymore because it doesn't matter. Nothing I do will ever be good enough for them. And I don't need their encouragement anymore anyways. I'm over it.

"Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, ambition inspired, and success achieved."

– Hellen Keller

WHEN I think about it plainly, encouragement kind of sounds a little cheesy. In my mind I'm picturing Dora the Explorer singing that we can do it as she asks us painfully obvious questions in a mix of two languages. Besides the fact that I know too much about Dora for my own good (this is what happens when you have younger siblings), I think that true encouragement doesn't always come from someone directly telling you some positive words. For example, when you see that others around you are failing but you're succeeding, you can't deny the surge of pride that fills you, which makes you want to be the best in further endeavors as well. Granted this doesn't happen at Monta Vista often, since everyone seems to succeed, so I guess we get all of our encouragement through Asian parents and despising those better than us. Personally, and as sad as this is to admit, I can't deny that I don't feel better about myself when I see someone else having a harder time doing things, even if the feeling only lasts for a millisecond. And as bad as it may sound, being a Monta Vista student, you can't deny that you haven't felt the same kind of pride and encouragement out of the failures of others.

"What the caterpillar calls the end of the world, the master calls a butterfly."

– Richard Bach

MY friends and family are my main source of encouragement. They are always there to push me to do my best and to never give up. I play tennis and everyday my dad spends a half hour with me helping with my swing and aim. He never yells and is always very patient with me, correcting my mistakes and pointing out the things I do right. My friends and I are very competitive, but that only makes it so that we work harder. Yes, we're competitive, but we always

encourage each other to do our best because we want each other to succeed. Without the encouragement of the people I love I don't know what I would do.

"Nine tenths of education is encouragement."

– Anatole France

IS it encouragement anymore Mom?

Or have we gotten to the stage where the difference between encouragement and abuse has become blurred. Why is it that I'm cringing as course selection comes around another year and you yell and scream at me for not challenging myself, for being an idiot, for selling myself short, when 3 of my 6 classes are honors or AP. Why is that I let your "encouragement" cause me to change my mind and compromise on the choices that are going to define my life?

Why is it that I let you encourage my sleepless nights, my depression, my cutting, my bulimia?

Here I am doing everything you've encouraged me to do and I'm still "a little piece of s\*\*\*" to you, who has made nothing of herself.

Please mom, don't encourage me anymore.

"Press on – nothing can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Perseverance and determination alone are omnipotent."

– Calvin Coolidge

I'M always encouraging people...to play video games. Through video games, I feel like I've grown close with and bonded with many friends. The number of late-night rounds of LoL, the cheesy inside jokes at lunch. I hate how society discourages video games and people to label things like video games, tv, and comic books as "undesirables". Every girl I've dated, I've encouraged her to play video games. What other guy can brag to his buds that his girlfriend plays video games? Surprisingly, video games improves social skills and critical thinking skills. So yes, I encourage everyone to play video games! Screw what society says, grab a remote and just have fun!

"The art of living lies less in eliminating our troubles than in growing with them."

– Bernard Baruch

I try my best to be that source of encouragement for my friends: telling them that the "C" on their test won't affect their future, to keep going, and that "it's all okay". However, for once I just want someone to do the same for me. Around me, a lot of my friends are always depressed and stressed out, and it's not like I'm not stressed out myself. I just want a friend or someone who will smile back at me and tell me that "it's all okay" too. It's difficult to have to hold a pretense every single day and constantly comfort your friends when I myself would like to be comforted.

"A word of encouragement during a failure is worth more than an hour of praise after success."

– Unknown

I once had a friend who really liked this girl, but the issue was that she just recently broke up with her boyfriend of two years, so he thought that she would not be ready to be in a new relationship and that he would be a rebound. Being a mutual friend, I knew that she had feelings for him too, but that she was scared of being hurt again. It was extremely frustrating because neither of them was brave enough to admit their feelings for one another, and they were both too stubborn to make the first move. Everyday, I would encourage the two of them to just admit their feelings for one another, and after almost two weeks of my pep talks and encouragement, they finally talked to each other about their feelings. They decided to date, and have become one of the happiest couples I have ever seen. Without my reassurance and encouragement, the two of them would have never have had the courage to admit their feelings for one another and they would both be wondering what could have been.

"Why should you continue going after your dreams? Because seeing the look on the faces of the people who said you couldn't... will be priceless."

– Kevin Ngo

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# A WORD FROM THE PROFESSIONAL

Pantea Far, MFT Intern

Raising teenagers is not an easy task. Teenagers don't come with an "operating manual". Parents find themselves more and more distant from their teens, even though they are still using the same parental skills that worked for them when their children were younger. Most if not all parent's expectations are rooted in the love for their children and their hope for a brighter future for them. Regretfully, love and hope gets lost in the way parents express and deliver them.

Universally, teenage years are considered the most difficult years of one's life. As not only the expectations from family, school, and society exceedingly increase for teens, they are also dealing with internal changes and transformations. At the tender age of 13 through 19, our children are working hard at their academics and extra-curricular activities, as they aim to navigate their fears and anxieties about leaving the nest. They are made to believe that the outcome of their high school career is the "one and only" determinant of where they end up in life, and that their future happiness is dependant on the grades they receive in high school. As adults we know, although sometimes fail to convey, that there are other factors that determine happiness. Those factors do not boil down to what grade we received in our sophomore year of high school.

Chartering new territories in their newly developed bodies, high school students are expected to do above and beyond norms in all aspects of their lives. They are under a great deal of pressure and can be easily discouraged and lose hope. Encouragement is, therefore, desperately needed to reassure our teens that they are good enough and what matters is that they are doing their best.

What is Encouragement?

Encouragement is Empowerment.

I believe that encouragement is an essential element in a healthy and positive relationship between parents and teenagers. Parents who are encouragers tend to help their teens become inner-directed, cooperative, responsible and develop trust in themselves, versus being outer-directed and obey authority figure's (parents, teachers, other adults) demands of them.

It is important to note that there is a major difference between responsibility and obedience. Ideally, when responsibility is encouraged, there is no fear of failure, no punishment, no feelings of inferiority. Whereas, when parents demand obedience, there is an element of control. In addition, when obedience is in the mix, there is shame and guilt associated with the "less than perfect" outcome. What I call controlling and unreasonable behavior can include, but not be limited to, harassing, ignoring, being condescending, intimidating, nagging, criticizing, yelling, and demanding.

It is important to note that by merely steering away from the place of control and unreasonable behaviors towards teens, which mostly results in discouragement, parents are able to cultivate an attitude of encouragement. However, by just stopping the above discouraging behavior, we might not achieve cooperation and harmony.

To replace discouragement with encouragement in a relationship, both parents and youth will have to contribute actively to the process, using their creativity and willingness to take some risks.

Parents can change their interactions by paying sincere attention to their teenagers. They can listen

attentively without judgment to what their teens are interested in, how they preserve their high school experience, their likes and dislikes, their fears and anxieties, their music, friends, struggles, and how they are coping.

Parents can express their love and acceptance to their children by actually telling them about their love, hopes, and worries for them, instead of assuming that by the mere fact that they are providing food and shelter for their children, their love is expressed.

In return, teenagers can take risks, be brave, and make an effort to show interest in what their parents find important, ask what happiness looks like for their parents, how their parents survived high school, communicate what they would like to receive from their parents. Being mindful that their parents are from a different generation, and their challenges were also different as teens, will help understand where they come from and will cultivate respect.

Creativity would come to play when you need to find time in your busy schedule for each other. What works best is to find an activity of common interest so that families can spend quality time together weekly, and stick to it.

Implementing the above suggestions are not easy at first, especially for parents and teens who have been steering away from each other in the recent years. However, I guarantee that your efforts will be rewarded as your relationship with your loved ones improve.

Encouragement is built on Five Principles

What also needs to happen in most cases is: to accept others as they are and trust that they have the innate potential and resources to be in a space of well-being. Acceptance and trust are the two fundamental aspects of encouraging relationship.

The third component to encouragement is mutual respect. By being respectful towards ourselves, adults can model this behavior for teens, and at the same time give due respect for each unique individual who strives to be responsible and self-reliant.

Freedom of choice is the other aspect of encouragement, as adults, we need to remind ourselves to let our children be who they are, and not expect them to fulfill our wishes and/or demands. Instead of demanding, parents can provide choices and children and teens can be free to choose. When choice is given to the young person, cooperation is inevitable, and commitment is a most likely outcome. By having freedom to choose, children and teens will be able to experience the outcome of their choices and make conclusion about their decision-making, as they pave their way into adulthood.

Optimism is also essential in an encouraging relationship between parents and teens. Expressing confidence in our teens implies that we believe in their courage, strength, and ability. That to me is the most encouraging thing a parent can do.

How to take the first steps towards being encouraging parents?

Here are some basic dos and don'ts:

- Having realistic expectation is encouraging. Focusing on mistakes is discouraging.
- Being optimistic and trusting is encouraging. Comparing is discouraging.
- Being connected and in communication is encouraging. Being overly helpful is discouraging.

- Focusing on effort and improvement is encouraging. Focusing on outcome is discouraging.
- Having faith and respect is encouraging. Having doubt and disrespect is discouraging.

### Praise vs. Encouragement

There is a major distinction between praise and encouragement. Praise and reward usually follow satisfactory outcome or compliance from teens. When there is praise, there is also judgment and evaluation. Encouragement is not result driven; it branches out of recognizing effort, supporting improvement, and helping teens expand their strengths. When praise can foster a fear of failure, encouragement fosters acceptance of being imperfect.

A reoccurring theme in the above submissions that caught my attention is that, not only the students are thirsty for validation and acknowledgment, but, they would welcome any kind of praise and reward with all the strings attached, let alone encouragement. These students don't want to be ignored and they want to feel connected to their families. They don't want to be judged, they need love and support from their parents. Most are caught in between two sets of values and feel tremendous pressure and disconnect, they feel belittled when parents constantly express that they are not good enough. They need guidance, hope, and freedom, to feel good about themselves and be able to thrive.

Being silent and not acknowledging teens' successes can be as bad as being condescending and patronizing. As adults, our job is to make sure our teens are supported at home so that they can have a strong sense of self and can tackle what is expected of them at school and with friends.

### Resources:

1. Parenting Wisdom Workshop Series @ Process Therapy Institute, Los Gatos for more information visit [PTI.org](http://PTI.org) or call Julia Muddari at 408.358.2218 x433
2. Parenting skills: Tips for raising teen <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/parenting-tips-for-teens/MY00481>
3. Surviving Your Adolescents: How to Manage-and Let Go of-Your 13-18 Year Olds [Thomas W. Phelan PhD](#) (Author)
4. <http://www.treehouseyouth.org> – Article: My Teen is so Discouraged, How can I Help?

## About the Professional

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