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# MAKE SPARKS FLY

## Persevere in the Face of Discouragement

**Overcome discouragement:** About one in five teens says that someone has purposely discouraged them from pursuing their passion or interests. Unfortunately, there are people in this world who may not be supportive of you as you set goals and pursue your sparks. Sometimes, when you feel discouraged, you may be inclined to give up on your sparks. *What can you do to overcome discouragement from others?*

**Give yourself a “Sparks High-Five!”**

1. Keep trying when things get difficult.
2. Strive for excellence, not perfection.
3. Get perspective by thinking of the long-term or the big picture.
4. Learn from your mistakes.
5. Take small steps forward, rather than procrastinating.<sup>1</sup>

The “**Sparks High-Five**” reminds us to stay positive and encourages us to **persevere\*** during tough times. These five concepts reveal life lessons about persevering. Discuss with a partner or small group what each core concept means to you.

Now, think about a time in your life when you felt discouraged. On a separate sheet of paper, write a short newspaper article about this life experience. Use one of the “Sparks High-Five” core statements as the title and theme of your article. Use your personal experience to share a “life lesson” with others. What can other teens learn from you so they can overcome discouragement in their lives and continue to develop their sparks?

**\*PERSEVERE:** to persist in anything undertaken; maintain a purpose in spite of difficulty, obstacles, or discouragement; continue steadfastly.

(<http://dictionary.reference.com/>)

**Discover “life lessons” in perseverance:** Perseverance is an essential quality to develop as you pursue your sparks. Explore USA TODAY and find an article that exemplifies perseverance. In a short paragraph, share the “life lesson” about perseverance we can learn from the article. Explain how this life lesson can help teens overcome obstacles and move forward to achieve their goals.

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**Find out how perseverance pays off:** Everyone has a spark—a passion, talent or interest—that potentially motivates them to overcome the discouragement that may arise in their lives. Go to [at15.com/videos](http://at15.com/videos) to view a powerful video about U.S. Senator Robert Menendez from New Jersey and how he persevered to reach his goals. What life lesson can we learn about perseverance?

Now, connect with other young people who are overcoming discouragement as they go for their sparks, by becoming a member of @15. Simply click “not a member” on the top, right corner of the home page and begin your registration. Join thousands of young people who are giving and receiving support to overcome discouragement and pursue their sparks!

<sup>1</sup> Benson, Peter L. *Sparks: How Parents Can Help Ignite the Hidden Strengths of Teenagers*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008.

