



Nurturing Your Mentee's Spark!

What gives you joy?

What connects you to life, bringing you purpose and hope?

What is your spark?

To familiarize mentors with the idea of *sparks*, participants at the January Mentor Training were encouraged to ponder these questions, with the idea that to best support someone in finding their *spark*, it is helpful to know your own. To explore your *sparks*, [click here](#).

The idea of *sparks* was formulated by Dr. Peter Benson and his team of social scientists from the Search Institute. While studying human thriving, the team centered their study on a key axiom of human development pontificated by the Greek philosopher, Plutarch: "The mind is not a vessel to be filled but a fire to be kindled."

Benson passionately believed that "the core of human thriving is the identification of that inner light, the special quality, or interest that lights us up. That light is our very essence, the thing about us that is good and beautiful and useful to the world." Through his research, Benson identified that thriving young people are joyful, connected and engaged in life. They contribute to their communities and are kind and generous.

Helping your mentee discover and nurture his/her *spark* is a process, one that can continue throughout your mentor/mentee journey.

For *sparks* categories and a beginning list of possible *sparks* [click here](#).

As you begin to support your mentee in finding his/her *spark*, here are some things to consider:

- In order for your mentee to talk about their innermost selves, their dreams and passions, they need to feel safe.
- Remind your mentee that *sparks* are not limited to things that come easily to them or that they already know how to do.
- *Sparks* are discovered at different times in life and change over time and you can have multiple *sparks* at one time.
- Help your mentee understand that he/she can become smarter and more competent as he/she tries new things and practices new skills.
- Your mentee will enjoy hearing about your *sparks*. Let them know about how you discovered your interest and how your interests have changed over time.

To help your mentee begin his/her *spark* discovery [click here](#).

Introduce sparks with this fun find a *spark* activity [click here](#).

Mentees can discover their *spark* by imagining what they might like to do [click here](#).

Inspire your mentee to dream about the future with this activity [click here](#).

Encourage your mentee to name his/her *spark* [click here](#).

For ideas to begin the *sparks* conversation [click here](#).

To view Dr. Peter Benson's Tedtalk follow this link-

<http://tedxtalks.ted.com/video/TEDxTC-Peter-Benson-Sparks-How>

Content for this article was gathered from the Search Institute's *Igniting Sparks, Connecting Students' Interests and Talents to Classroom Success*.