



Q & A with Jackie Marquette, PhD

Q: My son spends a great deal of time watching YouTube Disney videos. He started making his own YouTube videos about the history of Disney videos. He'll be 16, and school has not given him any job coaching. Is there a way to point his great interest in Disney videos into something approaching a career path?

A: Yes, you can explore options for your son's further skill development and engage him in experiences that directly relates to his interest in filmmaking.

First, begin with guiding questions to learn more about what your son likes about filmmaking and Disney movies. Specifically, what is it about Disney movies he likes? Are there certain movies he prefers over others? The answers may reveal options to explore you may not have considered. If your son has difficulty communicating his thoughts, watch movies with him or observe him in the process of creating to see what sparks his interest. Because you said he likes Disney, he obviously enjoys the idea of fantasy and escapism. Yet he has another related interest as well. For example, you mentioned he made a film on the history of Disney. This shows his interests in biography or illustrating a factual account.

Skills

With your son's participation, make a list of the skills he already has developed in filmmaking. Lighting, sound, and location shooting are some necessary skills. Determine the specific skills that need more development and exposure. Possibly you could search for a mentor or a coach to find a filmmaker who would allow your son to observe or participate as an apprentice. Another way to find an artist is through networking with your friends or through local, regional or state art councils.

Your son can begin using the skills he already has. Possibly he could make a video of a children's birthday party. If the event involved Disney characters, then it could capture his interest even more. Other options for your son might be making a film of family celebrations, weddings, and other parties. These are welcomed settings for a video that bring precious memories to

others for a lifetime, all drawn upon his skills and interests.

Person-Centered Planning

Search for support and ideas from a group of people to expand his exposure. You might consider using the Person-Centered Planning approach. Invite people who know your son well to come to a meeting at your home or another setting where your son is the center of attention. The purpose is to brainstorm as a group the "next step" options that could lead your son to additional experiences and opportunities to learn or practice new skills. Invite a person in the filmmaking field who could contribute ideas as a member on your son's behalf. You never know, options may emerge for your son such as volunteer work or practical experience as an apprentice. You can find lots of information on the Internet about the benefits of conducting a Person-Centered Planning meeting.

Because your son has shown an interest in the history of Disney, you might encourage him to explore these options. He could research the history of filmmakers and learn what others have accomplished with the challenges of their time. He could learn that famous filmmakers did not instantly reach their career goals; in fact, they often failed before they reached success. With his interest in history and filmmaking, these real examples might motivate him to keep going toward his dream of becoming a filmmaker.

Role Models

A role model can be a powerful motivational tool in developing one's interest. Some guiding questions you might ask: Who are his role models? Evidently Walt Disney is one, since he made a video of the history of Disney movies? Are there other role models? If so, what areas? If not, could he be introduced to an artist who is a successful filmmaker? Furthermore, he could be encouraged to interview this artist. If your son has a challenge in initiating a conversation, he could have his questions written out and possibly a family member or a mentor could assist in your son's interview.

Identify Supports

Your son may require supports in order to pursue his interest in filmmaking. When considering exposure to different settings with unfamiliar people, think in terms of these possible supports that may help him participate.

- *Establishing a mentor or a coach in these settings can be most supportive.*
- *Recognizing visual technical strategies to promote learning a new skill.*
- *Using pro-social behaviors, such as shaking hands or attending to the other person in a conversation as well as speaking up appropriately about his own filmmaking interests.*
- *Considering structural supports, time involved in an activity, time of day in participating that become conducive to his participation.*
- *Realizing the settings where he may need additional supports in order to participate can make it successful.*

Encourage motivation

Help expand his willingness to participate in a challenging setting with many unfamiliar people, such as a film festival. Take photos or a video of your son's involvement and activity. Nothing is as powerful as watching oneself successfully involved in a shooting on location, attending a festival, or interviewing a famous filmmaker.

Join groups with people who have similar interests

There are film festivals for youth such as the National Film Festival for Talented Youth (age 22 and under). He could submit his own film or attend to see what others are producing. Local, regional, and state art councils are another place he could participate in festivals. Also, your son could also join an organization, read, or subscribe to periodicals or magazines on filmmaking.

You obviously appreciate your son's skills and interests. Nurturing his interest in filmmaking can lead him to a career that is satisfying and rewarding. You are the solution to your son now, if mainly to connect him to opportunities, people, and experiences that allow him to use and develop his skills and talents.