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INTERVIEW SERIES

**How to “Parent With Purpose”
and Give Your Child the Spark
They Need to Succeed**



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HardToFind Seminars.com

Expert Interviews On Mind Body & Spirit

Dear Student,

I'm Michael Senoff, founder and CEO of HardToFindSeminars.com.

For the last five years, I've interviewed the world's best business and marketing minds.

And along the way, I've created a successful home-based publishing business all from my two-car garage.

When my first child was born, he was very sick, and it was then that I knew I had to have a business that I could operate from home.

Now, my challenge is to build the world's largest free resource for online, downloadable audio business and health related interviews.

I knew that I needed a site that contained strategies, solutions, and inside information to help you operate more efficiently.

I've learned a lot in the last five years, and today I'm going to show you the skills that you need to survive.

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Now, let's get going.

Michael Senoff

Michael Senoff

Founder & CEO: www.hardtofindseminars.com

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How to “Parent With Purpose” and Give Your Child the Spark They Need to Succeed

Hi, it's Michael Senoff, with Michael Senoff's HardToFindSeminars.com. The title of this interview is called 'How to Parent With Purpose and Give Your Child the Spark They need to Succeed.' According to Dr. William Damon, child psychologist and author of The Path to Purpose: Helping Our Children Find Their Calling in Life, our school system is set up to churn out adults minimally confident about a lot of things, but not expertly passionate about anything. He says that's because most schools are dreary places, unconnected to the communities they sit in or the children they serve children end up having no clue why they need to take tests or learn things, and lose one of the strongest keys there are to success – motivation. So Dr. Damon studied highly successful children to find out what motivated them and how they were different. And in this audio, you'll hear what he found in his study, and the simple ways you can help your children find their path to purpose.

You'll Also Hear...

- The real reason a lot of “entrepreneurial types” don't finish college – but go on to direct blockbuster hits or start a company like Apple or Microsoft...
- You'll hear simple steps parents can take for kids who just don't seem interested in anything to help them find their passion and purpose in life
- You'll hear everyday activities parents can do with their children that help them feel connected to the family, community and know their actions matter (and why that's so important)
- You'll see the ideal picture of what schools should be like when it comes to producing enthusiastic, confident, goal-oriented children
- You'll hear specific ways you can help your children know what their passion is – and how to help them develop it
- You'll also hear the importance of holding high expectations for your kids (but how to do it the right way – so they're not constantly looking over their shoulder just to please Mom or Dad)

Look we all want to raise motivated, self-directed kids with energy and spark, and the good news is, we can. We just need to help them feel connected to their community, encourage them to develop their talents, and

give them the resources to flourish. And in this audio interview, you'll hear exactly how to do that.

Hi Chris Costello and I teamed up with Michael Senoff, to bring can bring you the world best health-related interviews. So if you know anyone struggling with their weight with cancer, diabetes, ADHD, autism, heart disease or other health issues send them over to Michael Senoff's [HardToFindSeminars.com](http://www.HardToFindSeminars.com).

Chris And today we are talking with William Damon. Bill thank you so much for joining us today.

Bill It's my pleasure Chris

Chris So, you are one of the leading authorities on child development and written an exciting new book called, The Path to Purpose helping our children find their calling in life. And we are so excited to be talking with you today.

Bill Well thanks. Yeah, the book has gotten a lot of attention. And I think it's really the first time anybody has looked at this very central part of human life from a developmental point of view. Which is how do people actually go about finding what they dedicate their lives to, especially when they are young. And of course youth is a formative period in human development. So we were fortunate enough to be able to explore that and wrote the book based on the studies that we did.

Chris Yeah and the book is based on the findings of the youth purpose project. Can you tell us a little bit more about what that was all about?

Bill Sure. We got started about ten years ago and started small like all things should start. With just finding a few very extraordinary young people who really have been doing amazing things with their lives. For example: one young teenager who by the age of twelve had started a foundation to help build wells, drinking water wells for villages in Africa, where families don't have enough water. And this boy on his own initiative raised money, went to Africa, oversaw the building of these wells. These are very unusual kids. And we found about a dozen of them who we got to know a bit. Interviewed them, read whatever we could find about them, and got the general idea of what's possible during early parts of life. What kind of inspiration and dedication, achievement, and aspiration is possible in the

kids that really have a full sense of what they're after. A full sense of what they're trying to accomplish in life and why.

So that's where we started. And then of course we asked the question that everyone's interested in which is, "what about ordinary kids?" Do they have purpose? Do they have any purpose at all? Which ones do? And the ones that don't have purpose, why are they having trouble? And what difference does it make? Does it matter that a young person has something to believe in or some big goal in life. What difference does it make? So these were all the questions we asked. And we went around the country. We studied and surveyed, interviewed young people between the ages of 12 and 22 about what their lives meant to them and what their goals were and what they saw themselves doing 10 years from now, 20 years from now. Whether they were satisfied with their lives. Whether they were still looking for something that they hadn't found yet. And based on all that we wrote up some studies, we followed the kids for another 4 years, until the oldest of them was 26. And then I wrote the book. I wrote the book, "The Path to Purpose", describing the state of purpose among young people in America today.

Chris Yeah and I want to really get into, you've got some great, great information in "The Path to Purpose". But I'd like to start with just asking you because I know you're an expert on this; what is going on with kids in America today? I mean we hear so much about suicide rates and kids playing video games. What's your take on that Bill?

Bill Yeah, well the first thing I've got to say is that there is no single letter or adjective that can describe the whole generation. The stuff about generation X or Y or the Millennials, or the Odysseys, or the dumbest generation. All these catch words are really characters.

Chris And if we do that we're gonna sound really old.

Bill Yes that's one thing. And out of touch. It's very fragmented. There are a number of young people, we find about one in five who are absolutely shining with purpose and dedication. They know where they are headed. There are learning about the skills they need to learn in order to get there. And that's about 20% of the population. That's very important. And then on the whole other extreme, we find about a quarter of the young people, scattered across the country of course, this is a national survey with every possible group represented. But about one in four on a national basis haven't found anything and aren't even particularly looking. They've either

given up, or they are apathetic, or maybe they're even hedonistic or just having a good time, and they don't see goals as part of their lives at all. This leaves a lot of kids in the middle, maybe 60% who would like to find something. Who will experiment with a lot of things. Some of them are actually really great kids, really busy. Doing their piano lessons and soccer and getting good grades. But they haven't really found anything to dedicate themselves to. And nothing they're doing is providing a whole lot of meaning for their lives. And these are the kids sometimes who are pretty stressed out. Because they are looking for something they haven't found, they feel sometimes pressured externally to be active and do all these things. They are good kids. They are doing it, but they're not getting a lot of satisfaction out of it. And I would say that those are the massive kids in the middle who are probably the most typical group. Although as I said, you gotta also remember there are these other two groups. Both are very purposeful kids and the totally drifting, non-purposeful kids are an important part of the picture too.

Chris That gets me to in, "The Path to Purpose", you talk a lot about parenting for purpose. I really want our listeners to hear, what can out parents do that's really going to help them encourage and nurture their kids?

Bill We took a look at the parents of the purposeful kids were doing and it comes to a number of bullets that I describe much more in detail in the book. But to kinda simplify it: Number one; the parents are really getting to know the kids well enough that they can recognize, what is the spark that your child has? Every child has a spark. Every child has something that they are potentially passionate about. Some interest. It could be anything. It could be something serious that they study in school. You know, geometry, or literature, something like that. Or it could be something they look into outside of school.

One child that we studied got interested in cooking and food because she kept going to a French restaurant and was fascinated about how the chef made sauces. And she continued with this interest for 10 years. So it could be things that may be hard to recognize but what the parents are doing is taking a look and doing a lot of listening to what the child finds interesting and inspiring and then once that parent has recognized what that spark is, the parents give the kid a lot of support and resources. For example, that child that I just mentioned eventually the parents sent the kid to a summer camp where she learned cooking. Even though the parents were not particularly enthralled initially. They would have much rather had her go into math or science or something like that. So, the parents are listening. They are following the child's lead in the sense that

they are providing support and resources for what the child wants to do. And they are also providing the kid with a lot of good role models. Including people that can really tell the child, “look, here’s what you need to do practically to learn the skills, to develop the kind of knowledge that you’ll need in order to make this dream of yours into reality.”

What the parents are not doing is giving the kid a purpose, I will say that. We very rarely find that the parents are saying, “look, this is really what you should be doing in life. You should be a doctor. You should be a lawyer.” Or something like that. That doesn’t seem to work. But what does work, is when the child brings himself to it or herself to it. And then the parents provide the encouragement that the kid needs.

Chris Ok, how do you go from being supportive encouraging parent to pushy parent? We have an eight year old and he recently has been designing buildings and cities with google sketch or something, some program. And I said to my husband, “did you teach him this?”. He said, “No, No”, and I said, “Oh”, I was surprised, the kid is really talented. And I found myself very quickly going, “Well don’t you want to sit down and do that? Don’t you want to design today?” “No, No”. You know! How do you avoid that?

Bill I don’t think anybody can avoid it 100% perfectly. And that’s not needed. Parents don’t have to be perfect. But parents do have to be sensitive and the kids will give you a lot of signals. Really, in most cases that we looked at the child was going to the parent for help or advice or support when the child needed it. And the parents that were being responsive were the ones that got a lot of result as far as the child’s development was concerned. But parents don’t really need to do more than make an offer every now and then while to let the child know, I’m available or this is something we can encourage or support. As far as getting on the kids back as far as saying, “you should do this” Or “you should do that”. You know, it just isn’t that effective and it can really have a counter effect. Now that doesn’t mean that there aren’t things that children may need to do out of responsibility. And I don’t want to indicate that. In other words, children have their responsibilities. And they need to do their homework. They need to do chores around the house. That’s what the parents are asking. They need to live their life responsibly. So there are times when parents do need to exercise their legitimate authority and say, “you need to go to bed at this time”. “You need to clean up” or do whatever. But as far as finding purpose in life and finding a lifelong passion and goal, that’s an area where a heavy-handed parent is not going to have a positive effect. If the you as me and have the up that if the fifth and if the gift a gift from the fifth and if the and often that to

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Chris It seems to me to be a very subtle process also it seemed to notice that as soon as my son realized that I had been completely amazed and now blown away by this talent.

Bill Yeah well a lot of what kids are looking for is validation by people other than their parents. Peers and teachers, and so a parent can only do so much on that score.

Chris Ok so Bill in "The Path to Purpose" you also talked about schools. I'm wondering what you think about our school system now and what do schools need to do to create kids are engaged and really interested and what they're doing.

Bill Well one thing and it's not happening at a lot of schools these days unfortunately, but one thing is bringing a child inside on the question of why is that we're asking them to do what is that they are being asked to do. In other words, a lot of activities in school these days have to do with learning to take test well. Now testing is important, I'm not into the test, but test are a means to an end they're not an end in themselves. And too often these days especially in a lot of public schools tests are being presented as the end, this is the reason they're studying, this is why you're here to get a good grade or a good score on this test and then to move on to the next set of tests that will come up in the following grade. That is not going to inspire anybody. And it's too infrequent that teachers say, "Not been earning science because here's what we do in science in the world. Here's the human uses of..." Or even when it is that he and these skills are leaning toward, what can a job, what kind of vocations, what kind of like this will bring you to master the skills. And to understand that the tests are meant to give you feedback, they're meant to give you an understanding of how well you've learn something, not just as the accomplishment that you're aiming all your efforts towards. And I think that one of the reasons that kids get so board and apathetic in school, is because they don't really finding meaning in what they're doing. And they don't see where it's leading, they don't see that it's having them in a direction that they themselves want to go in. So I think that schools really need to have better conversations with kids about what I call in the book

the why question. Which is why am I doing this, because that's what kids want to know especially when they're young. They're already insiders in the system and they haven't already body into all of the reward structures incentives and all that. So they, and there just saying no I don't know why should I do this stuff? Well, we've got to provide a better answer that question.

Chris And what about the question of creating environments where they really highlighted strength? Because one of the things we've noticed from years of interviewing best-selling authors and Physicians and people that have achieved amazing things is they focus pretty early on um what they're interested in and what they wanna do. It seems in our schools it's all about being a generalist. I don't know that necessarily creates that sense of purpose.

Bill Yeah I agree with you. That again is another problem with incentives that are built into the schools right now. Is that we reward the kids for knowing a little bit about a lot of things and being able to pass the minimum level, the minimal standard of a whole range of subjects. And if a child gets passionate about music or about sports or about anything we don't really give the child the freedom to explore that in the kind of depth that will really bring satisfaction. And by the way, that's one of the reasons they see so many successful entrepreneurs not even finishing college for example. They get really excited about what they're doing and they go on create Facebook or Apple computers or Microsoft or go direct a movie. And I think part of that is because they're not finding freedom to really explore in depth, and of course these people are success stories so there's nothing wrong with what they've done. But a lot of kids who aren't able to move into this successful entrepreneurial direction just drift. It's been years never really finding something that they can do that they're proud of, that makes a contribution, that will make them a good living, and I think that is as you said in large part because we set up a system that is creating a lot of dilettantes. People who are just minimally competent about a bunch of stuff that have never really have the opportunity to develop their passion and their talent into something that will really make a difference in their lives and for the world.

Chris And it seems like with the schools a lot of times we focus on the disabilities, I mean often those disabilities come with incredible gifts and

visual gifts and design gifts in I often see these public school's overlooking that element.

Bill Yeah, we need to individualize instruction much more than we're doing. And to recognize that there are lots and lots of different kids and I use the word earlier lots of different types of sparks that can set a child off in a very positive direction. And if you focus on those assets... And that's when the movements that we have helped to start in the field of child development is called The Positive Youths Development. The acronym is PYD and I think it's a part of the growing youth development culture right now. Probably the last 10 years has seen a real sweet if people accepting this. And the ad are really is to focus our attention on the assets of young people and not on their deficits. And not just see that we're trying to correct a lot of things that they're doing wrong or feeling a lot of gaps in their knowledge. They're rather start with what their talents are than give them an opportune to you to kill those in the most creative and full blown way possible. So that's a movement and it has to do is help as well and behavior, not just learning. Again seeing young people as assets for the community not as problems.

Chris I know our listeners will be excited to hear about that. And what's the name of that group one more time?

Bill We call it The Positive Youth Development movement. And there are some people, with one person is Peter Benson who runs the Search Institute in Minnesota. In Richard Lerner from Tulsa university. We've had meetings about this for probably 10 or 15 years. But the good news is I think a lot of people are getting on board with us know. Say you'll hear this phrase quite a bit know even the National Science Foundation now has a program in funding positive youth development kind of research, so I think people are getting the message. And it's a positive message, it's a message the young people have a lot to offer. And if we think about what that is and how each individual child has their own particular thing to offer enough to overlook that or try to rubber stamp and act as if one size fits all for one mold fits all. But really celebrate this special gift of every child, that's the way to maximize human potential.

Chris So Bill you've written Path to Purpose and what do you say to the Paris that have kids out there that are struggling that just don't seem interested

in anything? How do they start? What are some simple steps that they can start with their kids?

Bill Well actually in the Path to Purpose we give some sample conversation that parents can have with the children, it especially a kid that comes from school and says, "Nothing much happened in school today." And the parents says, "Well was there anything interesting?" "Nah." Which is kind of typical. I've had three kids and have that conversation with each of them many times. And in the Path to Purpose I guess some examples of some types of questions the parents can ask and they start the kid to communicate the one and two things that maybe he or she did find interesting and then take it from there. But the part from that conversation step number 1 is having those conversations. And by the way creating occasions for those conversations. So by the way I'm not the person to say this but if you can have dinner with the kids instead of every one kind of getting in the refrigerator at different times that is an occasion where you can actually have a conversation about what happen in school? What's interesting? What did I find interesting in my day with kids you find interesting your day. Where does that mean? So the conversations are important and parents can have those conversations, be good listeners, ask a lot of questions and as I said in the Path to Purpose a given lot of examples of probing questions you can ask. And creative patience to have them. But the other thing that I want to add to the conversations that it is that you can actually do things in action with kids that bring a lot of these things out. Joint activities, going on a camping trip with your kid or going down to the never-fare or volunteering in the community or even watching a television show, the same TV show which is something amazingly parents and kids don't do very much together, because they have different interest. If parents are really concerned about communicating with kids and helping drive kids out in a way that helps them find a good direction in life you've got to make the effort you wouldn't necessarily be spending time on yourself what to do things with your child that the child finds interesting and then use that as an opportunity to get feedback to share your experience, your information you have about this and get these conversation started that will eventually need a child ideas about what directions and what activities can be meaningful in life.

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Chris And they'll but do you see in the kids that do have the Path to Purpose? You know some from even in very early age, we're seeing a lot of prodigy's now. What kind of characteristics do you see in those kids?

Bill A lot of energy and its energy and a very particular kind. Which is not stressful energy. One of the maze in things that we see is that these kids that are really purposeful that are juggling a million things at once in terms of their own creating for example, the kid that created the foundation for building wells in Africa for getting involved in environmental movements or learning to develop new skills and jazz music. I mean these are all examples of high aspirations they keep these kids very, very busy almost 24/7. But in not in a stressful way because they're in and state of flow as the psychologist (inaudible). Where they are getting an amazing amount of enjoyment and satisfaction out of this intense energy that they're sitting into things and is such a sharp contrast with the kids that are coming home with their homework in trying to squeeze in their music lessons and their other requirements and don't particularly know why they are doing any of it. Those are the kids that are stressed out an anxious and always looking over their shoulder wondering if they're doing a good enough job to please their parents. But the purpose of kids and not operating that way. Their self-directed, self-motivated and therein she has a very positive almost a glowing quality to it.

Chris And creativity takes a certain amount of downtime, doesn't it?

Bill Well sure. It also doesn't always look like you know kind of serious kind of clenching the jaw work. There's a lot of fun involved.

Chris So Bill in Path to Purpose you also talked a lot of schools. And I want to ask you what to our schools need to do to help create kids they have a path that have a strong sense of purpose?

Bill One thing would be to give the kids a chance to do more self-directed work. Until all the kids to work on projects that would lead somewhere. And the projects in their being done well in a learning sense if the school structuring them the right way they would include a lot of learning about math and their chair and all of the basic skills. But they would give the child a sense that they were accomplishing something. And I would just give you a couple of examples of that some are very common. For example writing a classroom newsletter for example or even a school

newspaper if the school has the resources to do that. And teaching writing that way with the child thing can see a published article or even a published paragraph that comes out under his or her name that actually communicates something about the world to people that people can read and learn from and it gives the child again a sense that there's a purpose to what you're doing not just a meaningless exercise. I also seen classrooms get involved in creating plans to clean up the playground, to build new recreational equipment all of which involve learning about mathematics, learning about physics, architecture, planning, writing proposals all of these kinds of real world skills that teach the very basic skills we're trying to teach when we focus on literacy and math and so on. So when we're trying to incorporate learning into exercises that are meaningful to kids would review products and things that actually have consequences I'm convinced will give children much higher degrees of motivation. And I'll tell you the greatest missing element in schools today is motivation. If you ask a teacher in a bid and the students they say the difference between a kid that's learning well and kid that just goes (inaudible) is whether the child is motivated. And that's the one thing we're paying the least attention to right now in all of our educational policies. So we've really need to reform schools so that day find ways to get kids more motivated to learn the things that we know will be important in their lives.

Chris And that word connected comes up for me in that. We talk to a lot of experts and health experts about the importance, especially Dr. Hallowell who I'm sure you know. Just about the importance of connection. And we see that in our schools today.

Bill Well not enough. And of course we're not talking about all schools I'm generalizing, I've been to some very good schools. And so just like when I was talk among kids saying you can't use one adjective to fit all of them there are some terrific schools, some very excellent charter schools I think the kip schools have been a doing great job, I think a lot of independent schools for the kids that can afford them are just wonderful environments. But all of these are just a fraction of a fraction of the total number of schools out there. And most schools are pretty dreary places with a lot of kids that are tuned out. And yeah the need is to first of all connect the school more with community so that more people like community leaders, parents, other people that have things to offer kids can come in and help

out and provide real life examples of what a successful life looks like. But also to get the kids connected more with each other and with a teacher and with the agenda of the school which is learning and to make it clear to students that this is a marriage, this is not something that is being foisted upon them from the outside. But rather that this is for them and that this part of their own vision or should be part of their own vision about how to get two a good life, how to become the person that you want to be, to accomplish and things that you want to accomplish in life school is an important means towards that end and when kids come to understand that they are motivated. And they understand that school will help them to find their purpose in life. And that's why it's so important to help young people find a sense of purpose. That they can understand what the connection is between following that purpose and the kind of learning that they have the opportunity to do in school.

Chris That is such an important thing just about connection and Bill you have another book out there that won the Parents Choice book award and that's 'Greater Expectations, Overcoming the Culture of Indulgence in our Homes and Schools'. Or what do you think are American kids overindulged? Or what you think, what's going on with that?

Bill Well I think that there are a lot of myths about what is good for kids. And one of those myths is that you shouldn't challenge kids too much because it might overpressure them or wound their self-esteem or something like that and that is a former intelligence that is very counterproductive because kids thrive on challenges as long as they understand what they're about. And as long as they're not too extreme. And what Greater Expectations was about is the idea that if we have the high expectations for kids that will excite them and inspire them and they will try to rise to those high expectations. And that's what will improve their self-esteem. But if we think that kids are all kind of helpless and their victims, but we had to feel sorry for them the result of that will be exactly what we don't want which is a group of kids that will be feeling in contested, feeling immobilized, paralyzed, not daring to take on difficult tasks in life. And so Greater Expectations was really a book about how high standards is really for the benefit of kids and not something that's just an added pressure on their lives.

Chris And it seems that often the kids want a sense of purpose.

Bill Kids want to feel that the matter. And that's the major part of the whole ballgame is helping kids to think that they can make a difference. And just as you said one of the earliest ways a parent can do that in the home is by asking the child to help out and to make the child understand that that's important, that the child really did make a difference by helping to water the plants or empty the dishwasher or do anything. And kids are capable of doing these things at a very young age. And they love the idea that they actually made a difference to mom and dad. It's not like sending the kid off to the labor factories for a child labor. Sometimes as parents if you ask the child to make their own bed if like being in a press and boss, but it's not really liked that all. Kids have time to do this they may grumble about it but in the long run you'll feel a lot of pride about making a difference in the household. And it contributes to this very basic sense of self the kids need, which is I matter, the things I do matter, these are import in my, this gives me hope for the future that I can be a real person of value in this world.

Chris Such a great message in such an important one. And Bill we want to thank you for spending time. And if you would share with our listeners where they can find you and how to find your website.

Bill Sure, my website is simply [williamdamon.com](http://www.williamdamon.com). And you can Google me under William Damon and you get like the website.

That's the end of our interview, and I hope you've enjoyed it. For more great health related interviews go to Michael Senoff's [HardToFindSeminars.com](http://www.HardToFindSeminars.com).