

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

THE FIRST MOVE

What to do this week when your kid is stuck. Written for parents of teens and young adults, whether your kid just came home from treatment or you're hoping it never comes to that.

THE REFRAME

STUCK AND LAZY ARE DIFFERENT PROBLEMS

You have a smart kid (maybe a brilliant one) who is doing very little with it. From the outside it looks like laziness, and everyone from your relatives to your search history will tell you the answer is more treatment. More diagnosis, more therapy, more professionals.

Here's what we actually see across families like yours: **the kids who look the most stuck have usually done the most work on themselves.** Some of them did more emotional labor in treatment than most adults do in a decade. What nobody did was help them figure out what they want their life to look like, and then stick around long enough to hold them to building it.

| *Therapy gave them insight. What they're missing is momentum.*

This changes what you do next. Pressure works on laziness. Programs work on some things (we'll be honest about which). Stuckness needs something else, and it usually starts with you.

THE PATTERN

THE LOOP YOU'RE PROBABLY IN

In nearly every family we work with, the same dynamic is running: a parent doing everything, paired with a kid doing nothing. You're researching, reminding, planning, worrying. The harder you work, the less they have to.

Underneath all that effort is anxiety, and anxiety leaks. It comes out as monitoring, preemptive problem-solving, and questions that are really check-ups in disguise. Your kid can feel the difference.

Here's the part nobody tells you: **your kid is looking at you to learn how to feel about themselves.** If what comes back is fear (however loving, however justified), that's what they internalize.

You can't want it more than they do and have it work. What you can change is the signal you're sending.

THIS WEEK

THREE SWAPS TO TRY

Small changes in language, big changes in signal. Pick one and run it for a full week before you judge it.

INSTEAD OF	"Have you applied anywhere yet?"
TRY	"What would you actually want in a job? Forget what looks right on paper. What would you want?"
WHY	They've learned to deflect the check-up question. The second one is real curiosity, and it points at the actual gap: nobody has asked what they want.

INSTEAD OF	Solving it before they can: finding the class, emailing the advisor, booking the appointment.
TRY	"I'm confident you can figure this out. What do you want to do about it?"
WHY	Every problem you solve for them confirms their private suspicion that they can't do it themselves. Saying you believe in them before they've fully earned it is one of the most powerful inputs to someone actually changing.

INSTEAD OF	"We're worried about you."
TRY	"I've watched you do hard things before. I think you'll get through this one too."
WHY	"We're worried" hands them your fear to carry. Naming a specific past win hands them evidence.

ONE QUESTION

"WHAT WOULD A GREAT TUESDAY LOOK LIKE FOR YOU?"

One specific, ordinary day. When would they wake up, what would they do, who would they see, what would make it feel like a good day?

Ask it once, casually. Then comes the hard part: **don't turn the answer into a plan.** No suggestions, no optimizing, no follow-up the next morning. The answer is a window into what they'd build toward if someone helped them get there. Just listen.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

PROGRESS STARTS SMALLER THAN YOU THINK

Families who got burned by big-promise programs tend to look for big proof. Real momentum starts small, and you can see it:

- They got up before noon without being asked.
- One application went out (theirs, this time).
- A disagreement ended without a blow-up, or got repaired after.
- They mentioned wanting something. Anything.

Watch for movement first. The milestones come later.

Why we wrote this. We're Not Therapy, a coaching team for teens and young adults who are stuck, built by people who've been through our own versions of it. We work with kids every day, in their actual lives (text, calls, home visits), and we work with parents too, because the family system is half the picture. Nothing you're going through would surprise us. If you want to go further than the guide, start here:

[Grab 45 minutes to talk with us](#)

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Not Therapy is coaching. We don't diagnose or treat mental health conditions, and we're not a crisis service. If your family needs clinical care, we'll be the first to say so.