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## Help Your Child Take the Road Less Traveled

by: **Lon Jordan**

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One common goal of parents and educators is to prepare our children to meet tomorrow's challenges. As our world evolves, so must our approach to education. How do you effectively guide a child who is very different and unique from you? How does one support a child who wants an unfamiliar and unconventional career?

I was one of those children teachers either appreciated or didn't. I must confess that most didn't. I was hyperactive with the tendency to daydream, and I constantly challenged my teachers, especially when they tried to help me with my grades.

While I was a challenging student for many of my teachers, there was no teacher whom I caused more pain than my own mother. My mother is a highly educated and gifted school teacher. My seeming lack of academic interest and commitment was a constant source of frustration for her.

What troubled my mother even more were conversations about my future. Whenever she would ask me what I wanted to do with my life, I would tell her that I wanted to be a professional dancer and travel around the country speaking to youth. Then she would ask me how I expected to support my future family, and I would tell her not to worry about it.

As the years went by, my grades improved. I graduated from college, and my dream of traveling around the country entertaining and motivating youth became a reality. My mother gained a better understanding of the person I am and allowed me to pursue my unconventional dream. It wasn't easy, but it was worth the effort —for both of us.

If your child is talking about pursuing an unconventional career path, here's how you can stop panicking and start helping:

Research with your child their chosen career path or interest. It is important that you be open-minded and not prejudice your child's career interests without first learning more about it. By doing joint research, you not only show that you care about you child's interests, but you also may erase any lingering biases about these interests and uncover additional educational resources your child may need to be successful.

Do not allow your fear to force your child down a road that could lead to heartache. Every parent wishes to prevent their child from making mistakes and failing, but closing your mind to your child's interests might be the biggest mistake of all. There is a difference between giving your child constructive criticism, and trying to shape him or her into being someone they were never meant to be. No child will ever completely think and act as you may wish. By accepting that this fact is beneficial, you will be able to help your child to be a critical and effective thinker without harming his or her unique design.

Encourage the development of your children's unique design. Every child has a special anatomy, personality, and mind. Parents have a vital responsibility to help nurture and protect their child's unique design. It is very easy for children to succumb to peer pressure and wind up doing or becoming something contrary to their makeup. It is our responsibility to remind them that they are special and to never give up on themselves or their dreams.

*Lon Jordan is an entertainer and motivational speaker based in Cleveland Heights, Ohio. Visit [www.lonjordan.net](http://www.lonjordan.net) for more information.*