

# 10 TEEN TURNAROUND SUCCESS STORIES

**STORIES TO INSPIRE AND MOTIVATE  
STUDENTS, TEACHERS AND PARENTS.**



*By Ray Langan*

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# INTRODUCTION ●

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**ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES YOU WILL FIND 10 TEEN TURNAROUND STORIES: JOURNEYS OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHO WITH THE RIGHT INTERVENTION ARE NOW ACHIEVING THEIR POTENTIAL IN TERMS OF THEIR CAPACITY TO LEARN AND ACHIEVE ACADEMICALLY. HUMAN BEINGS WITH WHOM I HAVE COACHED 1-2-1 AND ALSO IN MY GROUP COACHING. THEIR PARENTS APPROACHED ME AT VERY IMPORTANT TIMES IN THEIR CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT IN MANY CASES A DARK TIME, SEEKING AN ALTERNATIVE SOLUTION KNOWING THEIR CHILD HAD THE POTENTIAL BUT THEY NEEDED SOMEONE TO GUIDE THEM.**

Each of the following *RAYSE THE GAME* students were struggling when I met their first. Although I have changed the names for confidentiality purposes each case study is based on a real student. Each student is in a different year, has a different challenge and in many cases might have a learning difference. The most fundamental problem I work with is lack of motivation. It is my belief that with the right guidance and approach every learner has the capability to achieve great things. Sometimes it takes an outside voice to point that person in the right direction.

Thank you to all the students, parents, teachers and schools I have worked with over the years. I am forever privileged and grateful to for the opportunity to serve you and play a part in your journey to success.

*Enjoy the read!*

**RAY LANGAN**  
**SCHOOL MOTIVATIONAL SPEAKER**  
**STUDY SKILLS COACH**  
**TEEN PSYCHOTHERAPIST**

# CASE STUDY 1 ●

## JOHN PAUL - 3rd YEAR

### ISSUE

Anxiety/panic attacks/no clue how-to-study

### COACHING APPROACH

Teach study skills, organisation strategies and tools to manage anxiety

### OUTCOME

Exceeded all expectations and went up by 2 or 3 grades in some subjects

### TESTIMONIAL

*"In 2019 my son John Paul was sitting his Junior Cert. He always did well in class and achieved good marks in class tests. However, in third year the anxiety started and in exams he would panic and leave many questions blank.*

*Like a lot of students, JP felt like he should be studying but didn't know how. In his head there just seemed to be pages and pages that needed to be learned off, a daunting and impossible task. The worry and anxiety began to build for JP as the weeks went on leading to broken nights of sleep. After attending a Parent pep Talk in our school, I felt Ray totally understood the difficulties that students like JP were facing and decided to get in touch.*

*For the first session Ray spoke with myself and my husband and chatted about what his approach involved. He then spent 2 hours working with JP, getting to know the kind of kid he was and the difficulties he was facing with the whole concept of studying. Following this first session we could see an immediate difference in JP. Ray set him tasks centred around studying that involved things like drawing up his own timetables and breaking down chapters to one-page summaries.*

*These doable tasks helped JP to take that jump into the "activity of studying". Straight away he felt like he was doing something, he was in control and was engaged in some form of "studying" or as Ray put it in sporting terms, training for his exams.*

*Over the following few months Ray checked in with JP and giving tips for dealing with anxiety and specifically exam anxiety as the State Exams grew closer. The day before the exams Ray messaged JP to check in and wish him well. JP headed into his exams a little nervous but relaxed student feeling that he had done his best to prepare for them. For us this was success! When the results came out later that year JP had gone up by 2 and even 3 grades in some subjects and was delighted.*

*Now doing his Leaving Cert, this is where the amazing work with Ray really shows. From the start of Fifth Year JP has used Rays task orientated study skills to work towards the exams. They have become part of his everyday schoolwork and have allowed him to gain a greater confidence in himself and his academic ability. For a student who was achieving percentages in the 40s range in Junior Cycle to a student who now is achieving in the high 80s range at Senior Cycle. A happy student who likes school, who would ever have thought?"*



**Oonagh B, Parent**

**"FROM A STUDENT GETTING 40S IN HIS  
JUNIOR CYCLE TO A STUDENTS WHO IS  
NOW ACHIEVING HIGH 80S AT SENIOR  
CYCLE."**



# CASE STUDY 2 ●

## SÉAN, 18, LEAVING CERT STUDENT

### ISSUE

Overwhelm/I think I'm stupid. I can't study/Negative thinking

### COACHING APPROACH

When I met Séan he was quite shy and reserved. I knew he was reluctant to do the session. We went through his mock results which were okay but he knew he could do much better. His big problem was that he didn't know where to start now and the finishing line was looming. I tested him to find out his learning style and I gave him strategies to match his specific learning style. Using the 30-Minute Study Sprint was a game changer as he had a lot of work to do fast after the mock exams. This gave him the confidence that he would have enough time to cover the full courses between March and the exams in June. We did a lot of work around mindset and negative thinking.

### OUTCOME

Séan went up by 80 points in his Leaving Cert and got a college place in NCI.

### TESTIMONIAL

*"Thanks Ray for doing such a wonderful job with my son. You worked magic. His confidence level was heading towards rock bottom after completing his mock leaving cert and he was convinced that he was going to fail the leaving cert. He kept saying to himself 'I can't study. I am stupid.' Everything was... I can't. He reluctantly went into the session. Two hours later the guy that I got coming had totally changed. The light was switched on. There was excitement in his voice. His aura off the charts and he was sparking. I had two big concerns at the time.*

*The first if 'was he going to fall apart coming up to the Leaving Cert and the second concern was he going to end up in an even darker place? Séan is quite a sensitive boy. He takes everything on his shoulders, looks inward and then he can get freaked. That's when the negative thinking starts and I know he gets that from me. But after the session with yourself, he came out as a new person. From a parent point of view I felt I could breathe again. He went at his studies with gusto. He is a good worker but now he knew what to do. You showed him how to study to suit his style. His mind was calmer. He could manage the negative thinking. It was like a light switch flicked from cannot to can-do. Not only did you raise his confidence to an all-time high, he was able to apply the knowledge that you shared with him with regards to the best study method for him and thus he was able to raise his leaving cert point by nearly 80 points. Kudos to you for giving him the belief in himself."*

Mary H, Parent



**“IT WAS LIKE A LIGHT SWITCH FLICKED  
FROM CANNOT TO CAN-DO.”**



# CASE STUDY 3 ●

## DARREN LEAVING CERT

### ISSUE

Zero confidence/Does not know how-to-study/working hard but not smart

### BACKGROUND

Darren is a hands-on type of lad. Books were always a hassle. He struggled in both the Junior Cert and the Leaving Cert. When he came to see me he had just got his mock results and they were 'as bad as you could imagine.' In his words it was his 'lowest ebb and there had to be a better way to do this. 'He was studying hard but not getting 'any bang for his buck'. He just wasn't getting the results. This had a huge negative effect on his self-esteem. He said his brain 'was fried'. His Mom had done lots of research and they were 'desperate to find a way' to help their son get to the next level. They knew the school system wasn't for him but they wanted to help him not be at a disadvantage.

### COACHING APPROACH

From our learning style testing it transpired Darren's dominant learning style is kinaesthetic. This means he learns best thru movement and interacting with the material in a physical way. When I questioned him about his study technique he told me he would sit at his desk for hours trying to 'learn off notebooks crammed full of notes. I encouraged him to shorten his study sessions to 30 minute sprints and take more breaks. Darren also loved hurling. I encouraged him to walk around his room with his hurley stick in his hand as he learned the material. He also loved the WHIZGRIDZ note-taking techniques. Later he told me he was very calm on the morning of his exams. He flicked over his 1-page summaries and felt confident.

### OUTCOME

Darren got over 300 points and went up by over 150 points. He got his dream course. This was 3 years ago. He has not got his Level 7 ordinary degree and is going on to do his Level 8. He still uses the tools we taught him.

### TESTIMONIAL

*"Darren was totally demoralised when I contacted Ray. He was very down and disillusioned. He was really struggling to lift himself and get motivated. The ONE THING you helped him was belief in himself. Before the session he had zero belief in his academic ability. After the session it was like a black cloud lifted from him. He really picked up on your attitude that you can find another way to get to where you want to be. I liked the fact that you did a 1-2-1 and helped him find a way to learn to suit his style. You helped him with structure and organisation. He was all over the place. You taught how to organise himself. I just wanted him to get the tools to help him get to the next level. He particularly liked the mind maps and they helped him condense all this information. We are forever grateful. Darren is a great kid and works hard. We are so glad through you we could him the best chance to get ahead and not be at a disadvantage."*

**Patricia, Parent**



**“IT WAS LIKE A BLACK CLOUD  
LIFTED FROM HIM.”**



# CASE STUDY 4 ●

## SALLY LEAVING CERT

### ISSUE

Missed most of 5th year/High anxiety and depression

### COACHING APPROACH

I was very conscious going into this session that Sally had missed a lot of 5th year because of mental health issues. She told me she was finding going to school exhausting. In her words 'school was draining'. She said she forgot how much effort it took to go to school. It was also difficult because they had to leave the windows open in the classrooms because of Covid. The biggest issue for her were the classrooms were 'baltic' and some days she could not feel her toes. She said she was finding it difficult to motivate herself. After missing so much school she also said she had to get used to talking to people again. In terms of study she acknowledged she was doing the bare minimum. My approach to working with Sally was to use the principal of 'small wins'. I wanted her to see how well she was doing just getting to school and going to class. I wanted her to get the concept of getting her notes done during class-time using the WHIZGRIDZ. I also honed in some personal motivation strategies to help her get fired-up. By keeping tabs on Sally and having regular check-ins, this helped her stay accountable so she had sufficient work done by the time the Leaving Cert started.

### OUTCOME

Sally scored 445 points in her Leaving Cert despite having no 5th year and starting her coaching half way through 6th year. She picked up speed fast after Christmas and did a decent mock exams and accelerated on into the Leaving Cert. She got her dream course studying psychiatric nursing and she passed all her first year Christmas and Summer Tests. She said she still uses all the methods Ray taught her.

### TESTIMONIAL

*"Thanks Ray for the time you spent with my daughter Sally . You are an absolute gentleman and an amazing mentor. You really helped her confidence and showed her a way to reduce anxiety. She came away from talking to you and felt 10ft high. After your first session she was so much more calm. She felt her teachers constantly panicked her talking about the Leaving Cert. You helped take the enormity of the stress and break it down so it was manageable. A big thing she took away was organisation skills so she didn't feel so overwhelmed. We cannot believe how far she has come in the last two years since she started with you. Thank you so much. We need more people like you Ray in this country."*

**Kathleen T, Parent**



**“SHE CAME AWAY FROM TALKING TO YOU  
AND FELT 10FT HIGH.”**



# CASE STUDY 5 ●

## OISIN – 1st YEAR

### ISSUE

Zero focus and motivation. Lack of organisation. Struggling to make friends. Poor concentration. Inability to get homework done on his own. Mom having to help him do everything.

### BACKGROUND

Oisin had been diagnosed with dyspraxia and ADHD. He struggled to focus in class. He had very poor handwriting and it takes him a long time to write.. Although very intelligent he was failing many exams. Trying to get him to sit down and do his work was a problem. School stresses him out. Although very friendly and mannerly, he could be prone to outbursts at home. He had some gaming friends and loves Star Trek. His parents fear was how he was going to get through 6 years of secondary school. This was only the end of 1st year and things were building up. What would it be like by 6th year? How would he cope?

### COACHING APPROACH

My approach was to build rapport and talk about Star Trek. I then used some of the characters from Star Trek as a way of helping him navigate certain situations. For example I would ask how would Captain Kirk handle this maths problem? How would Mr Spock prepare for that History exam. What would Dr McCoy engage during science class? This changed the game. I wanted him to see that his learning differences were not limitations. They were strengths. This boy was clever, witty and determined. However, his self-esteem was on the floor. Hearing someone tell him he was smart changed so much for him. This helped him build confidence and to understand how to use his strengths and internal reference points to learn better and navigate the school system.

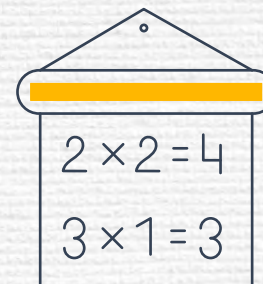
### OUTCOME

Oisin's grades immediately improved. In fact over the next 3 years he consistently performed well in all his exams. He achieved merits and higher merits and even a distinction in the Junior Cert. He is pushing into his Leaving Certificate year and has aspirations to go to study engineering.

### TESTIMONIAL

*"Oisin needed help and you gave him that help. He needed some self-belief and that's what you gave him. Before he was so frustrated and angry. Now he is a happier and has a better attitude. He still has his moments but working with you and learning to focus on his strengths was a real turning point."*

**Jillian, Parent**



**"LEARNING TO USE HIS STRENGTHS WAS  
A REAL TURNING POINT."**



# CASE STUDY 6 ●

## KIERA

### ISSUE

School/Motivation/Careers/Her Future/her fears/Family issues/stuck in a rut

### BACKGROUND

My stepdaughter who has been through quite a bit is struggling in her leaving cert year. She came to Ireland from Kenya some years back. She struggles with exams due to her cerebral palsy but has been struggling in general to get motivated & what life holds in store for her. Also we have a young family so probably feel that they get most of our attention. She gave me a number of topics she would like help with. I think in general she is starting to look beyond school & what life holds. She will be looking at a PLC or taking a year out. Due to her CP, there are limitations on the career/ life she can follow.

Currently I feel she is in a rut. We want to help her (my wife & myself) but also want her to understand she needs to help herself too.

### COACHING APPROACH

I used a lot of psychotherapy and counselling skills whilst working with Kiera. She could get very emotional and her self-esteem and confidence were on the floor. In fact we spent most of our first session in what you would describe as talk therapy. It was really important to strike up some rapport and connection. This young person needs to be heard and listened to. She needed some empathy and to feel someone was in her corner. She attended my Study Boost Monday Night Motivation sessions and I worked with her on the study system. For me it was crucial for her to learn the study skills as well as to help her overcome feelings of negative self-esteem. Sometimes she didn't turn up but it was important to be patient and let her work at her own pace.

### OUTCOME

*"Hi Ray, just want to let you know that Kiera is in good shape & looking forward to the leaving cert & her business course in Cathal Brugha Street after. She has found a suitable course via the Rehab program. Thank you so much for your help earlier in the year. It really was a turning point in her confidence & she has blossomed since. Fingers crossed its onwards & upwards."*

*Roy, Parent*



**"YOUR COACHING WAS A TURNING POINT  
IN HER CONFIDENCE & SHE HAS  
BLOSSOMED SINCE."**



# CASE STUDY 7 ●

## LAURA 2nd YEAR

### ISSUE

Severe Bullying/High Anxiety/Panic attacks/Fear of going to school

### BACKGROUND

Laura was in 2nd year when her Mom called me. At the time she was being targeted by 3 groups in her class with one ring leader. Lockdown gave her a break. Just before Christmas she called her Mom from the bathroom in school crying and to say she had been humiliated again in class. The bullying went on daily. Laura loves sport and plays Gaelic football. However the impact of the bullying took its toll and culminated with her having a massive panic attack on the pitch. The attack continued into the night even when they went home. Her daughter crying 'I am failing at life. I can't do this anymore.' Something had to be done. Obviously this was having a massive adverse effect on her schoolwork and ability to concentrate in class.

### COACHING APPROACH

I used a 360 approach of counselling, coaching and psychoeducation when working with Laura. Laura being a visual person really embraced the use of colour to identify when a situation was RED, YELLOW OR GREEN. We used a lot of metaphors to help her anchor positive thoughts. We also used talk therapy to help her convey her despair, isolation and vulnerability. We then gave her tools to help her navigate different scenarios.

### OUTCOME

*"From the first moment you connected with Laura and she even said 'he just gets me. Myself and her dad needed outside help. We were at our wits end and we knew we could not do it by ourselves. We will be forever indebted for helping us with our daughter. Her life has transformed. She has moved class. The bullying and humiliation has stopped. She is flying with her football and made the county team. She has good friends around her. When she does get panicked at least now she has the tools to cope. She uses everything you taught her. Now I know she's got this. She can do it. The difference in her is incredible. I can sleep at night knowing that Laura is in a good place again."*

**Pauline, Parent**



**“I CAN SLEEP AT NIGHT KNOWING THAT  
LAURA IS IN A GOOD PLACE AGAIN.”**



# CASE STUDY 8 ●

## CASSANDRA LEAVING CERT REPEAT STUDENT

### ISSUE

Repeat student/Pressure to increase by 200 points for her dream course and college

### BACKGROUND

Cassandra was very disappointed with her results when she sat the Leaving Cert for the first time. By her own admission she was sick mentally and physical and not in the right head space. Her friends told her when she was going to repeat that she might go up by 50 points if she was lucky. She found all the talk about the Leaving Cert exhausting. She needed help with her study plan.

### COACHING APPROACH

I met Cassandra after I did a seminar in my school. She asked me if it was possible to go up by 200 points in Leaving Cert? I told her 'of course it was.' This seemed to give her a lot of confidence. I showed her how to break it all down. This is the real secret. We then created a study plan so she could focus her energy on studying the right things.

### OUTCOME

*"The Leaving Cert is just a bunch of exams. Get your notes done as soon as you can in each subject. Get the exam papers. Keep practicing the questions and the marking schemes are gold. Stick to your plan. I dropped to ordinary English and that was the best decision. I love Science and Maths so I could focus on these subjects. The Leaving Cert is a wall and you just have to burst through it. There is no need to be anxious. Most students' diet and sleep is poor. These are the things you need to get write. The one thing you said is write everything down. You need discipline. If you can disciplined for the leaving cert you can get disciplined for college. You won't have your Mom or Dad there to tell you what to do. The big thing I took away from Ray was the positivity – you said everything is possible and nothing was impossible. Also how to get organised. Use your time wisely. And to do it for yourself."*

**Cassandra, Leaving Cert repeat student**



**“EVERYTHING  
IS POSSIBLE AND  
NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE.”**



# CASE STUDY 9 ●

## ALAN, 2nd YEAR

### ISSUE

Severe Bullying/wanted to leave school/Isolated at break times/seriously underachieving in school

### BACKGROUND

Alan had a very tough time last year. He was bullied for most of 2nd year. It got quite severe and he wanted to leave school. He got through it but it has been a difficult time. Lunch times are worst because he is not sporty. He spends a lot of time on his own. Lucky we have a close relationship but he did say one time that he 'could not take it anymore.' This was very worrying for us. He has a soft and sensitive nature and we could see it was getting too much for him. He has a lot of ability. We got him assessed and what came out of that it that he is 'seriously under-achieving in school'. His concentration is not great but we know he is very capable. When I ask him how was school he just sort of shrugs his shoulders. It's heart-breaking to see him going through so much pain. He keeps saying 'I am no good at anything.'

### COACHING APPROACH

What really stood out with Alan was his size. Even though he was just 14, this kid dwarfed me! He was 6 feet 2. He was staring down at me. But I could feel his awkwardness. I immediately put his mind at rest and we launched into the session. I could see he was a gentle giant. We needed to focus on his strengths and do a positive assets search. We needed to shift his mindset. What was key for me was for Alan to see his size as a strength. We did a lot of work around this and creating a new self-image for himself. We also worked on the study skills and I did a lot of work with him on his study skills to suit his learning style, brain type and personality.

### OUTCOME

*"Alan has really flourished since you worked with him. The bullying has completely stopped. Alan has a new confidence about him now. He started to apply himself and he is now doing well in school. He has made some new friends and those boys don't bother him now. We cannot thank you enough. "Highly recommend this...Ray has such a gift in dealing with teenagers...amazing."*

**Olwyn, Parent and Teacher**



**“RAY HAS SUCH A GIFT IN DEALING WITH  
TEENAGERS.....AMAZING.”**



# CASE STUDY 10 ●

## JACK 2nd YEAR

### ISSUE

Zero motivation/fights about Play Station/No application/Mom having to do homework

### BACKGROUND

Jack was told if his grades did not improve he would lose his Play Station privileges. He barely scraped thru his 1st year summer exams. His Mother was having to drag him through everything. There were constant fights about doing homework. Sunday night was a disaster when he had no homework done for the weekend. Jack was told his attitude and application needed to improve.

### COACHING APPROACH

Jack was only 13 but being a sports and gaming fanatic meant I could use lots of sporting references and gaming analogies in our session. Effectively we set-up study like a massive game of Fortnite. We needed to set the game up to win. He needed to get some kills or small wins under his belt fast. We mapped out a plan and focused on his strengths. Jack liked this. The plan was as soon as he was home from school, he would hit the books and get his homework done as soon as possible. He liked the 7pm Rule in other words to get his homework done by 7pm. He also liked that if he could show he was getting his work done and his grades were starting to go up then he could earn extra screen time.

### BACKGROUND

Jack went from barely passing his 1st year summer exams to averaging 72 in his Summer 2nd year exams. Result!

### TESTIMONIAL

*"The difference in 1st and 2nd year is like night and day. I had to drag him through everything in 1st year. The fights over that Play Station were unreal. However now he just goes up to his room and gets his work done. It's unbelievable. Now he has the tools and habits to succeed in secondary school."*

**Joselyn, Parent**



**“WENT FROM BARELY PASSING HIS  
1ST YEAR SUMMER EXAMS TO  
AVERAGING 72 IN HIS SUMMER 2ND  
YEAR EXAMS.”**



# Does Your Teen Need a Boost?

If your son or daughter needs help then I have great news. I have just launched my new 6-Week Study Boost programme. This is one of the most creative, inspiring and motivating study skills programmes ever released. Here they will learn exactly HOW-TO-STUDY in short bursts using my 30-Minute Study Sprint. They will learn how to create incredible notes called WHIZGRIDZ that will save them hours of wasted time. They will learn the study success formula. We show them my study plan called the Game Plan which shows each student how to organise themselves and their time so they can still partake in sports, music, dance, extra-curricular activities and cut out those fights over screentime.

Check out <https://www.raysethegame.com/study-boost/>

If you want a 1-2-1 coaching session with your son or daughter, then book your free discovery call with me. But hurry to book your place as I can only work with 30 students per intake and coaching slots fill up fast.

Forget grinds. Forget after-school study. And whilst counselling has its place, I am here to help your teenager get the gloves on, get into gear and get ready super-charge their study!

If you are serious about your teen's success and you feel your teenager will be open to working with an outside voice to help motivate and re-energise them, then I look forward to giving them a STUDY BOOST.

## APPLY FOR STUDY BOOST NOW

<https://www.raysethegame.com/study-boost/>

