

Raising Gifted Children

A Parents' Survival Guide

Words of Wisdom

“In order to lead happy and meaningful lives, all people – and especially gifted people – must spend at least as much time developing socially and emotionally as a person as they do focusing on their intellects. So often giftedness is equated with the knowledge or artifacts that people produce – be it a theorem or computer design. But what’s equally as important, I believe, is the memory they leave behind of what kind of person they were.” ~
Judy Galbraith

Challenges of Parenting Gifted Children

- Gifted kids are on a different timeline than the average child
- Gifted kids generally process information at a different rate and different style than peers
- Gifted kids react differently to social situations
- Gifted kids can be highly emotional and easily frustrated
- Gifted kids are easily bored
- Gifted kids don't always have close friends
- Gifted kids are often just like their parents
- Just because they are gifted in one area doesn't mean they are gifted in everything or even more than one thing

Gifted kids are on a different timeline than the average child

- They ask questions atypical for someone their age
- They pay closer attention to adult conversations
- They are often aware of and concerned about global issues or even family issues that the average child is not
- They want to know things NOW, not next week when the teacher is planning that lesson or after dinner or whenever it fits into the schedule

Gifted kids generally process information at a different rate & different style than peers

- Gifted kids need few repetitions to gain understanding
- Gifted kids make connections other kids miss
- Gifted kids often connect new information with a specific interest
- Gifted kids know ‘everything’ about a topic and are ready to move on
- Gifted kids want to learn ‘everything’ about a topic and aren’t ready to move on
- Gifted kids take in knowledge through a funnel not a cylinder (<http://www.shulamit.info/funnel.htm>)

Gifted kids react differently to social situations

- Gifted kids are often more sensitive than their peers
- Gifted kids often see the moral/ethical injustices of a situation that peers are not aware of
- Gifted kids aren't always social, preferring to work alone rather than in groups

Gifted kids can be highly emotional and easily frustrated

- The crushed butterfly can make them cry
- They focus on fair more than others
- They find drama where there isn't any
- They see the answer and can't understand why others don't
- The two p's – perfectionism and procrastination
- Those emotions/intensities come into play a lot when trying to complete something
- Lots of unfinished projects
- Lots of hair-pulling/hand wringing from parents & teachers

Gifted kids are easily bored

- Homework seems irrelevant
- Why should I show my work when I can do it in my head?
- I got this the first time, why do I have to do it again?
- Boredom can lead to
 - Behavior issues
 - Underachievement

Gifted kids don't always have close friends

- Asynchronous development creates issues as they may be emotionally one age but intellectually much older
- Intense focus on a topic makes others shy away if they don't share that same interest

Gifted kids are often just like their parents

- Let's face it, we see ourselves in our children
- Their struggles are often our struggles
- It hurts to watch them deal with similar issues
 - School
 - Friendship
 - Intensities

Just because they are gifted in one area doesn't mean they are gifted in everything or even more than one thing

- This is one of the biggest complaints shared by students – adults who assume that because they are good at one thing they are good at everything.
- Some students are twice-exceptional – gifted in one area while displaying a deficit in another

How to Ruin Your Terrific Child in Twelve Easy Steps

- ALWAYS have to be right
- Stay in CONTROL of your child's life as much as you possibly can
- CRITICIZE your child at every possible opportunity
- Expect your child to be PERFECT
- Make sure your child knows THEIR BEHAVIOR EMBARRASSES you and the family
- Fill your home with conflict and disagreement over parenting and child-rearing practices.

How to Ruin Your Terrific Child in Twelve Easy Steps

- Expect order, organization, and cleanliness at all times
- Don't praise your child
- Hang on to every word your child utters. Photograph every move
- TV, video games, and computers make great baby-sitters
- Say "SHH" and "BE QUIET" a hundred times a day
- Use the phrase "BECAUSE I SAID SO" as your primary form of decision making.

~Linda Levitt (*What to Do When Your Kid is Smarter Than You*)

Okay, so I know all that, now what?

- Accept and love your child unconditionally
- Expose your child to lots of learning opportunities
- Don't overload your child – more than 10 items or 15 hours? Too long
- Help your child dispel unwarranted feelings of inadequacy
- Communicate with your child about his/her abilities
- Be aware of your own baggage
- Don't hold your child up as an example
- Demonstrate how to prioritize
- Enjoy your child

Gifted girls and boys need different things

Advice for Parenting Gifted Girls

- Be coaches not judges
- Emphasize intelligence, hard work, independence, sensitivity, perseverance
- Deemphasize appearance
- Set as high expectations for daughters as sons
- Teach healthy competition
- Don't pressure your daughter to fit in socially
- Encourage involvement in all girl activities
- Encourage them to read stories about successful women
- Don't let birth order get in the way of leadership opportunities
- Travel with your daughter
- Be an active role model for learning and developing your own career

Advice for Parenting Gifted Boys

- Gifted boys are helped by one-on-one conversations about rules and the reasons for them
- Gifted boys often need more stimulation than peers
- Emphasize intelligence, hard work, independence, sensitivity, perseverance
- Don't chide them for being overly sensitive

What about kids who like to argue?

- Make the Rules Clear.
- Make the Consequences for Breaking the Rules Clear
- Avoid Negotiating Consequences After a Rule is Broken
- Don't Argue Back
- Increase the Consequence if Your Child Continues to Argue
- Be Consistent and Follow Through with Consequences.
- Make Consequences Reasonable and Enforceable.

That makes sense, but sometimes I get so frustrated!

- Take a step back and assess the situation
- Take time to talk with your child
- Take time to BE with your child
- Do the best you can, and recognize sometimes they have to ride the emotional rollercoaster alone
- Recognize your limitations, and know when to ask for help

Final Words of Wisdom from Jen Merrill (www.laughingatchaos.com)

Five Ways to Survive Raising a Gifted Kid

- **Wine.** Yes, the fermented juice of the grape so beloved by all. Sometimes a locked door and a nice glass of red keeps the screams in the back of the throat quiet for another day.
- **A tribe.** Whether online or real life, we parents of gifted/2e kids absolutely *must* find other parents in the same leaky boat.
- **Find something fun and outrageous to do.** Take flamenco lessons, learn to juggle flaming chickens (I do not condone setting chickens aflame), tightrope walking. Something to remind yourself that A) you can learn something new, B) you're allowed to do something completely different, and C) if you can do *that* you most certainly can raise a gifted/2e kid.
- **Date night.** You and your spouse must spend time together, preferably without the kids. No, let's make that *most definitely without the kids*.
- **I...don't have a number five.** I'm far from an expert, I'm a living laboratory raising a 2e kid. I have far more questions than answers and can often be found banging my head repeatedly on the desk. I have days where I'm hanging on to my last shred of sanity with my teeth, and days where I'm so on top of things nothing bothers me. There's a lot more of the former than the latter, and I suspect that's the case with a lot of parents of gifted kids. So I raise a glass to all the parents of gifted kids out there, who know it's not all sunshine and roses raising these kids, and somehow still manage to stay just one step ahead of them.
- Excerpted from <http://gtnetwork.ie/index.php/gifted-education-awareness/geaw-2012/five-ways-to-survive-raising-a-gifted-kid/>

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