

PARENTING HIGHLY CAPABLE CHILDREN

Susan Winebrenner, *Parenting Your Gifted Child*

1. It's very important to remember that your gifted child is first a child. They need love and controls, attention and discipline. They seem to need a reason for everything, so you should accept this need as a part of their ability and not as a challenge to your authority. The key is to give them choices whenever possible while retaining your authority.
2. Listen to your child. The endless questions reflect the gifted child's unusual curiosity. Don't be afraid to tell your child that you don't know the answer to some questions. Your job is to help guide them to find the information themselves.
3. Don't compare your gifted child to other children, siblings, or peers. Try not to discuss their ability with other people in a way that makes it sound like you are primarily proud of them because of their intelligence. Gifted children need to understand that their advanced learning ability makes them different, not better, than their age peers; and that they are perfectly normal in their own right.
4. The gifted child needs time to daydream, be silly, lie on the bed and contemplate things. Be patient when your child seems unable to stay with a topic for very long, or finds one and never wants to go on to another. They have a vital need to acquire information and store it away for future reference.
5. Encourage your children because all people need encouragement to stay goal-oriented. Praise their efforts as well as outcomes. Also praise their ability to take a risk when something doesn't work out well.
6. Many gifted persons have difficulty dealing with the issue of perfectionism. Perfectionists believe that they will only be valued when they do exceptionally great things. They need consistent experience learning that they are valued just as much when they are not "perfect".
7. Gifted children must learn that true learning is a struggle! A grade lower than an "A" may indicate the student is struggling to learn new material. The longer a student's experience with struggle is postponed, the more difficult it may be for them to develop study skills needed in these situations. Remember that colleges are very interested in "well-rounded" students and a few "B's" will probably not prevent the student's admission. Intelligence is not the same thing as effortlessness!
8. Do whatever you can to help your child find a suitable friend – one who is just as capable as your son or daughter and who shares the same interests. Many gifted individuals are content with one or two close friends. It is not productive to insist that they socialize with age peers if they'd rather not.
9. Be aware that gifted girls have special problems as they are conditioned as they get older by society to be more feminine and less intellectual. Emphasize that the best jobs require as much training in math and science as possible. Encourage them to take these classes and excel in them.
10. Many pressures accompany exceptional learning ability. When gifted youngsters continually hear about the contribution they will someday make to the world, it may cause them to worry about what will happen if they don't succeed. Try to encourage, but not overemphasize, their ability to impact the future.
11. Gifted people usually have many careers they might follow. They may experience a great deal of stress and indecision as a result. Encourage them to "follow their passion" rather than to try to fulfill anyone else's goals for them.
12. Parents of gifted children are people too! Recognize your need for help and guidance in understanding and dealing with the special needs of your children. Become a member of your school's parent group and visit your state's annual conference for those involved in the lives of gifted children.
13. Enjoy! Of all the problems children can have, being gifted is a good one! As you help your child take pride in his or her accomplishments while learning to accept other children as they are, you will be able to relax and enjoy the excitement of parenting gifted children.