



# Coping Strategies for the Gifted

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# Myths About Gifted Children

## Myths common in public perception:

- They have everything going their way.
- They can succeed without help.
- Their special abilities are always prized by their families.
- They should be valued primarily for their brain power.
- They are more stable and mature emotionally.
- They have gotten “something for nothing”.
- They naturally want to be isolated socially.

# More Myths About Gifted Children

## Myths common among parents and educators:

- They are not aware of being different unless someone tells them they are.
- They will reveal their giftedness.
- Their giftedness needs to be emphasized above all else.
- They need constant challenge by others if they are to achieve.
- They need to be disciplined more than other children.
- They should assume extra responsibility for others.
- They enjoy serving as “examples” for other children.

# Areas Where Gifted Children Sometimes Struggle

- **Motivation** – low achievement
- **Discipline** – need for self-direction and self-regulation
- **Stress Management** – overcoming perfectionism
- **Communication of Feelings** – feeling free to express frustrations and fears without letting people down
- **Peer Relationships** – difficulty fitting in
- **Sibling Relationships** – birth order and sibling rivalry
- **Tradition Breaking** – asking “Why?”
- **Depression** – 3 types:
  - 1. Feeling too much pressure or responsibility;
  - 2. Feeling alienated;
  - 3. Feeling intense concern for the human existence (global issues)
- **Parent Relationships** – encouragement v. pressure and modeling self-care

# Living Up to the World's Expectations

When the world says, “You could have done better if you had just applied yourself...”

1. **Listen selectively.** Be choosy about who you choose to listen to.
2. **Speak up.** Let others know when you feel they are pushing too hard.
3. **Find allies.** Find a sympathetic friend, supportive teacher or understanding family member.



# Perfectionism

## Perfectionism means:

- Thinking less of yourself because you earn a B+ instead of an A.
- Being hard on yourself because you aren't equally talented in all sports.
- Chastising yourself because you weren't chosen for student council, the varsity team or for Select Team.



## Pursuit of Excellence means:

- Thinking more of yourself for trying something new.
- Choosing some things you know you'll be good at – and others you know will be good for you or just plain fun.
- Congratulating yourself because you were nominated or considered, and deciding to try again next year – if that's what you want.

# Value of Mistakes and Risk Taking

What do the following have in common?

- Cheese
- Chocolate chip cookies
- Coca-Cola
- Penicillin
- Post-It notes
- Silly putty

Mark Twain said:

“Accident is the greatest inventor who ever lived.”

Give yourself permission to make mistakes!

# Pace Yourself



## Goal Setting Guidelines:

1. Make your goals specific.
2. Keep your goals realistic.
3. Include enjoyment among your goals.
4. Don't set too many goals at once.
5. Be prepared to achieve some of your goals but not all of them.
6. Free yourself to revise your goals as circumstances change.
7. Be honest with yourself. (ex. "I can't." might really mean, "I'm afraid to try.")
8. Trust your intuition.
9. Practice, practice, practice.
10. Share your goals with a friend.
11. Be prepared to hold fast to your convictions.
12. Don't compare yourself to anyone but yourself.



# Gender Issues: Gifted Girls

Gifted girls face special challenges.

- Sexism, discrimination, sexual harassment.
- Dealing with males who are intimidated by intelligent girls and won't date girls they perceive as smarter than they are.
- High expectations.

“Of my two handicaps, being female put many more obstacles in my path than being black.” *Shirley Chisholm*

- *On January 25, 1972, Chisholm announced her candidacy for president. She stood before the cameras and in the beginning of her speech she said,*
- *"I stand before you today as a candidate for the Democratic nomination for the Presidency of the United States. I am not the candidate of black America, although I am black and proud. I am not the candidate of the women's movement of this country, although I am a woman, and I am equally proud of that. I am not the candidate of any political bosses or special interests. I am the candidate of the people."*



# Encouraging Gifted Girls

- Be aware the middle school is the most “at risk” time for gifted girls.
- Take advantage of educational opportunities that will give you the facts you need to explore a variety of careers.
- Learn to distinguish between friends who bring out the best in you and those you’re better off without.
- Remember that decisions you make now will affect your future.
- It’s normal to want to fit in and be popular, but not at the expense of your gifts and talents.
- Seek out girls and women who are doing interesting things.
- Assess your self-esteem.
- Make it a priority to know yourself and decide what’s important to you.



# Gender Issues: Gifted Boys

Gifted boys also face special challenges:

- Being labeled a nerd and being teased about being smart.
- Peer pressure to fit in; having to continually conform.
- High expectations, extra work, and/or more responsibilities.

“True equality can only mean the right to be uniquely creative.” *Erik H. Erikson*

*Erikson is credited for widening the scope of psychoanalytic theory to take greater account of social, cultural, and other environmental factors.*



# Encouraging Gifted Boys

- Let yourself feel and express your emotions.
- Share your hopes, dreams, fears, and insecurities with your parents.
- Educate yourself about gender biases and stereotyping and how they can limit you.
- Find other adults/mentors who accept you as you are.
- Don't push yourself so hard. Boys develop at a later age than girls.
- Learn to accept your strengths and limitations.
- Follow your own interests.
- Make friends with similar interests.
- Respect and like yourself for who you are.

# Ethnic Issues:



- Minority students are historically underrepresented in gifted programs.
- Even when identified, minority students don't always succeed in gifted programs once they get there.
- Conflicts between expectations of cultures and expectations of what it means to be gifted.
- Being gifted means more than having a high IQ.

“Do not call for black power or for green power. Call for brain power.” *Barbara Jordan*

- Jordan was elected to the Texas Senate in 1966, becoming the first female African-American to do so. In 1972, she was elected president pro-tempore of the Texas Senate - the first African-American elected to preside over a legislative body anywhere in the country. When Jordan was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1972 she became the first African-American woman to represent a previously Confederate state in Congress. In 1976, Barbara Jordan became the first African-American Woman to deliver a keynote address at a political convention.

# Economic Issues:

“There’s nothing so unequal as the equal treatment of unequals.” *U.S. Supreme Court*

- Treating all students equally in the identification of gifted students all too often results in the under-representation of an entire segment of the student population who come to school with “unequal” opportunities.

Resources that affect all students:

- Financial
- Emotional
- Mental
- Spiritual
- Physical
- Support Systems
- Relationships/role models
- Knowledge of hidden rules of society

Access (or lack of access) to these resources contributes to a student’s performance in school.

# Understanding the Diversity of the Gifted

Being gifted is like having a really nice car, but the environment in which you drive your car affects how far you can go.

1. The nurtured gifted from enriched backgrounds have the car with the deluxe accessory package and a license to drive it.
2. The low socio-economic gifted have the car, but may not yet have the keys or funds to put gas in the tank.
3. The highly gifted (prodigy) have the car but may only be allowed to drive within the city limits full of school zones.
4. The underachieving gifted has the car but has not completed requirements for a driver's license.
5. The very young gifted has the car, but is too young to drive.
6. The language-different gifted has the car, but the signs and directions are in the wrong language.
7. The ADD/ADHD gifted has the car, but the ignition system is wired differently so it stays in motion when others want it to stop, constantly getting tickets for speeding and running stop signs.
8. The culturally diverse gifted has the car, but it has shrink-wrapped over it which clouds it's potential.
9. The physically challenged gifted has the car but the AC is broken and is always in the shop.
10. The gifted female has the car, but she may be self-destructive or be around others who think she doesn't deserve it.

# What Do These Gifted People Have in Common?

- Pablo Picasso
- Albert Einstein
- Tom Cruise
- Leonardo de Vinci
- Richard Branson
- Thomas Edison
- Jay Leno
- Charles Schwab
- Ted Turner
- Robin Williams
- Harry Belafonte
- Henry Winkler
- Ansel Adams
- Andy Warhol
- George Patton
- John Lennon
- Nolan Ryan
- Agatha Christie



# Options for Gifted Students

- Acceleration
- Enrichment
- Independent Study
- Advanced Placement
- Early College Entrance
- Back-to-Back/Paired classes
- On-line Courses and Credit
- Mentorships
- Field Trips and Cultural Events
- Seminars/Mini-Courses
- Summer School

# Coping Strategies for Gifted Kids

Parents are the single most influential factor in the success of any student, especially a gifted student.

Be a **lighthouse** in the darkness for your child.

