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How Can I Support My Gifted Child? by Linda Silverman

Raising and nurturing a gifted child can be an exciting yet daunting challenge. This [article] defines giftedness and offers some insight into what parents can do to act as their child's best advocate throughout the school years.

Perceptions of giftedness vary even among gifted-education specialists. Today, giftedness generally includes a wide range of attributes, from traditional intellectual measures to interpersonal abilities. Giftedness can be found in children from all cultural, linguistic, and economic groups.

The U.S. Department of Education (1995) defines *giftedness* as "children or youth who give evidence of high performance capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who require services or activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop such capabilities." Many states and localities use this definition or a variation. School districts use a wide variety of methods or tests to decide which children qualify for gifted programs or services. Some school districts use a definition from a specific model, such as Renzulli's Schoolwide Enrichment Model or Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences.

How Can I Encourage My Gifted Child?

Children learn first from their parents and families. Parents who spend time with their gifted child are more able to tune into their child's interests and can respond by offering appropriate enrichment opportunities. If you are the parent of a gifted child, you should:

- **Read aloud to your child.** It is important that parents read to their gifted child often, even if the child is already capable of reading.
- **Help your child discover personal interests.** Stimulation and support of interests are vital to the development of talents. Parents should expose their child to their own interests and encourage the child to

learn about a wide variety of subjects, such as art, nature, music, and sports, in addition to traditional academic subjects such as math, reading, and science.

- **Encourage the support of extended family and friends.** As an infant, a gifted child can exhaust new parents because he or she often sleeps less than other babies and requires extra stimulation when awake. It can be helpful to have extended family in the home, grandparents who live nearby, or close friends in the neighborhood who can spend some time with the child so the primary caretakers can get some rest and to give the infant added – or different -- stimulation.
- **Speak and listen to your child with consideration and respect.** From the time he or she can talk, a gifted child is constantly asking questions and will often challenge authority. "Do it because I said so" doesn't work. Generally, a gifted child will cooperate more with parents who take the time to explain requests than with more authoritarian parents.

Conclusion

Parents of gifted children need opportunities to share parenting experiences with one another. It takes the persistence of large groups of parents to ensure that provisions for gifted children are kept firmly in place. It is important for parents of children with any special needs to meet with teachers early in the school year, work regularly with teachers, and stay both involved in their child's education and informed about gifted education in general.

The key to raising gifted children is to respect their uniqueness, their opinions and ideas, and their dreams. It can be painful for parents when their children feel out of sync with others, but it is unwise to put too much emphasis on the importance of fitting in; children get enough of that message in the outside world. At home, children need to know that they are appreciated for being themselves.

This article is excerpted from the updated version of the 1992 ERIC Digest *How Can Parents Support Gifted Children?*, written by Linda Kreger Silverman of the Gifted Child Development Center. It has been updated by Sandra Berger of the [ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education](#). This publication was prepared by [ACCESS ERIC](#) with funding from the Educational Resources

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Achieving Balance in the Lives of the Gifted by Debi Torres

Ask any parent of a gifted child if life is “easy” with their child at home, and most responses would be, “No”! Many parents say their gifted child is a combination of many “different” children all formed into one being. It would not be out of the ordinary for a parent to say their six year old child reads like a fifteen year old, solves math problems like a twelve year old, plays chess like a seventeen year old, plays soccer like a six year old, and cries like a two year old when he can't have pizza for dinner. Does this sound familiar to you? Often, parents say they wish their gifted child was “normal” in every way except for the ability to achieve at high intellectual levels.

Society tends to place people into certain peg-holes for what is “normal” or acceptable according to a person's chronological age. What is chronological age? According to Merriam-Webster, *chronological* means “of, relating to, or arranged in or according to the order of time, *also*: reckoned in units of time <*chronological age*>.” As parents of gifted children you know that most gifted children don't fit perfectly into “the normal peg-holes of life.”

What makes gifted children different? Many highly gifted children reach milestones at different times than other children of the same chronological age. This is the basis for asynchronous development. Basically, their emotional, social, and cognitive development is out of sync, or uneven, with their peers. The gap between the cognitive and social/emotional development phases tends to widen with higher intellectual ability. Asynchronous development is usually more obvious among young children, when their developmental differences seem to be more obvious to parents and teachers. It is vital to remember that each child is unique and that in order to help them to develop into a happy adult, your child needs to learn the importance of balancing all areas of their life.

As parents, don't only focus on the academic achievements of your child. Reward them for social and emotional growth as well; all areas are equally important to the growth of your child. Remember that in order to develop into a happy adult, your child needs to learn the importance of balancing all areas of their life. "When we focus only on what gifted children can do rather than on who they are, we ignore vital aspects of their developing selves and risk stunting their growth and muddying or distorting their sense of themselves and their worth." (Tolan, 2000)

Merriam-Webster Online. (2005). <http://www.m-w.com/cgi-bin/dictionary?va=chronological>

Helping Gifted Children with Stress Management by Leslie Kaplan

Is a Gifted Child More Likely to Feel Stress than Others?

Many gifted youngsters have a heightened sensitivity to their surroundings, to events, to ideas, and to expectations. Some experience their own high expectations for achievement as a relentless pressure to excel. Constant striving to live up to self expectations-- or those of others-- to be first, best, or both can be very stressful. With every new course, new teacher, or new school questions arise about achievement and performance, since every new situation carries with it the frightening risk of being mediocre. Striving becomes even more stressful when unrealistic or unclear expectations are imposed by adults or peers. The pressure to excel, accompanied by other concerns such as feeling different, self-doubt (the "imposter" syndrome), and the need to prove their giftedness can drain the energy of gifted children and result in additional stress.

Stress occurs even when everything is going well. Youngsters get tired from their constant efforts and may secretly fear that next time they will not be as successful.

What Are Some Other Stresses on a Gifted Child?

Many gifted children accept responsibility for a variety of activities such as a demanding course load; leadership in school activities, clubs, or sports; and part-time jobs. Even if it were humanly possible, doing everything well would be physically and emotionally stressful.

Vacations may be stressful if children are comfortable only when achieving and succeeding. Taking time off may make them feel nervous and lacking control.

Gifted children need intellectual challenge. Boring, monotonous busywork is very stressful for individuals who prefer thinking and reasoning activities. Boredom may result in anger, resentment, or, in some cases, setting personal goals for achievement and success that significantly exceed those of parents or school.

Some gifted children value independence and leadership, yet the separation they feel from their peers results in loneliness and fewer opportunities to relieve stress. Finding a peer group can be difficult, particularly for adolescents. Some experience a conflict between belonging to a group and using their extraordinary abilities.

Gifted children are complex thinkers, persuasively able to argue both sides of any question. This ability, however, may complicate decisions. Children may lack information about and experience with resources, processes, outcomes, or priorities that help tip an argument toward a clear solution. Furthermore, not every problem has one obviously correct answer. Compromise and accommodation are realities in the adult world, but they are not easily perceived from a young person's viewpoint. Thus, decision making may be a very stressful process.

How Can Gifted Children Cope With Stress?

Some healthy ways of handling stress include the following:

- **Change the source of the stress.** Do something else for a while.
- **Confront the source of the stress.** If it is a person, persuade him or her to remove the stress. Sit down with the person driving you crazy and talk about ways you might better work together.
- **Talk about the source of stress.** Rid yourself of frustration. Find a good listener and complain. Talk through possible solutions.
- **Shift your perspective.** Tell yourself that each new situation or problem is a new challenge, and that there is something to be learned from every experience. Try to see the humorous side of the situation.
- **Learn skills and attitudes that make tasks easier and more successful.** Practice effective organization and time management skills.
- **Take time for enjoyable activities.** Everyone needs a support system. Find friends, teachers, or relatives with whom you have fun. As a reward for your efforts, give yourself work breaks. Listen to your favorite music, shoot baskets, or participate in some other brief activity that is mentally restful or fun.
- **Get regular exercise and practice sound nutrition.** Physical activity not only provides time out, but also changes your body chemistry as you burn off muscle tension built up from accommodating stress. Exercise also increases resistance to illness. Nutritious food and regular meals help regulate your body chemistry and keep you functioning at your sharpest.

How Can Parents, Teachers, and Counselors Reduce Stress on Gifted Children?

Let children live their own lives. Caring adults support, encourage, and celebrate children's efforts and successes, but they stand back a bit from these efforts and achievements. They let children select and master activities for personal enjoyment. Be available for guidance and advice. Some gifted children appear to be more mature than their chronological age indicates. They have advanced verbal skills and can talk a good line. Nevertheless, they are still children and need realistic, clearly stated guidelines about limits, values, and proper behavior. Gifted children need to hear adults openly state some of their perspectives to understand expectations and acceptable limits. While these children are very perceptive, they cannot read minds.

Gifted children may know more facts about their interest area than do their parents and other adults. However, they have not lived longer; they need loving concern and guidance.

Article excerpted and modified from Kaplan, Leslie S. *Helping Gifted Students with Stress Management*. ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education, Council for Exceptional Children. Reston, VA: ERIC, 1990. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 321 493). Available online at: http://www.kidsource.com/kidsource/content/stress_management.html#credits

Help Your Child Make Friends by Judy Wright

Nothing touches the heartstrings of a parent or teacher more than the cry "nobody likes me" or "I don't have any friends." We wish there were something we could do to insure the child will be, if not the most popular, at least

included in the games on the playground or invited to the birthday party. Actually, there is something we can do to increase their acceptance by the group and become more approachable to others. We can teach them some skills and behaviors that will enhance their chances of being picked as a friend.

Likeability can be Learned:

New research shows that all likeable children behave in certain ways. These skills can be taught by parents, teachers and other caring adults. There is a language of likeability that some children cannot pick up by osmosis, but must learn. It has been called "shorthand" to making friends. It consists of reading non-verbal clues, listening with the heart and trying again another day. Those who have formed valued friendships develop a resiliency and support group for all of life's bumps along the highway of life.

Not only does fitting in and having friends feel good, it has numerous other advantages including better grades, healthier bodies, less stress, and more opportunities to learn social skills. Children have friends they can count on tend to stay in school longer, make wiser decisions, and are generally happier. Friendship is so much more important than just having a play date.

Here are 10 secrets to assisting your child to be more likeable. Teach and model them on a daily basis.

1. Look for opportunities to assist others. Studies show that helpfulness correlates more strongly than any other attribute to being liked. Teach them to be aware of other people's needs and to offer assistance spontaneously, before they ask for it.
2. Find something that makes them feel special. Encourage your child to find an activity, hobby or interest that they really enjoy. They don't have to excel at it, just enjoy it. Do they enjoy drama, dance or railroads? Join a group of enthusiasts.
3. Say "hello" first, and smile. People who smile are perceived as nice and approachable. Friendly and optimistic people act as a magnet to others. Have you ever gotten mad at someone who smiled or said "hi" to you?
4. Be pleasant to be around. It is simply too much work to try to figure out someone's "moods" and if your child tends to complain a lot or blame others, they will find others distancing themselves. If your child is consistently negative, help them to see the positive and break the habit of pessimism.
5. Treat others as you would like to be treated. If you are disrespectful to others or gossip about those who are not present, people tend to be wary of how you will treat them. Don't blame other people for not living up to your expectations. It is important that you teach your child that he or she is loveable and that if they continue to behave in positive ways, a friend will come along.
6. Don't stand out from the crowd. Whether we like it or not, kids are judged by the way they look. Try to help them fit in socially by giving them the opportunity to choose their own clothes and hairstyles. Encourage them in good hygiene habits.
7. Ask to join in the fun. When approaching a group that is already engaged, pick one person to look in the eye and ask if you can join them. If that person says no or seems hesitant, then smile and say, "Okay, maybe next time?" You will get a much better response if you ask one person than if you address the group at large. If the one person accepts, then the others will go along with it. Be sure to say, "Thanks for letting me join you. It was fun."
8. Don't take it personally. Help your child understand that another person may just be having a bad day and may not be mad or dislike him or her. Teach them that people are really less concerned about us than we would like to think.

9. Watch your body language. Verbal communication is the language of information. Body language is the language of relationships. Appear open, friendly and eager to join in and make friends. Stand up straight and look people in the eye. Respect other people's space by not standing too close.

10. Recognize the difference between friendship and popularity. Friendship is more important and will last a lifetime. Popularity is fleeting and dependent on the group. You really only need one good friend.

Be very careful to resist the urge to speak ill of those who have not befriended your child. Your job is not to pull others down, but to build your child up.

One of the most effective tools for change is to think about an incident that happened either positive or negative and then say, "next time..." It helps you to cement what went right and reflect on what didn't go so well, so you can make changes in behavior and attitude. It also reminds the child that we all get another chance to try again, and that somewhere there is a friend just waiting for him.

Article adapted and printed with permission. Judy H. Wright is a parent educator, author and international speaker on family issues. Sign up for other articles, E-zines and tele-classes ArtichokePress.com. You can also contact Judy at 406-549-9813 or JudyWright@ArtichokePress.com.

Pick Me, Not Pick on Me by Rhonda Boyer

Let's face it, second only to safety is the desire to fit in, the need to belong. Being a gifted child and the accompanying uneven development — social, emotional, mental, and physical — realms creates dynamics where concerns arise regarding peer interactions. If your child is fortunate to have discovered unconditional acceptance by others he or she encounters regularly than there is little need to worry. However, this is typically not the case. Most children, in particular gifted children, are exposed to a range of behaviors which impact their sense of security as well as acceptance. Name calling, teasing, harassment, rumors, and bullying are harmful at the very least and scarring at the worst, emotionally and sometimes physically. Being victimized is never fun and never okay.

Gifted children tend to have a heightened awareness and sensitivity to issues involving social justice, and when they experience threatening situations their responses may be passive internalization or aggressive retaliation, a lose-lose outcome. This is especially true during the aftermath when they try to intellectualize the conflict between the way things ought to be and the way things are. As parents our role is to guide our children in pro-social behavior yet insulate their well-being through proactive prevention and intervention.

- Teach your child to stay calm and ignore the situation. Deep breathing helps counteract anxiety. Counting often has a soothing effect as does thinking about some place peaceful. Empowering self-thoughts also may help, such as "I'm bright enough to handle this" or "I'm not going to allow someone else to take my power away."
- Teach your child to use I-messages: "I feel _____ when you _____." This may help deescalate a situation because it does not attack anyone with words.
- Teach your child to use posturing and voice tone and volume. Body language, facial expressions, and how words are delivered make a difference. To encourage assertiveness role-play strong eye contact, firmness in voice and stance, and straight posture.
- Teach your child to be creative. Behaving in an unexpected way may confuse or even throw off the aggressor. Looking for a way out of the situation requires quick thinking, decisiveness, wit, and risk taking. It is better to try something and fail, then never to try anything at all.
- Teach your child self-defense strategies. Martial arts foster discipline, coordination, self-confidence, problem-solving, and mental and physical control. If you are opposed to forms that emphasize physical contact, try one that focuses on the art form such as Shotokan.

Proactive Intervention

If your child does become a target of cruelty, you still have the opportunity to intervene. Use problem-solving strategies to address what has happened and attempt to prevent it from happening again.

- Discuss the problem openly and without judgment. Sometimes it may be easier to discuss after it's been written down first.
- Brainstorm alternative responses to the problem in case it occurs again.
- Weigh the consequences, pros and cons, of each response.
- Decide the best strategy.
- Reflect on how the strategy worked if a situation occurs that requires it.

Through proactive prevention and intervention, we teach our children life lessons in coping skills. Avoid a "kids will be kids" attitude. You are the number one advocate for your gifted child. In an effort to lead your child into a well-adjusted adulthood you, want him or her to embrace their gifts and maximize them while at the same time overcome the obstacles they may encounter along the way. After all, your child has the potential to change the world.

Tips for Parents: Perfectionism by J. Rasmussen

The following information was gathered during a facilitated discussion on perfectionism that included parents of profoundly gifted children.

While preparing for the discussion, one key point consistently surfaced in regards to perfectionism: the fact that it is a characteristic trait that will never go away, but instead can only become fine tuned. Once one is able to accept this, it is just a matter of finding a way to approach perfectionism in a more healthy and productive manner. The parents who attended my facilitated discussion shared many wonderful ideas and successful experiences that have helped them gradually help their children combat against the "disabling perfectionism" and move more toward fostering the "enabling perfectionism" instead.

- **Practice losing.** Start with small games that emphasize chance and are not dependant on skill (rock, paper, scissors and war), then gradually move to more ability based games. This can also help teach children how to be gracious losers.
- **Practice practicing.** Find something that your child will have to work at. This may even be something that you know your child will be the worst at (an art class, an organized sports team, swimming, etc.). Music can work well for those who are not musically inclined since any mistakes that are played do not stick around like a drawing or a sculpture.
- **Emphasize process, not outcome.** How did they get to that conclusion or that next step? What made you decide to use that color? What did you learn from the entire experience?
- **Be specific with expectations.** Gifted children are very literal, so make sure to define and be specific. Explain to them exactly what you mean by 'finishing' the project. Be very clear with your expectations. What do you expect your child to get out of writing the English paper? Have your child work in small increments of study time and try and get the most out of it. One great idea, although it does not work well for every child, is to use a stopwatch and have a time restraint.
- **Have a sense of humor.** Gifted children are already so hard on themselves, it is great if you can all laugh together when mistakes are made. Watching *America's Funniest Home Videos* could be a great homework assignment!
- **Discuss how mistakes can be good.** Penicillin, chocolate chip cookies, banana bread, etc. Read books together on accidental discoveries.
- **Model.** Show your children the ways you are a perfectionist and how you cope with it. Point out any mistakes that you make and tell stories of mistakes you made when you were younger.

- **Priorities and perspective.** Stop and discuss how important the outcome is/isn't of a particular project or activity. What will happen if you don't draw it just right the first time?
- **Goal setting.** Start by practicing with small goals and gradually up the ante. Make sure all goals are realistic and attainable.
- **"Full tank" & "down-time".** Make sure that all family members are well rested and have a full tummy. Set aside quiet time to allow everyone to re-group and unwind. This can cut down on the number of meltdowns and the heightened sense of irritability.
- **Pursuit of Excellence vs. Perfectionism.** Perfect is not possible. Explain to them the difference between excellence and perfectionism. A great resource that can help you do this is *Perfectionism and the Highly Gifted Child* by Shaun Hately.

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Multipotentiality—A Mixed Blessing by Jim Granada

Gifted children, because of the range of their unique talents, may experience the challenges of multipotentiality as they grow up. According to Rysiew, Shore and Leeb (1999), multipotentiality describes individuals with multiple interests and high abilities, allowing them to excel in numerous areas. Frederickson (1979) defined a multipotential person as “any individual who, when provided with appropriate environments, can select and develop any number of competencies to a high level” (p. 268).

Gifted children with traits of multipotentiality begin to face prioritization challenges very early on, having interests and talents in many areas and often not willing to prioritize among these areas. As they grow older, they may face tough choices in school (courses and extra-curricular activities), in college (career paths and majors), and in their careers (difficulties in selecting an occupation).

Barabara Kerr (1990) addresses challenges of gifted children at various grade levels. Elementary level children may demonstrate difficulty in choosing topics or projects when provided options or may jump from one hobby to another with passing interest. They may also have difficulty in finishing up and following through on tasks. Middle level gifted kids may participate in multiple social and recreational activities with no clear preferences. They may over-schedule and have difficulty meeting deadlines due to lack of time. Over scheduling may continue in high school resulting in overly packed class schedules and acceptance of leadership roles in a variety of groups in school, religious activities, and community organizations. These overly-ambitious children may show occasional signs of stress and exhaustion.

Once in college, multiple majors and changes of majors may occur. Intense participation in extracurricular activities is likely to continue, and they may encounter the opportunity cost of giving up some interests in favor of others. Parents can help children with multipotentiality by providing them with focusing activities and opportunities to develop skills in prioritization. Real world exposure to careers with emphasis on the meaning and value of work can help, along with opportunities for volunteer work.

Schools can help by providing support in goal setting and time management, asking students not “What do you want to do?” but instead “What do you want to do first?” The important thing to remember is to start support early along this challenging journey.

Career Pathways: Do I Have to Choose ONE Career? By Debi Torres

Many families of gifted children assume that career planning for their child will come naturally. After all, “My child excels in many areas. Finding a career will come easy.”

Multipotentiality describes individuals with multiple interests and high abilities, allowing them to excel in many areas.

The fallacy is that gifted individuals who have multiple strength areas will have an easier time selecting a career when it comes time to decide, usually sometime in high school or college. Unfortunately, evidence is mounting that youthful brilliance in one or more areas does not always translate into adult satisfaction and accomplishment in working life. (Kerr, 1990) When comparing several diverse groups of young adults, National Merit Scholars, Presidential Scholars, and graduates of gifted education programs, Kerr found that the path from education to career is not always smooth, and it may be complicated by social-emotional problems and needs of gifted students that differ from those of more typical students.

How can you help your gifted child with career planning?

- Instead of asking your child what they want to be when they grow up, try asking: “What are all the things you’d like to do in your life? How can you set goals to organize yourself to make the most of your interests?” Tell them, “The point is not to specialize early or sign up only for those courses that fit your eventual goal, but to find out as much as you can about what it will take to get there.” (Galbraith & Delisle, 1996)
- Encourage your child to practice the “try before you buy” philosophy when selecting future careers. Try the following activities during the summer months: shadow a professional, volunteer, or join a mentorship program. Try to find willing professionals in the business or academic communities who are willing to guide your child and provide answers to his/her many questions.
- It is also important to teach your child that the career decision they make is not forever, it’s okay if they decide to change careers in the future, but they still need to consider “life” choices. When selecting college majors, try to have them select areas with various career options to allow for ease of movement between jobs. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, about 10 percent of the American work force switches occupations every year and many Americans will have between 3 to 5 careers in their lifetime.

Remember, with the right mix of intelligence, ambition, foresight, and passion- your child may find him/herself changing directions numerous times throughout their career path before they retire. In other words, a career choice doesn’t have to be a life sentence. (Galbraith & Delisle, 1996)

Galbraith & Delisle,. (1996). The gifted kids’ survival guide: A teen handbook. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit.

Kerr, B. (1990). Career planning for gifted and talented youth. ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 321497 This article is in the public domain. Authorization to reproduce it in whole or in part is granted.

Supporting Your Gifted Child’s Constantly Changing World by Jim Granada

Think of a time in which your gifted child experienced a challenging transition. What did you do to help with the transition? In retrospect, what might you have done differently? From early childhood to young adulthood, gifted children journey through a variety of transitions for which they need a parent’s understanding and support. Whether

it's the first day in a structured pre-school or kindergarten setting or heading off to college for the first time, children need to know that their primary advocates, the individuals that understand their complexity the most, will be there to help cross the transitional bridge.

What makes these transitions particularly challenging for parents are the many variables that can impact both the transition and the support provided by parents. Parents may have anxieties about the unknown as their children explore pathways of which parents have no reference points. These anxieties can be particularly acute when taking a journey with the firstborn, or when the child chooses a pathway very different than the pathways that were taken by parents when growing up.

Parents may also complicate the transitions if they have issues regarding their own journey through childhood. What may have been a particularly troublesome transition for a parent when they were a child may be smooth sailing for a son or daughter. We all want our children to learn from our mistakes and not make the same ones we made, but we must keep in mind that the pathways of the past may be very different than those that our children are trekking.

One additional challenge in supporting a child's transitions may come from a resistance to giving a child more independence as they get older. While parents innately have the urge to be protective, gifted children often will have a strong sense of independence and want to break free of the protective nature of their parents. Combine the need for independence with a willingness of a child to take risks, a parent may resort to becoming more controlling rather than supportive, creating conflict in the parent-child relationship.

When gifted children enter school for the first time, their behaviors must change to fit the new setting. Once they step into an environment populated by other children, they no longer operate as the center of the universe.

Structures and routines must be adapted to, and parents may struggle with the changes, while at the same time wondering if they are doing enough as a parent now that responsibilities for their child are now being shared with at least one adult outside of the family. At this point of transaction, parents need to support their child by balancing the structures and routines of school with the freedom to ask unlimited questions, the freedom to dabble in areas of interest, and the freedom to discover that the home can continue to support and foster.

Another critical transition is when children move from the inclusive, nurturing elementary school environment to the more fast-paced and complex world of middle school, where many adults (with many different personalities and teaching styles) share the responsibility of educating children. Unfortunately, this complex educational transition parallels the even more complex physical, social and emotional transition into adolescence. As the need for independence grows, and as other adults and peers grow in their influence over one's child, a parent will need to be extremely creative and flexible in determining ways in which to support their child while simultaneously giving the child the space they need during this transition. Communication becomes pivotal at this transitional stage, and may be the primary means of parental support during these challenging years.

While transitions will continue throughout a young person's life, the support system expands and the parent's role, while still important, becomes less critical in young adulthood. And for most of you, those transitional bridges remain to be built. Good luck on your journey!

Imagery and Visualization: Picture the Future by Rhonda Boyer

Using imagery and visualization doesn't have an age limit; children as well as adults can use this technique as a part of setting and reaching goals. Using visual images of goals combined with the other senses, words, thoughts, and feelings tap both the left and right sides of the brain.

Teach your child to spend a few minutes a day visualizing themselves reaching their goals. Encourage them to think about the sounds, smells, and tastes associated with the pictures they form in their head. Have them put themselves into the picture. What are they doing? How are they feeling? The goal is to try to create a vision that stirs motivation, passion, and enthusiasm. Have your child talk to you about their goals and what they "see" when they use imagery and visualization.

Joel Frankel and Teddi McDonald suggest the following creative tools that are concrete ways of using visualization and imagery. Try them out for yourself and then teach them to your child. You may be surprised by how powerful these tools can be!

☐ **Create a goals list poster.** Using a piece of poster paper, write out your goals list in colors. You can use "Mind-Mapping" and put the goals anywhere on the page rather than in linear order. Don't forget to add sub-goals with lines linking them to the major goals. Decorate the poster with colorful pictures or stickers. Draw things on the poster or paste on pictures you cut out of magazines, whatever appeals to you. It should be exciting and make you feel great when you look at it.

☐ **Create a collage to support your vision.** To make a goals collage, cut out pictures and words that you like from magazines and glue them onto a piece of paper the size of a placemat or larger. Be sure to put your photograph on the page as well. Display it in a location where you notice it at least once a day. One idea is to laminate the paper at a copy shop and use it on your dining table to remind you of what you want to create.

☐ **Use images that inspire.** Find an inspiring picture and write a few motivating words on it. Try writing the words with brightly colored markers or finger paints. Hang this picture on your wall at home or at work to inspire you and build energy for your goals. You can use pictures of anything including animals, nature, and mythical figures.

☐ **Try writing goals with non-dominant hand.** One interesting technique that can help break through linear thinking and tap creative thinking is to write goals and detailed plans with the opposite hand from the one you normally use. This technique can reveal hidden aspects of plans and dreams and new goals, too. According to a recent article in the magazine *Utne Reader*, this process is an excellent technique for tapping into creativity and intuition.

☐ **Use the computer to support you in reaching goals.** There are many ways you can put goals on the computer. Scan your collage or a poster/picture that inspires you into your computer, convert it to a graphic and use it as wallpaper. You can create a screensaver with your scanned images or just put up a digital "post it" with your goals list. You can also create your own custom posters, personal stickers, and printouts using a graphics program.

Remember, the only way to reach a goal is to have a goal! As George Bernard Shaw once said, "Imagination is the beginning of creation. You imagine what you desire, you will what you imagine and at last you create what you will."