Nurturing the Gifted Child

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How can adults keep gifted kids from feeling like they are on edge? And maybe help to prevent social isolation?

Adapted from J. Delisle, 2006.
Don’t forget they are children first and gifted second.

Don’t expect them to be perfect all the time.

Don’t expect them to always act like adults.

Adapted from J. Delisle, 2006.
• Don’t put gifted kids on constant display in front of other adults.
• Don’t put gifted kids on constant display in front of other children (and siblings).
• Don’t expect them to be natural leaders.

Adapted from J. Delisle, 2006.
Areas Where Gifted Children Sometimes Struggle...

- Communication of feelings.
- Feeling free to express frustrations and fears without letting people down or feeling judged.
Areas Where Gifted Children Sometimes Struggle…

- **Motivation.**
  Low achievement.
- **Discipline.**
  Need to learn self-regulation.
- **Stress Management.**
  Overcoming perfection.
Areas Where Gifted Children Sometimes Struggle…

- **Peer Relationships.**
  Difficulty fitting in with others.

- **Sibling Relationships.**
  Birth order and sibling rivalry.

- **Parent Relationships.**
  Encouragement versus pressure.
Asynchronous Development

Intellectual

Emotional

Physical

Social
When I ask you to listen to me
And you start giving me advice,
You have not done what I asked.

When I ask you to listen to me
And you begin to tell me why
I shouldn’t feel that way,
you are trampling on my feelings.
When I ask you to listen to me
And you feel you have to do something
To solve my problem,
You have failed me,
Strange as that may seem.
Listen! All I ask is that you listen.
Don’t talk or do—just hear me.
We need to listen to them!

How else can we know what our gifted kids need or want?

“Be a good listener. Your ears will never get you in trouble!”

- Frank Tyger
It’s easy to say you’re a good listener… It’s harder to be one.
Poor Listening Styles

- **Spacing Out** is when someone is talking to us but we ignore them because our mind is wandering off in another galaxy.

I’d rather be...

blah blah blah
Poor Listening Styles

- **Pretend Listening**
- We still aren’t paying much attention to the other person, but at least we pretend we are by making insightful comments at key junctures.
Poor Listening Styles

- Selective Listening
  - We pay attention only to the part of the conversation that interests us.
Poor Listening Styles

- **Word Listening**

- We are paying attention to what someone is saying, but we listen only to the words, not to the body language, we miss out on what’s really being said.

Did she say she wants to watch football?

Let’s not watch football tonight?
Self-Centered Listening

happens when we see everything from our own point of view. Instead of standing in another’s shoes, we want them to stand in ours.

Everyone knows dogs are smarter than cats!
Poor Listening Styles

- Judging

- Sometimes, as we listen to others, we make judgments (*in the back of our minds*) about them and what they’re saying.

He’s crazy!
Genuine listening is...

53% Body Language
40% Tone/Feeling
7% Words
Other Ways to Help

- “Talk about feelings openly and honestly. Share your own feelings when appropriate.”
  - Judy Galbraith, M.A.

- “There’s nothing that can help you understand your beliefs more than trying to explain them to an inquisitive child.”
  - Frank A. Clark
Help them to understand that things will always get better.

“Birds sing after a storm, why shouldn’t we?”

- Rose Kennedy
Do you ever feel like this?

You’re not sure if your gifted child is really listening to you?
Are You Too Critical?
Put Downs VS. Positive Statements

- Instead of this...
  “If you’re so smart, then why are your grades so bad?”

- Try this...
  “How do you feel about your report card?”
Are You Too Critical?
Put Downs VS. Positive Statements

- **Instead of this...**
  “Why can’t you do this right? What’s wrong with you?”

- **Try this...**
  “You might be able to do a better job if you....”
Are You Too Critical?
Put Downs VS. Positive Statements

- Instead of this...
  “You’re smart, you don’t need my help. Go find the answer yourself.”

- Try this...
  “Sure, I don’t mind helping. All people need help sometimes.”
Are You Too Critical?
Put Downs VS. Positive Statements

- Instead of this...
  “That was a dumb thing for you to do. I thought you were smarter than that.”

- Try this...
  “Okay, so you made a mistake. What did you learn from this?”
Are You Too Critical?
Put Downs VS. Positive Statements

- **Instead of this...**
  "Quit acting like a baby, act your age."

- **Try this...**
  "Do you want to talk about what’s bothering you?"
Are You Too Critical?
Put Downs VS. Positive Statements

- **Instead of this...**
  “That was dumb. For someone so smart you sure don’t have any common sense.”

- **Try this...**
  “Everyone makes mistakes. What can you do better next time?”
The Walking Argument

How many times have you heard, “That’s not fair!”?? One of the most disconcerting qualities of the gifted is their tendency to argue with everyone about everything. This is particularly true of the highly gifted, who have an inherent need for precision in thought and language.

-Linda Kreger Silverman, Ph.D., Gifted Development Center
The Walking Argument
Here are some tips to help...

- Try not to feel threatened by the child’s need to argue.
- Some minds need to argue as a form of exercise.
The Walking Argument
Here are some tips to help...

▪ Be clear about what is negotiable and what is not.

▪ If you have firm standards on certain issues, (e.g., name calling is not allowed, everybody helps, etc.), the child will learn to respect those boundaries.
The Walking Argument
Here are some tips to help...

- Appeal to the child’s growing sense of fairness.
- Ask, “Is this ‘fair’ for just you or is it fair for everyone, including me?”
Help the child understand the feelings of others.

The need to be right can be tempered by helping the child understand other people’s feelings and reactions to their arguments.
Discuss mercy versus justice.

Talk about values of mercy and justice. Then look for applications of both in various situations in real life, books, and the media. When is mercy more appropriate than justice?
Be a role model of appreciation for other views.

Children learn what they see. Do you have an acute need to be right that you are inadvertently teaching through your actions?
The Walking Argument
Here are some tips to help...

- Use humor.
- When all else fails, laughter will often times help the child to snap out of his/her mood and realize it wasn’t that important to begin with.
The Walking Argument
Here are some tips to help...

- **Seek counseling.**
- If the child or other family members are terribly threatened unless they are right all the time, this is a sign of low self-esteem and may require some professional assistance.
Closing Thoughts

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

“The child supplies the power but the parents have to do the steering.”

-Benjamin Spock, Dr. Spock's Baby and Child Care