

COMPILED AND EDITED BY TINA HARLOW



# HELPING GIFTED KIDS THRIVE

INSIGHTS FROM THE EXPERTS

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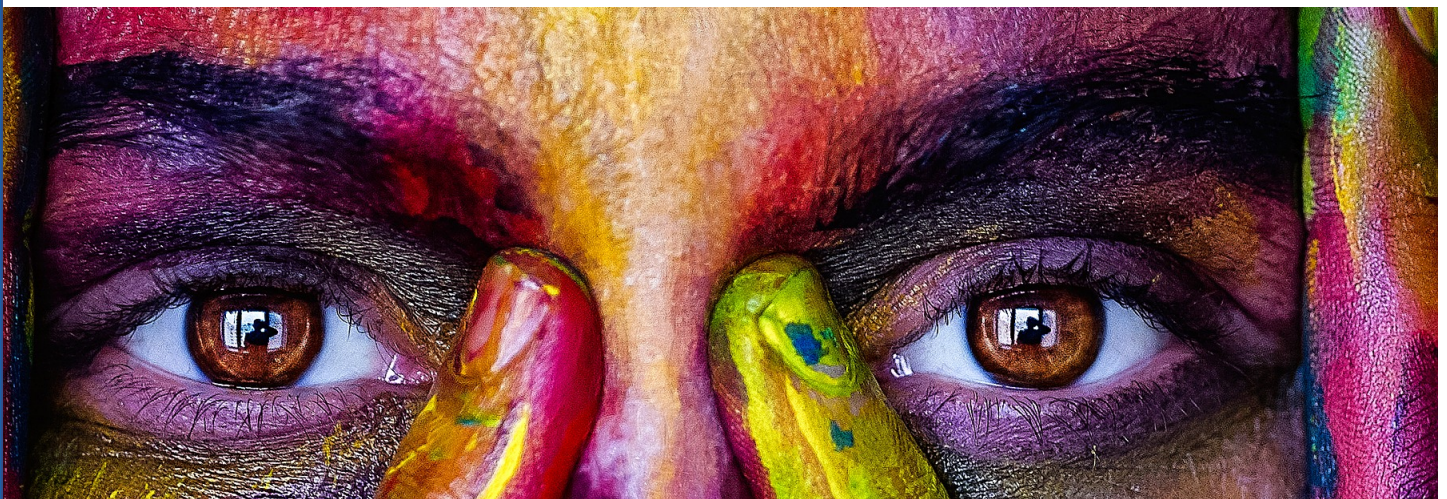
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For parents of gifted children  
who love so deeply,  
advocate so passionately,  
and seek so tirelessly.

WE SEE YOU.



# Introduction

Dear Parents of Gifted Children,

I am moved, on a daily basis, by the tireless love and effort that I see in you. The funny thing is...most of you have no idea how exceptional you are. You question and doubt yourselves, but you are some of the most dedicated parents I know.

It is not easy raising a gifted child today. The dawning of technology has initiated one of the greatest societal changes in history. Suddenly, we find ourselves holding humanity in the palm of our hands. We are parenting our highly sensitive, intense, anxious children in a world for which there is no manual.

In my therapeutic work, I have observed a high level of anxiety that seems to permeate the entire family system. Parents are so worried about the future of their children and are desperately seeking guidance to alleviate these fears.

After seeing this elevated anxiety repeatedly in my practice, talking with other professionals and participating in online forums, I knew that parents of gifted children were in need of a map to navigate this complex jungle. In efforts to provide parents with a comprehensive guide, I decided to reach out to leading experts in the

field of giftedness.

I contacted 26 experts and asked them one simple question:

**“WHAT ONE THING CAN PARENTS DO NOW TO HELP THEIR GIFTED CHILD TO THRIVE IN THE FUTURE?”**

Of course, there is no “one thing,” but this question resulted in a rich compilation of timeless advice.

This group of therapists, educators, authors and advocates, ventured beyond their professional experiences to offer insights from their own personal parenting journeys. Each response is heartfelt and poignant.

The majority of responses are transcribed interviews and, therefore, have a conversational tone. The interviews range in length with each containing invaluable wisdom that hold the power to positively impact the way we parent.

It is my hope that the ripple effects of this collaboration of love and support will enable our children not just to survive, but thrive beyond measure.

May the world flourish in their hands.





# THE QUESTION

**What one thing can  
parents do now to  
help their gifted child  
to thrive in the future?**



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# 1

# FOSTER ACCOUNTABILITY



Ed Amend

*“Giftedness can be used to explain behavior, but it should never excuse behavior.”*

**Edward R. Amend, Psy.D.**, is a practicing clinical psychologist at Amend Psychological Services, P.S.C., in Lexington, Kentucky. He is licensed in both Kentucky and Ohio. In his practice, Dr. Amend focuses on the social, emotional, and educational needs of gifted and talented youth, adults, and their families. He provides evaluations and therapy, facilitates child and parent discussion groups, and offers consultation and training for school personnel. Dr. Amend is co-author of two award-winning books: *A Parent's Guide to Gifted Children* and *Misdiagnosis and Dual Diagnoses of Gifted Children and Adults: ADHD, Bipolar, OCD, Asperger's, Depression, and Other Disorders* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). As a strong advocate for the gifted population, Dr. Amend's years of service have included the Board of Directors of Supporting Emotional Needs of Gifted; President of the Kentucky Association for Gifted Education; Chair for the National Association for Gifted Children Counseling and Guidance Network; and consultant to the Davidson Institute for Talent Development. He speaks locally and nationally on issues related to giftedness.

Some parents confuse the idea of an explanation with an excuse. Giftedness can explain a child's behavior, but it should never excuse inappropriate behavior. Sometimes we say, "Well, the kid is gifted. That's why this happens." Yes, that explains it, but it should not make inappropriate behavior acceptable. Yes, he is gifted and that high energy level combined with the lack of engagement in the classroom may explain why he is running around the room doing handstands better than a label like ADHD. While giftedness doesn't excuse that behavior, it can be used to begin to design interventions to address that interfering behavior.

So, what can parents do now to avoid that confusion between explanation and excuse?

Parents can validate that gifted children are different and often feel different from age-peers in many ways. They can foster an understanding in the child of what it means to be a gifted individual. They can communicate an acceptance of self and others, while not allowing giftedness to define the child.

Parents can teach children to acknowledge their role and foster accountability. Unfortunately, this does not always happen in the world. We blame—everything is someone

else's fault. While blaming others can temporarily raise one's self-esteem, blaming others and deflecting responsibility is not healthy or productive. You cannot live successfully in the real world if you blame others for everything that goes wrong. Everyone needs to look at the role they play in every situation, which is not always easy or comfortable to do.

Parents can educate themselves about the needs of gifted kids, understand how they are different, and recognize that giftedness doesn't define them. It is a piece of who they are. You cannot deal with behavior that is driven by giftedness by taking giftedness out of the equation just as you can't buy pants if you don't know how tall somebody is. You have to incorporate giftedness into the process of growth, development, or education just as you factor height into buying pants. The more parents understand, the better. They are able to validate and communicate acceptance and recognition in a positive way that separates the deed from the doer and the behavior from the child. It separates the giftedness from the overall aspect of who the child is. In the end, this will lead parents to refrain from excusing inappropriate behavior on the



basis of giftedness.

If parents foster accountability, it will give children an appropriate sense of who they are. If children can acknowledge that they are kids with strengths and weaknesses, then as they venture into adulthood, they will feel like it is okay to have strengths *and* weaknesses. Often when I speak, I ask parents, "How many of you are gifted?" Very few parents raise their hand, but we know that gifted kids often come from bright parents. When parents are uncomfortable with their own giftedness, they may not see it as a good thing to foster in their children.

We can raise a generation of people who are comfortable with their giftedness just like we have people who are comfortable with their ability in sports. When it comes to sports, people do not shy away from showing and sharing their strengths. However, when it comes to school and academic endeavors, people are often less comfortable in acknowledging their extraordinary abilities.

If we can raise a generation of kids who are comfortable with themselves, who are clear on their strengths and weaknesses, and who take responsibility for their behavior, the world will be better for it.



## RESOURCES

RECENTLY CO-AUTHORED BOOKS:

[\*Misdiagnosis and Dual Diagnosis of Gifted Children and Adults: ADHD, Bipolar, OCD, Asperger's, Depression and Other Disorders \(2<sup>nd</sup> Edition\)\*](#)

[\*Twice Exceptional\*](#)

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## 2

# SEE THEIR UNIQUENESS

*“Let them experience a sense of belonging based on who they are instead of what they achieve.”*

**Anne Beneventi** is Director of the Annemarie Roeper Method of Qualitative Assessment (QA) and Annemarie's Roeper's successor. She has a private practice evaluating children for giftedness using QA and consulting with families and schools to provide appropriate educational and emotional support for gifted children. Anne served as past Chair of the Global Awareness Network of the National Association for Gifted Children, is an Associate of the Gifted Development Center and serves on the board of Gifted Homeschool Forum. She is the 2015 recipient of SENG's Lifetime Achievement Award. Anne Co-founded Helios School for the Gifted in California where she assesses applicants for admissions using Qualitative Assessment.



**Anne Beneventi**



The one thing parents can do is support who their child is rather than what their child achieves.

I evaluate children using the Annamarie Roeper method of Qualitative Assessment. The first goal of this assessment is to get a glimpse of who the child is and support that essence. It's the non-physical part that's still intact, if we don't socialize it out of them. We want to recognize and amplify the child's unique nature, because within it is their strength and their calling. In order to glimpse a child's uniqueness, we meet the child with no expectation and curiously observe to see what emerges. Where are their joys and interests?

Parents are well meaning, and of course, want the best for their children, but sometimes they are tempted to dictate who their children will be and the path they will take. Our traditional education system is focused on conformity. It is about succeeding, but with a very narrow definition of success that can deny the individual's essence. I see the race toward achievement as having nothing to do with the true nature of the child.

It is important to create opportunities for children without expectations. Praise them for their qualities that have nothing

to do with achievement, such as kindness, empathy and bravery. Tell them you are glad there are people like them in the world. Let them experience a sense of belonging that is based on who they are instead of their achievements.

I see kids so worried about doing things perfectly that it stifles creativity. Sometimes gifted kids feel abandoned because they aren't recognized for who they are. Everyone longs to be known for their genuine and authentic self. When children abandon their true selves, they then also abandon the idea that they have something of value to give. They acquiesce to fit in. They construct a false self. When this happens, we lose their contribution, brilliance and individuality. Children can lose their sense of wonder, their purpose and their resourcefulness. They can spend their lives without making a true contribution because no one supported their true nature.

I think gifted children can feel lonely because there are parts of themselves that they cannot share. Sometimes it is because if they share, teachers or parents expect even more from them than they are already giving. Sometimes children feel their talent over defines them. They reject it because it's only a small part of who they are.

I co-founded a school for gifted children. On the surface it is about gaining skills, but really it is about the community children make for themselves and their connection to others. It is the first place some children feel accepted and understood.

If we teach children to trust their unique voice, it will benefit them throughout their lives. They need reflection and validation of their feelings. Children need time to self-reflect to understand who they really are, but often there is no time. Kids are over-scheduled with everyone else's agenda. Parents have such good intentions. They see the future as competitive, and they just want their kids to have a chance, so they parent defensively.

We often don't realize, though, the very thing that would give our children emotional well-being and a meaningful contribution in life, is shut down before we even see what it is. We are putting all of our children on the same track and, in doing so, we are missing their unique essence.



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# 3

## COMMUNICATE FEELINGS

*“Focusing on verbalization, self-reflection and sharing of feelings enables children to have higher emotional intelligence.”*



**Terry Bradley, BA, MA** is a gifted education consultant specializing in the social and emotional aspects of giftedness. Terry is the Talented and Gifted (TAG) advisor at Fairview High School in Boulder. She is past President of the Colorado Association of Gifted and Talented (CAGT) and serves

on the Executive Board. Terry was a founding member of Boulder Valley Gifted and Talented (BVGT) and served as president for seven years. She is a facilitator/trainer for SENG (Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted) and a national SMPG (SENG Model Parent Group) facilitator.

Terry provides services to many schools and school districts in Colorado and select cities around the USA. She leads district in-services, facilitates student discussion groups and parent support groups, and is a presenter at regional and national gifted conferences.

Terry received the “Parent Of The Year” award from CAGT in 2005 and was recipient of The Boettcher Foundation Teacher Recognition Award in 2015.



I am the GT Coordinator at a large high school that is a magnet for GT students because of our rigorous academics, highly acclaimed performing arts, standing in various sports, and meaningful leadership opportunities. These are all great things; there's also a lot of competition, perfectionism, higher expectations, and concern about being good enough. I see the stress and anxiety that the students frequently deal with. Many of their parents reach out to me for help because their once happy, ambitious, positive children have become hard to communicate with, stressed, anxious, and depressed.

So I have definite opinions about this question, and what we can do, early on, to help our gifted children thrive in the future... it has to do with becoming aware of our feelings and getting comfortable expressing them.

I think parents need to encourage specific vocabulary as their children learn to speak their own words. The more specific, the better insight into exactly how you are feeling, what caused it, and what you should do about it. For instance, if a child is sad we need to dig deeper. We become "sad" for a number of reasons, just as we become "angry" for various reasons. If you are sad because you're lonely and have no friends to play with vs. being sad

because you can't find your favorite toy, the way to solve each sadness requires different problem solving.

I vividly remember when my first-grade son would come home sad from school I would ask WHY he was sad. He would say "I don't know, I'm just sad." Kids often have the feeling without being able to discern the origin. I would help him figure it out by compartmentalizing his day. I would say "Did something happen with your teacher?" "Did something happen with your friends?" "Did something happen with your sister before school?" I remember once when all of those were met with "No." I kept going, "Did something happen at recess?" And then the lightbulb went on. "Yes. It was recess. The other kids wouldn't let me play football with them." We talked about how that felt and what options he had the next time that happened. After we talked, he happily headed off to do something else.

It's also important to share some of YOUR feelings with your child. Children need to know that we all have ups and downs in our days. We all have stress. It's what you do about it that really matters. You can let some things go, but other things need to be faced and dealt with. This helps them to know that talking



about feelings is a helpful thing. This is good practice for managing emotions.

I want to suggest a practice that can be done with children... My students and I frequently talk about our "emotional temperatures." On a scale from 1 to 10, 1 being the worst day of your life and 10 being the best day of your life, what is your current temperature and why? This practice encourages self-reflection and interpersonal awareness. As our children get older, they are just in "go" mode and don't pause to process their feelings. This activity encourages them to do so. It also helps us adults to get to them before the crisis point. For many of our over-scheduled, overly involved kids, pausing to reflect can feel like a guilty pleasure. Yet, it is crucial. Focusing on verbalization, self-reflection and sharing of feelings enables children to

have higher emotional intelligence. It improves their mental strength and their equilibrium. This goes a long way in helping them understand and interact with others, and will help them to thrive in the future.



#### WORKSHOP:

Terry is currently leading a Professional Development Workshop for educators called [Creating and Facilitating Discussion Groups for Gifted Students](#).

In this workshop, Terry provides training to educators on the social and emotional aspects of giftedness which includes interactive activities to use with students.

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# 4

## USE LANGUAGE THAT REFLECTS THEIR VALUES



Maggie Brown

*"We have to start naming these things because otherwise that child is going to hear other words that are pathologizing."*

**Maggie Brown** is a counselor, therapist, and coach specializing in working with gifted adults and families. As a research psychologist, she is also currently conducting an international study on giftedness. She believes that gifts, talents, creativity and aspirations will thrive if built on a firm foundation of values, and a positive sense of identity tied to those personal values. She integrates this belief into her work with people of all ages, including hundreds of families around the world in 1:1 meetings and larger workshops. Maggie has a solid grounding in neurobiology which she uses to assist clients in understanding the emotional and physiological bases of intensities, and how to live well with these. A gifted woman herself, and mother of a gifted son, Maggie understands the courage and creativity required to step out of the box to make a difference.



If I have to choose one thing, it would be for parents to help their children understand who they are at a deep values or morals place. We tend to focus on things that show up on the surface of a child, whether we call that achievement, emotionality or behavior. It is important for children's identity formation that they understand what drives them internally.

In my experience gifted children have a cluster of values from a young age that underlie the emotional issues they experience. Words like enthusiasm, determination and zeal... those inner words have been neglected as have qualities like justice and fairness.

We have a vocabulary that talks about the surface, so we tend to focus on behavior, without naming what motivates the behavior. Therefore, kids, parents, teachers and others fill in the blank to explain with words that are, unfortunately, pathologizing. We make negative statements such as "you're just too excited" or "calm down" instead of "There's that enthusiasm again." Or the child may hear "You're way ahead of everyone else. Settle down and wait for the others to catch up." We need to go much deeper into who that child is internally. In this case, maybe we are seeing

enthusiasm and curiosity!

If we see determination or excellence, we usually say, "good job" which puts the focus on behavior. We can approach this from a very different and much more positive angle if we instill in our children from an early age that they are seen for their inner qualities. Then when they complete homework thoroughly or spend 6 hours huddled over legos, the parent and child know that both have to do with the child's values of excellence and determination. We do not need to over-celebrate them for that, but simply acknowledge and name the qualities, because the child understands that this is part of who they are. Empty praise doesn't have a place anymore. What's needed is a vocabulary.

We need to start naming these things because otherwise our children are going to hear other words that are pathologizing. That is just the way it is when you are not in the norm.

Almost every gifted person that I have worked with has had, even when very young, a strong reaction to injustice. I would encourage parents to really look at words like justice and fairness so their children can more easily understand and articulate their inner experiences now and later in life. For example, if children are taught to name their values at



home, then at school when someone says, “share that toy” they can understand their own reaction as being about fairness. “That child has five toys and I only have one and that is challenging my sense of fairness.” That information can then be processed on a deeper level and becomes about fair sharing rather than bad behavior. This helps everyone understand what underlies a strong reaction, now and later in life.

I suggest that parents reflect deeply on the language they are using with their children. We often ask “what do you want to do about that?” It is easy to change the language to “how would you like to be around this?” and refer to the child’s values. It moves it inside. It’s just a simple shift in language that can make a big difference: from doing to being who you are.



Maggie Brown is a New Zealand-based therapist. She will be in New York May – August, 2018 and is available for therapeutic work and workshops.

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# 5

## BE CONFIDENT

*“The thing that I see most often is that the intuition, the gut, of gifted parents is almost always correct.”*

**Stephen H. Chou, Psy.D.** is a supervising clinical psychologist in private practice in California and Colorado and the Director of Training and Research at the Summit Center in the San Francisco Bay/Los Angeles area. Dr. Chou is also the Co-Founder/Director of 2e Assessment and Research at FlexSchool. Dr. Chou is a former Director with the Board of Directors with Supporting the Emotional Needs of the Gifted (SENG). Dr. Chou is currently an adjunct professor with the University of Denver, and was an adjunct professor at Alliant International University – California School of Professional Psychology in San Francisco, CA and Hong Kong, a supervising clinical psychologist at the Chinatown Child Development Center through the Department of Public Health with the City and County of San Francisco,



**Stephen Chou**

and the Executive Director of the Big Sibling Program. Dr. Chou practices from a developmental, strengths-based, and multicultural stance through individual and family counseling, as well as intellectual, educational, behavioral, emotional, and neuropsychological assessments, with children, families, and adults, especially with those who are gifted, talented, twice-exceptional (2e), and multiexceptional. Dr. Chou also presents at state, national, and international conferences on a variety of topics in giftedness.



You are the parents of a gifted or 2e or multi-e child. That, in and of itself, means you are already fantastic and you already know what you need to know to be a good parent. Truly, finding your own sense of self and your confidence in who you are as parents is one of the most valuable things you can do for your child. This kind and flexible fortitude is the foundation for the healthy development in your gifted/2e/multi-e child.

One of the things I unfortunately see most often and most anguishingly is, though the intuition (your gut) of you as gifted parents is almost always genuine and deeply YES, parenting (guiding and caring for your child) is regrettably deviated and lost because professionals, who assumedly know more about the body or the mind or education, steer you towards a different path; this is not out of bad intentions, but mostly out of a lack of education and lens that is not a gifted or 2e lens.

One of the things I think is most important is to stay true north and do what you think you know is best – trust your intuition – of course, with consultation from professionals who know

and live gifted/2e when you need. I think parents love and know their kids most and best and they have their own history of living from which is oftentimes the best for their own children to learn.

Believe in you. You may not always know what you're doing is right when "it" happens, nor will you always be perfect in your parenting, or have all the answers, or, or, or... Gifted minds often can go a thousand miles a second as well as going into a million directions at once – that's not just our kids, but us, too. When we are dealing with things that are most important as parents, which is usually our kids, sometimes those thoughts get supersized. When that happens, it is often even more difficult and can bring even more doubt because you can explore a myriad of different possibilities, some of which are not always good. When you center yourself, relax and find your peace, it helps your child to find their own peace together with you in the torrent that is life. Again, believe in you as parents. Then, our gifted kids intuit from you that they are standing on a good foundation that comes from a lot of experience and living and love. The calm that is able to weather many storms in which



you are parenting, albeit not always easy, is still a goal. You have a target. You're in the know. Kids have a great radar and know whether or not you have no idea what you're talking about or if you actually know or desire to find out. They see you, and you see them.

You, as the parents of your gifted/2e/multi-e child, see your child best. They need to be seen, in a world that may not always fully understand them. You see their strengths and/or challenges most clearly. When parents truly see their kids, then the kids have a haven in which to be safe – to laugh, to cry, to be angry, to be anguished... They know you as their parents understand them and love them above all else, unconditionally. When it feels like no one else in the world does, at least they know their parents

are there with them and for them, because we love them. Believing in yourself helps you believe and love your kids.



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# 6

## NURTURE CREATIVITY

*“Creativity is very much a cognitive and intellectual capacity needed for problem-solving in our society today.”*

**Susan Daniels, Ph.D.**, is co-founder and Educational Director of the Summit Center as well as Professor of Educational Psychology and Counseling at California State University – San Bernardino. At the Summit Center, Dr. Daniels provides Differentiated Educational Plans for children and adolescents as part of the Gifted Comprehensive and Gifted Complex Assessments. She analyzes and synthesizes the data for each individual, making recommendations for appropriate academic differentiation, enrichment, acceleration, and more. She is also available for consultation with families and schools. Dr. Daniels is an internationally recognized expert in the field of gifted education, social-emotional development of the gifted child, creativity, and visual learning and teaching, with numerous publications and presentations given at educational and psychological conferences each year. She also specializes in the social and emotional development – and related intensity and sensitivity – of



Susan Daniels

gifted individuals across the lifespan. Dr. Daniels is co-author of *Raising Creative Kids* (Great Potential Press, 2013), and co-editor and co-author of *Living with Intensity* (Great Potential Press, 2008). Her most recent book, *Visual Learning and Teaching: An Essential Guide for Educators K-8*, will be released by Free Spirit Publishing in August, 2018. In addition to consulting and writing, Dr. Daniels is a Co-founder of [Camp Summit](#), a residential summer camp for gifted youth.



Creativity is an innate capacity, a human birthright. As parents, we are often keenly aware of our child's intellectual, emotional, social, physical and spiritual development. However, we often overlook the importance of our children's creative development. Nurturing creativity is essential for the psychological and even the physical well-being of our children. It is through imagination and creativity that our kids can see possibilities and have the potential for making a positive difference in our world.

Research shows that children experience a drop in creativity at about the 4th grade. That is, in part, because most schools do not actively nurture creativity. So it is up to parents to find ways to stimulate their children's creativity.

Creativity is very much a cognitive and intellectual capacity needed for problem-solving in our society today. It involves intellectual, social and emotional implications. If we can think flexibly, we can see, and potentially understand, others with differences. We can entertain other perspectives. All of these benefits make our children healthier and more adaptable.

Attending to creativity is great fun. I encourage parents to have a creative zone in their

Home: a space where children are free to make messes, design, build and experiment with objects and ideas. If parents don't have much space in their home, this is an opportunity for creativity! Some parents I have interviewed keep boxes of creative implements under a table or their child's bed.

There are plenty of books that parents can use as resources. In fact, I just co-authored one titled "Raising Creative Kids." One thing I encourage parents to do with their child is to create nature journals. Parents can invite their child to observe something very carefully through a magnifying glass and then draw it in great detail. If the child has the manual skills, they can look at their fingerprint and recreate it. Parents can ask children two curious questions that spark creative thinking: What does it remind you of? What does it make you think of?

A primary characteristic of highly creative people is a desire to seek out the unusual and creative aspects in their world. We can develop that perception and mindset in ourselves. Observe aloud to your child when you see a chair with a unique design, notice patterns in leaves, or witness the creativity of others in web design, drawing or writing.

We can weave simple, creative approaches into daily conversations with our children. We can engage their imagination and challenge them to shift their perceptions. We can take a different viewpoint. These approaches provide children with the flexibility necessary to navigate our rapidly changing world.

Another characteristic common among creative people is that they need alone time. As a culture, we are prone to over-scheduling - our kids and ourselves. When our children are intense and wound up, parents can say, "I need a time out." Time out can be an option, not a punishment. Model for your child that it is okay for them to take time to just lie on their bed and think. On a nice day, go outside, lie on the ground with your child and watch the clouds. Ask "What does it look like?" and

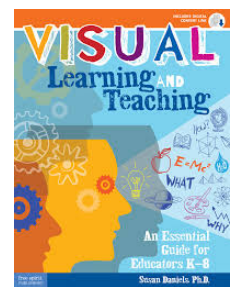
"What does it remind you of?" Creativity is available to everyone.

Every parent can be a creative parent. By doing so, in very easy and accessible ways, we can encourage our child's creativity. This provides a lifelong avenue for preparing our kids to thrive in the future.



**NEW RELEASE!**

Susan's New Book, *Visual Learning and Teaching: An Essential Guide for Educators K-8* will be released in August.



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# 7

## FOSTER CULTURAL AWARENESS & SENSITIVITY



*“To not be culturally adaptable – sensitive, aware, and skilled - could compromise children’s ability to reach the height of their success and potential.”*

**Donna Y. Ford, PhD**, is Professor of Education and Human Development and Cornelius Vanderbilt Endowed Chair at Vanderbilt University. She is the former 2013 Harvie Branscomb Distinguished Professor and former Betts Chair of Education & Human Development. Dr. Ford currently holds a joint appointment in the Department of Special Education and Department of Teaching and Learning.

Professor Ford conducts research primarily in gifted education and multicultural/urban education. She has written over 200 articles and book chapters; she has made over 1,000 presentations at professional conferences and organizations, and in school districts.

She is the author/co-author of several books, including ***Gumbo for the Soul: Liberating Memoirs and Stories to Inspire Females of Color*** (2017); ***Telling Our Stories: Culturally Different Adults Reflect on Growing Up in Single-Parent Families*** (2017); ***R.A.C.E. Mentoring Through Social Media: Black and Hispanic Scholars Share Their Journey in the Academy*** (2017); ***Recruiting and Retaining Culturally Different Students in Gifted Education*** (2013),



My responses are going to be based primarily with gifted Black and Hispanic children in mind and others who are often underrepresented in gifted programs.

We are living in a nation that is very diverse across racial, ethnic and economic lines. This diversity is not going to decrease. So it behooves us all to expose our gifted children to other children from a variety of racial, ethnic and economic backgrounds. This is going to prepare all students to be able to thrive in the future. No matter where they go in the United States or internationally, our children are going to be around people from different backgrounds. To *not* be culturally adaptable – sensitive, aware, and skilled - could compromise children's ability to reach the height of their success and potential.

We have to teach our children the value of having a work ethic. Too often, we think that work should come easy to children who are gifted and, as a result, too many don't learn the power of effort. If they are going to be successful in the future, they have to know that no matter how smart they are,

effort is critical to success. We have to nurture gifts and talents, and that means finding out what they are interested in. Unfortunately, I think that some gifted parents impose their interests on their gifted children rather than allowing them to discover their own interests. Therefore, exposure is critical. Black and Hispanic children need to be exposed to a variety of extra-curricular experiences outside of academics. A child could be a scholar-athlete or a scholar-musician. If we just focus on intelligence and academics, we are going to lose a lot in terms of what our children can contribute to the larger society.

I would like to encourage parents to refrain from obsessing over the cognitive and academic gifts and talents of their children. We must help our children to be well-rounded and address social and emotional needs as well. So when it comes to gifted children of color, addressing social and emotional needs means that you have to hone in on a racial identity. For students of color to be successful, they have to love the skin they are in and have positive racial identity and pride.



Parents can make sure that their children are exposed to children from other backgrounds and read multicultural literature. I am not just speaking to one group here. It is important that *all* parents expose their children to others who are different from them. It's important to have open conversations in the home about social issues that are age and developmentally appropriate. The key is interaction and exposure. Don't try to hide the issues and ills going on in our world. Our children are going to know about them.

The rate of hate crimes within our public schools is actually increasing. When you look at hate crime statistics, the most prevalent place for hate crimes is within our own neighborhoods. The second highest is driving on the streets and highways. The third most

prevalent place for hate crimes is within educational institutions. These statistics give me such a sense of urgency. Many of our gifted children are likely going to go on college and could end up with a roommate from a totally racially different background. Are we preparing them for that?

I know this sounds pie-in-the-sky, but I really believe that if we, as parents, foster cultural adaptability in our children, we can bring more harmony to our world.



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# Embrace the Futures of Gifted LGBTQ Youth

**Terry Friedrichs, Ph. D., Ed. D.,** has served for 40 years as a teacher, advocate, and youth-group leader for gifted LGBTQ youth. In this capacity, he has advised countless parents about how to inform, learn from, protect, educate, and inspire LGBTQ and straight youth on sexual- and gender-minority issues. He served for many years as inaugural Chair of the NAGC GLBTQ Network, and now works as Communications Officer of that group. He also directs Friedrichs Education in suburban St. Paul, MN, an assessment, instructional, and consulting center for a wide range of gifted and special needs students, and can be reached at [terry@friedrichseducation.com](mailto:terry@friedrichseducation.com)



*“For both LGBTQ and other youth, we need to reach out beyond the pain to embrace the futures of gifted LGBTQ children!”*



According to research, approximately 30% of gifted kids are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning (LGBTQ). When we, as parents and other caring adults, support justice for LGBTQ and other under-represented groups, we really help our own kids, whether they are sexual or gender minorities or not. Through our home-based social-emotional affirmation, our advocacy for bright LGBTQ futures, our teaching about LGBTQ people and their achievements, and our seeking LGBTQ-supportive school environments, we can greatly assist gifted LGBTQ youth, their non-LGBTQ peers, and us. Our courage and compassion can make a difference in many lives.

For all youth, parents and other adults can start supporting gifted LGBTQ children by making their homes affirming places that truly honor differences in all people. We can be thoughtful and supportive in our language. For example, we can avoid assumptions about partners being of different genders and about workers in different fields being either straight or LGBTQ. In short, we can expand on the journey on which our culture has been engaged for some time, looking beyond the simple views that

“boys are like this” and “girls are like that.” We can discuss news events affecting LGBTQ people, emphasizing our support for equity for those who are under-represented. If a child mentions support for the LGBTQ community, we can affirm those sentiments. We can provide children with opportunities to meet community adults and youth who are sexual and gender minorities. We can speak often and positively about both the similarities and differences between straight and LGBTQ people. Many youth already have LGBTQ people in their lives, including aunts, uncles, and family friends, and we can help children forge connections to have individuals in their lives who are like them.

In dealing with LGBTQ and other children, affirm the futures of sexual- and gender-minority youth rather than merely provide those youth with physical and psychological security. Admittedly, there's a lot to worry about out there. There are high rates of harassment, discrimination, and institutional and personal bias against LGBTQ youth and adults and their supporters. However, if we rely solely on a limited game plan of just providing safety, we don't get at the specific LGBTQ nature of

gifted LGBTQ children. We miss opportunities to learn about these youth, and for them to learn about us, as LGBTQ-supportive individuals. When we and our youth learn new things about LGBTQ persons -- through challenging the future, changing discriminatory structures, or simply educating ourselves through information, travel, and personal interactions -- we push forward dynamically toward being creative, self-actualized individuals. We reach beyond our pain to affirm our own futures, as well those of LGBTQ people generally.

During our children's elementary school years, we can speed eventual LGBTQ acceptance by telling these youth that there is much that is exciting, honorable, and interesting about the sexual-and-gender-minority community. If we teach kids about the



centuries-long achievements of LGBTQ people, and about the great things that our youth can do for LGBTQ individuals and causes, then our children can reach out to something truly great. At the secondary level, we as adults can provide English, Science, Health, History, Health, Arts, and other teachable moments in which LGBTQ youth and their peers truly learn about being sexual and gender minorities. We can be more specific about these minorities' joys, sorrows, problems, and solutions. Concerned adults' independent efforts are sometimes quite necessary, since many gifted LGBTQ students and their peers still go without one mention of sexual- and gender-minority people in their entire K-12 school careers.

At school, parents can take additional steps to support gifted LGBTQ children and their peers. If youth attend schools that are blatantly discriminatory, hurtful, or harmful, parents can strive to find other schooling options. Parents should seek options where LGBTQ kids are happily enrolled and where these kids' parents (and LGBTQ parents) are openly, actively, and centrally involved. Examine school and classroom

walls for rainbow flags and other LGBTQ-supportive symbols.

Ask about openly LGBTQ and LGBTQ-supportive teachers and about various curricula that describe sexual-and-gender-minority achievements. Discover whether very advanced LGBTQ-and supportive youth can take courses online or at universities, can do independent studies, or can be mentored in LGBTQ-identified career fields. Help these youth to find books on topics of interest, to start a Gay-Straight Alliance, or to develop a Safe Zone Training Program. As you help your children on LGBTQ-supportive

matters, you will be greeted by social institutions that still lack some acceptance but that now have more informational resources, more-supportive environments, and more legal rights than ever before.

With effort – and enthusiasm – we can help our LGBTQ-and-supportive children move forward toward bright futures.



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# 9

## PURPOSE

*“Children with a purpose, act.”*



**Rosina Gallagher**

**Rosina M. Gallagher, PhD, NCSP,** is a licensed clinical psychologist with more than 30 years experience as a nationally certified school psychologist and educator. Emigrating to the United States from Mexico City in early adolescence, she obtained her doctorate from Loyola University of Chicago, and has served as evaluator of bilingual programs, coordinator of special education, and administrator of gifted programs in a large urban school district. Committed to

supporting diverse student populations, she is the lead author of *Diversity and Equity in Illinois: Responding to Differences within the Gifted Population*, [Educando Hijos Exitosos](#), and book chapters and articles in these areas. Adjunct faculty at several universities, she is a frequent presenter at state, national and international conferences. Dr. Gallagher is current president of the Illinois Fund for Careers in School Psychology Minority Scholarship Program, and former president of the Illinois Association for Gifted Children, the Illinois School Psychologists Association, and the national nonprofit organization, SENG, Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted. She has also served as past chair of the Special Populations Network and member of the Parent Advisory Committee of the National Association for Gifted Children. William and Rosina are blessed with three sons and four grandchildren.

## Children with a purpose, act. From the classroom, to the Olympics, to the March for Our Lives

Guiding children to focus on areas of interest can enlist them to discover their passions and eventually clarify their purpose in life. Allow me to reflect from professional experience and current life events. Five-year-old Ángel's difficulties in acquiring early reading skills waned as his interest in dinosaurs was recognized, nurtured, and validated. By the end of Kindergarten, he was not only reading on grade level, but had become the respected classroom expert, illustrating a book of five major dinosaur types in brilliant detail.

In second grade, Justin's preoccupation with environmental pollution was interfering with his overall academic progress and ability to make friends. He was distraught by peers having commercial bottled water on their desks. Agreeing that staying hydrated helped them to concentrate on their work, Justin, his teacher, classmates and room parents found a solution. They raised funds to purchase a large plastic beverage dispenser, and each student provided his/her own decorated, refillable container. With adult supervision, teams took turns properly refilling the dispenser. Justin became a class leader, recognized for his research and

problem solving skills.

During the 2018 winter Olympics, we read about 9-year-old Jamie who was offered an old, hand-me-down snowboard. The fifth of eight siblings living in the Sierra Nevada mountains, she fell in love with the sport and opted for homeschooling to drill down the slopes 4 to 6 hours a day. At 15, she became the first gold-medalist in women's slopestyle snowboarding and four years later won a second. Her skill mastery, determination and resolve thrilled spectators, worldwide, and she now inspires and mentors future snowboard Olympians.

Teens with a purpose can launch a national movement. In March of 2018, survivors from the tragic shootings at a Parkland high school in Florida united to demand action for gun reform. On television, we could not see the end of the crowds. Hundreds of thousands of demonstrators gathered in the nation's capital and cities across the country chanting, "Enough is enough!" "Never again!" Led by student voices, crowds resolved to be part of the solution: "We don't have to wait for others to keep us safe... Register, bring power to



the polls and show that we matter!"

But interests, passions, and advocacy for social causes continually change, as they rightly should in a lifespan. Thanks to the work of psychologists like Martin Seligman and his colleagues, we can now design strategies to guide children and young people to pursue the positive emotions conducive to a meaningful life.

That is, to review the past with contentment, gratitude and forgiveness. To embrace love, work and play in the present, enjoying the "flow" that can be experienced from our "signature strengths," and finally to envision the future with optimism, hope and resilience. Ultimately, however, researchers in positive psychology poignantly remind us that to pursue a life of purpose and meaning requires "placing our signature strengths and

virtues in the service of something larger than ourselves."\*

\*M. E. Seligman. (2002). *Authentic Happiness: Using the new positive psychology to realize your potential for lasting fulfillment*. New York: Free Press.



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- Supporting the Emotional Needs of the Gifted [www.sengifted.org](http://www.sengifted.org)
- Illinois Fund for Careers in School Psychology Minority Scholarship Program  
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# UNSTRUCTURED PLAY

Tina Harlow, MSW, LCSW is a therapist, speaker, consultant, blogger and founder of Guiding Bright in Steamboat Springs, Colorado. Tina utilizes creativity and fun to help gifted children and families gain a better understanding of themselves and each other while emphasizing the strengths that lie within their neurological differences. Over the last 25 years, Tina's work has traversed a variety of settings including outpatient, day treatment, residential, intensive family treatment, child welfare and even a performing arts camp. Tina has presented at conferences nationally and internationally on the social and emotional aspects of gifted children. In addition to her private practice, she works for Gifted Development Center in Denver and serves as coordinator of the Colorado Consortium of Schools for the Gifted. Tina is a SENG (Supporting the Emotional Needs of the Gifted) mental health provider. She and her husband have two children.



*“So it is up to us, as parents, to put aside our fears, resist conformity, and make unstructured play a priority in our homes.”*

When I think of one thing that has had a positive impact on my children, I picture "Sabonia." You have never heard of it because it exists in our backyard. The neighbors may see this unsightly branch and mud structure as an eyesore. I'm sure the homeowners association would be happy to see it disappear. But for my children, it is their kingdom: a place where they can create freely, strategize on how to defeat imaginary forces, grow their own food, climb, innovate, dig and make their own rules. There is no question in my mind. Much of my children's preparation for life has taken place in Sabonia.

I realize that most children do not have a "Sabonia." Unstructured play has been replaced by structured sports and a myriad of activities. This is what we have been taught to prioritize.

As a child and family therapist specializing in giftedness, I see parents who are absolutely exhausted and overwhelmed. Each day is filled with numerous transitions which take a toll on parents and children alike. Our society is over-scheduled and it is not serving us well.

The June 2012 edition of *Gifted Child Quarterly* contains a wonderful study on play.\* Results of this study suggest that parents should allow time for self-directed play after school and limit scheduled activities. Sadly,

even after play was identified as a core need, the study noted that "students experienced structural barriers for time to play."

We are the barriers. We are getting in their way.

In a 2014 study published in *Frontiers in Psychology*, researchers found that young children who spent more time engaging in open-minded, free-flowing activities displayed higher levels of "self-directed executive functioning."\*

What is executive functioning? It is essentially the set of mental skills primarily controlled by the pre-frontal cortex that enables us to complete tasks. These skills include emotional control, attention, goal-directed persistence, organization, impulse control, task initiation, planning and prioritization. They are the very skills needed to bring all of those amazing ideas to fruition.

In addition to strengthening executive functioning, unstructured play helps build social skills. When children play together, they learn to navigate relationships. Children often struggle at school during recess and lunch because they have difficulty relating with one another when not in the confines of a structured setting.

Sometimes our heightened worry

over their peer interactions incites us to barge into their social life like a bull in a china shop. We take over instead of coaching them on how to maneuver the complex world of human communication.

Our society shows no signs of shifting back to unstructured play in the near future. So it is up to us as parents to put aside our fears, resist conformity, and make unstructured play a priority in our homes.

You don't need a Sabonia. You may not have a backyard. Children just need the space that exists within our own mindset that allows them to create freely without worrying about making a mess. Let them get out every blanket and sheet in the house and create their dream fort with the agreement that they clean it all up when they are done. Let them explore outside, get dirty and engage their imagination. Then smile and rest comfortably in the fact that you are giving them exactly what they need to thrive!



\*Beisser, S.R., Gillespie, C.W., Thacker, V.M., (2012) An Investigation of Play: From the Voices of Fifth-And Sixth-Grade Talented and gifted Students. *Gifted Child Quarterly, Vol 1(June) p. 1.*

\*Barker, J.E., Semenov, A.D., Michaelson, Provan, L.S., Snyder, H.R., and Munakata, Y., (2014) Less-structured time in children's daily lives predicts self-directed executive functioning. *Frontiers in Psychology. Vol. 17(June) p. 26.*



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# Building Resiliency



Jenny Hecht

*“In order to be resilient, one must be able to develop a resilience to shame.”*

**Jenny Hecht, LCSW** has 18 years of experience working with adolescents and adults and is a Certified Yoga Teacher. Her practice is grounded in mindfulness and the examination of thought patterns that limit potential. Jenny's approach is eclectic and client-centered.

Jenny supports the social-emotional needs of gifted individuals with a focus on the existential dilemma. She provides consultation for educational professionals who work with the gifted. Jenny has presented at several conferences, including the SENG (Supporting the Emotional Needs of the Gifted) Annual Conference (2015), the Colorado Association for Gifted and Talented (CAGT) Annual Conference (2013 - 2018), Beyond Giftedness (2014-2018), 2015 State TAG District Coordinators Conference and has presented workshops for gifted youth at the 2017 Profoundly Gifted (PG) Retreat.

Jenny is a regional trainer for Sources of Strength, a wellness and resiliency program that provides evidence-based prevention for suicide, violence, bullying and substance abuse. She is also on the Board of Colie's Closet, a peer education suicide prevention program.

My clients often come to me struggling with some sort of addiction, whether it is to being busy, to devices, to drugs and alcohol, or to self-harm. I strongly believe that all of our addictions are attempts to avoid difficult feelings. Resiliency and distress tolerance are the best gifts we can offer our children, as well as ourselves.

Many gifted individuals are perfectionists and often their self-worth becomes attached to productivity. They may stay busy to avoid difficult feelings. Then there are those who become paralyzed by perfectionism, leading to procrastination, underachievement and lack of motivation. In my experience, everything comes back to internalized shame and a lack of self-compassion and resiliency.

Resiliency as defined by the American Psychological Association is “adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy or significant **ongoing stressors**.” In today’s cultural climate, we are all facing ongoing stressors and for highly sensitive gifted individuals, these stressors often have an even greater impact. Parents can help build resiliency by talking openly about their own difficult feelings. We are very adept at masking emotions and gifted individuals

sense that dissonance. Children often find relief in hearing that adults struggle too.

Another aspect of resiliency is shame vs. guilt. Brene Brown offers that the primary difference between the two is recognizing that you have made a poor choice or mistake (guilt) versus believing that you are a bad person because of that choice or mistake (shame). Guilt can offer motivation to learn from one’s choice or mistake, while shame is paralyzing and toxic to our overall sense of self-worth.

Ellen Langer believes that there are only two states in which we can live our lives: mindfully or mindlessly. There are also only two states that our brain can be in at any given time: reactive and receptive. “Lizard brain” (amygdala) is reactive and “wizard brain” (pre-frontal cortex) is receptive. In wizard brain, our mind is receptive and we are likely living mindfully. When we’re in lizard brain, our mind is reactive and we’re likely living mindlessly.

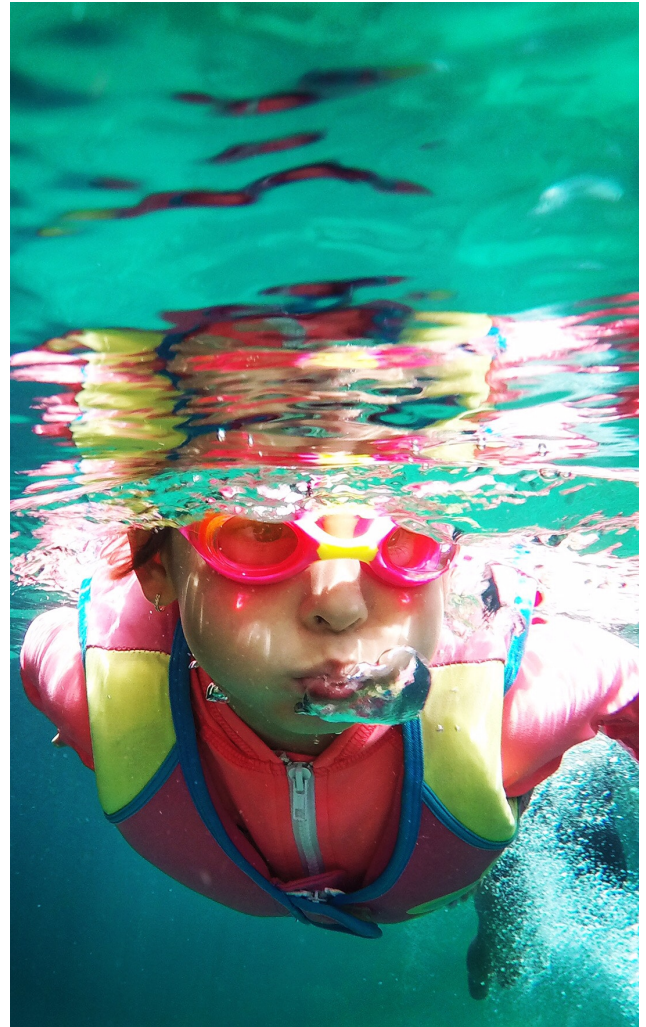
I often ask my clients about their access point to mindfulness and for one client, that was scuba diving. However, she hated the safety stop, a 3-5 minute stop that divers take 15-20 feet below

the surface of the water during the final ascent. This is to pause, regain control and be aware of their surroundings so they can rise to the surface safely, as well as to release the nitrogen built up in their bloodstream.

I use this concept with my clients - in this case, to release the cortisol (stress hormone). When we keep going and do not take time to pause and recover, we are in a constant state of lizard brain. If a child goes straight from school

into a long night of studying, it is likely that the child is going to get distracted, read over the same information repeatedly, and be unable to digest it. If the child takes the safety stop between school and homework, he/she may only have to study for half the amount of time with a far greater benefit.

When our amygdala is triggered, there is increased blood flow to arms and legs. One of the best safety stops to teach children is to have them lay on the floor with their legs up the wall to reverse the blood flow. Placing a book on the stomach enables them to naturally breathe down into their stomach.



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# NURTURE THE SELF OF THE CHILD

*"From very early on, you have such a strong sense of what is right, what you need to be doing, and what is right for the world."*

**P. Susan Jackson** is the Founder and Therapeutic Director of "The Daimon Institute for the Highly Gifted" in White Rock, British Columbia, Canada. This international institute offers service to highly and profoundly gifted children and adults, supporting their learning needs and overall development. She was formerly a teacher and a Gifted Coordinator in a large school district, servicing gifted kids of all stripes. She is the author of numerous articles and chapters in gifted education literature. Her "Integral Practice for the Gifted™" model addresses multiple aspects of human functioning – cognitive, emotional, spiritual, physical and talent-based dimensions – and explains how advanced cognition influences these elements, the Self and the expression of talent. Sue is the past chair of the NAGC Counselling and Guidance Network and a member of the editorial board for SENG. She regularly presents keynotes and symposia worldwide in her role as a distinguished expert in



**P. Susan Jackson**

the Exceptionally and Profoundly Gifted populace. Her documentary "RISE: The Extraordinary Journey of the Exceptionally and Profoundly Gifted" has received wide acclaim and has been shown on every continent. She is currently writing several books on the Exceptionally and Profoundly Gifted.

If I had to say there was one thing, it would be to get to know, to cherish, to scaffold and to sometimes challenge the self of the child. I think the great philosopher, Seneca, said it first, "Will and intellect are one and the same." Our gifted children are born, by and large, with an incredibly strong sense of self, unless they've experienced really noxious environments, maybe even prenatal environments that were toxic.

I work with children as far away as India and I work with the profoundly gifted. That is my specialty. One of the things that struck me most when I began working with the profoundly gifted was how quickly I connected to other profoundly gifted people who also had a very strong sense of self. It doesn't mean that you're necessarily socially dominant or aggressive. It can be very quietly expressed. From very early on, you have such a strong sense of what is right, what you need to be doing, and what is right for the world. It is very transpersonal.

I have an integrated model in the literature called Integral Practice For the Gifted. It squarely asserts that gifted children, like all children, need integral practice in their development. We need to take care of them. Certainly, for

their advanced cognition and their exceptional talents, but equally we need to help them with their communicative capacities, with their understanding and expression of gender and sexuality, emotional components, kinesthetic components - there's over 32 different aspects of development that children, adults and families need to understand. The thing that coordinates all of this in the model is this notion of the self or the soul, basically the conductor of this very dynamic and powerful orchestra that is the gifted child.

The gifted child is not just cognitively advanced. Potentially, all of them are emotionally and morally advanced. In terms of communicative capacity, they are capable of extraordinary levels. In terms of gender, they have the capacity to be androgynous from very early times. They are able to access both ends of the classic binary of gender and are able to integrate both which can be very confusing for them.

I was at one point the social and emotional network chairperson for National Association for Gifted Children so I've been hugely involved with advocacy. When we are communicating with the public at large, like doctors, it is very difficult to talk about the gifted child's level of development and

the complexities so people will still focus on the cognitive advancement. It is so important that children, even the profoundly gifted, have a sense of body. They're not cognitive-centric. For instance, there are recent studies on the importance of diet in managing depression because the gut is the second brain. If you take care of the gut, children are less likely to become depressed in any case, no matter what their level of intelligence. Yet in many schools for the gifted, we will cut physical education or health programs to double up on the academic side of things. Then I hear about these children needing clinical support for depression and anxiety. So we need to really get to know our children because they are all so incredibly unique. Even within the realm of gifted, there are differences. We also need to help



them understand that they are different and have unusual needs but they are also part of the human family. That tension of opposites is really important to teach our children. Otherwise, they carry too heavy a load.



### RESOURCES:

Daimon Institute Newsletter  
<http://www.daimoninstitute.com>

Facebook Group (4500+ followers)  
[www.facebook.com/TheDaimonInstituteForTheHighlyGifted](http://www.facebook.com/TheDaimonInstituteForTheHighlyGifted)

Daimon International  
<http://www.daimoninstitute.com/daimon-international>

### NEW RELEASE:

Susan's first book, *Excuse Me, Where Do I Park zmy Whale? The Extraordinary Journey of the Exceptionally and Profoundly Gifted*, will be released in the fall of 2018.

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# BE PRESENT

*“Presence is an antidote to busyness.”*

**Michele Kane**, Ed.D., is a professor in the Department of Special Education and Program Coordinator of the Master of Arts in Gifted Education at Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago. Inspired by her experience raising six gifted (now adult) children, a major focus of Michele's work is related to social, emotional, and spiritual needs of gifted children as well as the experiences of educators, parents and caregivers across the lifespan.

She has served the gifted community as a public school district gifted coordinator and teacher and as a consultant offering professional development opportunities for schools and organizations. Her leadership roles include past-president of Illinois Association for Gifted Children, former Chair and Co-Chair of the National Association for Gifted Children's Global Awareness Network, and board member for PG Retreat. Currently the chair-elect of the Parenting and Community Network NAGC, she also serves on the Parent Editorial and



**Michele Kane**

Content Advisory Board of NAGC and has been a frequent presenter at state, national, and international conferences for over 25 years. She is a contributing author to *Off the Charts: Asynchrony and the Gifted Child*, *Giftedness and Creativity: Identification and Specialized Services for Gifted Students*, *Living with Intensity*, *The Roeper School: A Model for Holistic Development of High Ability*, and *Accelerating and Extending Literacy for Diverse Students*. Her most recent book, *Planting Seeds of Mindfulness*, co-authored with Dorothy Sisk, was just released.

The one thing that parents can do now is to provide the gift of presence. We need to eliminate the word “busy” from our vocabulary because it is a cover-up for other things. We make choices every day about how we are going to be in the world.

It is important for parents to put their own agenda to the side and truly be with their child. This is a gift I learned from Annemarie Roeper. Quiet your own thinking. Quiet your own emotions. Be an active listener so that the child is directing the conversation. Be so quietly observant that you are noticing body language. You are noticing what is *not* being said as much as what *is* being said.

I recently spent time with my grandchildren while awaiting the birth of their new sibling. My daughter-in-law, being a conscientious mother, had downloaded an app that provides weather emergency alerts. It makes this strident beeping sound. It would go off and the two-year-old would say, “What’s that?” Mom would say, “Oh, don’t worry. The weather man is just telling us that we’re going to be getting a really big snowstorm.” Then it would go off again and the child would say, “What’s that?” Mom would say, “Oh, don’t worry. The weatherman is telling us that flooding is going to happen.” And again. “What’s that?” Mom would say, “Oh, don’t worry. The weatherman is just

telling us that the roads are going to be icy and that Daddy will need to be careful when he drives home.” Every time it would beep we would all jump.

I do a lot of work with parents around stress and anxiety of gifted kids. Something as insidious as this little weather app that is intended to be helpful can create a tremendous amount of stress and anxiety for kids who are now able to imagine challenging situations. The Center for Disease Control reports that 20% of all children ages 6-18 are diagnosed with mental illness in the form of a specialized anxiety disorder and/or depression. Of course, the gifted population is always higher. We must be mindful about what is happening in the world of our kids. Their metacognition is high. They pick up the energetic shift from the parent. When we are present, we are better able to sense their discomfort, and address it immediately.

We had a blended family of six gifted kids who are now adults, so our household was very busy. There was curiosity and artistic expression, experimentation and analytics. Some of our kids loved to argue. All those things were happening simultaneously. It was so easy, as Pema Chodron, the Buddhist teacher, would say, to “bite the hook.” In other words, to get engaged in the fanaticism of the moment instead of really

quieting and being present. I am learning more now from the perspective of being a grandparent to be aware with calmness.

When I was a child, my mother would say, "Children, come quickly!" We would go rushing to see what was happening. My mother would sit there with her arms out and say, "Look at this sunset! Isn't it the most glorious manifestation you've ever witnessed!?" I can hear her in my mind. We need to invite our children to be present with us. It is a gift of quietude. Presence is an antidote to "busyness."

If parents could be more present with their children, it would be magnificent. Many children fear growing up because they learn from what they see in the lives of adults. Children, at very young ages, see the ills of the world and do not understand why the adults around them cannot manage problems effectively. When we teach children calmness, presence, and an attunement to who they are, then they learn that those things are part of being an adult as well.

If parents could give their children the gift of presence, it would change the complexion of everything. The divisiveness that we are witnessing on the



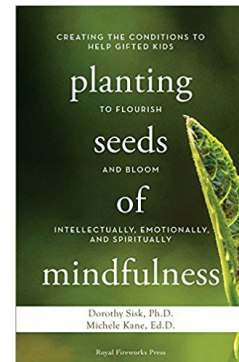
big screen of our world right now would not be as glaring. We would see more interdependence in the world and understand how we all have to count on each other.



#### **NEW RELEASE:**

*Planting Seeds of Mindfulness*, co-authored with Dorothy Sisk.

[www.amazon.com/Planting-Seeds-Mindfulness-Creating-Conditions/dp/0898243866](http://www.amazon.com/Planting-Seeds-Mindfulness-Creating-Conditions/dp/0898243866)



#### **Michele Kane, Ed.D.,**

*Special Education & Program Coordinator*

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# LET THEM STRUGGLE

*“Have the confidence in their ability to overcome it on their own.”*

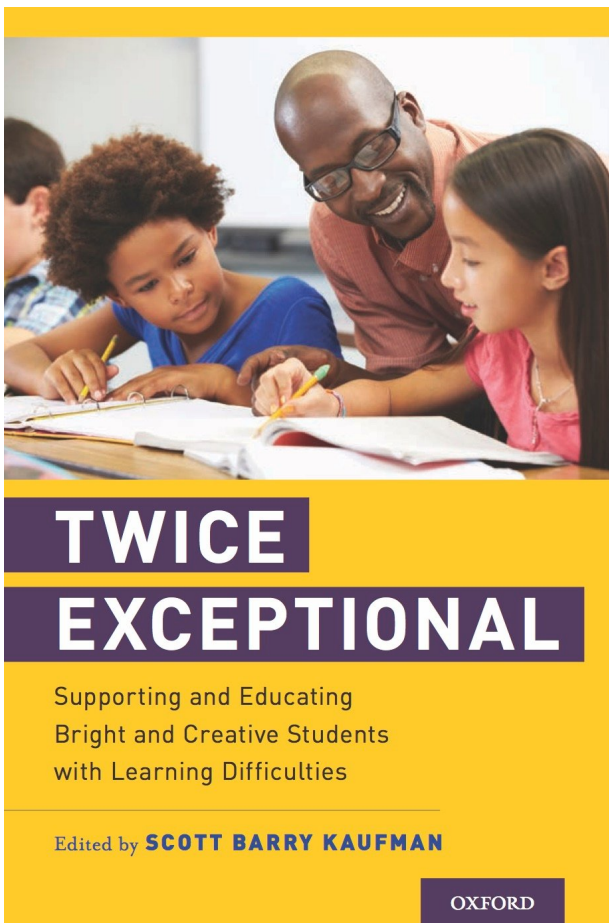
**Scott Barry Kaufman, PhD,** is an author, researcher, speaker, and public science communicator who is interested in using psychological science to help all kinds of minds live a creative, fulfilling, and meaningful life. He is author and/or editor of 8 books, including *Twice Exceptional: Supporting and Educating Bright and Creative Students with Learning Difficulties*, *Ungifted: Intelligence Redefined* and *Wired to Create: Unraveling the Mysteries of the Creative Mind* (with Carolyn Gregoire).



His writing has appeared in *The Atlantic*, *Scientific American*, *Psychology Today*, and *Harvard Business Review*, and he writes a blog at *Scientific American* called *Beautiful Minds*. Kaufman is also host of *The Psychology Podcast*.

“One thing parents can do now to help their gifted child to thrive in the future is to let them struggle. Let their child encounter difficulty and tell them you have the confidence in their ability to overcome it on their own.

A lot of parents coddle their children, but this will be damaging in the long run. Instead, let your child explore and roam free, but also make it clear that you are a safe haven if they need one.”



Scott Barry Kaufman recently released his new book, “Twice Exceptional: Supporting and Educating Bright and Creative Students with Learning Difficulties.” To purchase go to <https://www.amazon.com/Twice-Exceptional-Supporting-Educating-Difficulties/dp/0190645474>

**Scott Barry Kaufman, PhD**  
[scottbarrykaufman.com](http://scottbarrykaufman.com)

# HONOR DIVERSITY

*“If parents expose their children to the differences in our world, it will make them stronger leaders.”*



**Tiombe-Bisa Kendrick-Dunn**

**Tiombe-Bisa Kendrick-Dunn, MS, SSP, NCSP** is employed with the School Board of Miami Dade County Florida as a school psychologist where she has practiced since 2005. She holds a license, professional educator's certificate and national certification in the field of school psychology. Mrs. Kendrick-Dunn was previously affiliated with Barry University where she served on the adjunct faculty in the School

Psychology Program. She was the Clinical Supervisor for Barry University's School Psychology Clinic. She also runs a private practice where she has subspecializations in gifted and talented children and providing culturally competent psychological services. Mrs. Kendrick-Dunn currently serves on Professional Advisory Board for Western Psychological Services (WPS). She is currently the President of the Dade Association of School Psychologists (DASP) and serves on the board of directors for the Children's Trust of Miami-Dade County. Mrs. Kendrick-Dunn also serves on committees for the National Association of Gifted Children (NAGC) and is the Gifted/Talented Interest Group Coordinator for the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP). She is married and family is a priority in her life.



Parents can expose their children to other people, cultures, languages and religions so that they are well-rounded and have a better understanding of the world they live in today.

We are part of a very diverse world. In the higher level of United States government, officials have to interact with other countries and understand their culture in an effort to ensure they have a working knowledge of various cultures. This allows U.S. government officials to have the ability to understand, respect and adhere to the customs of various cultures.

It starts here. People have a right to speak their native language in their own homes. Gifted children should have a healthy respect for the differences in our world. I am referring to all types of diversity. The world is big and we want gifted children to grow up understanding the positives that lie within our differences.

If parents expose their children to the differences in our world, it will make them stronger leaders. They will become more sensitive human beings to people who are different from them. They will have a different relationship and respect for

people who have immigrated to this country, indigenous people of this country, and descents of African slaves (Black Americans) in this country. Every group of people share a unique story and that story should be understood!

I have worked with families from Honduras, Haiti, Cuba, Jamaica, Dominican Republic, Russia, and France. All of these families come from countries with rich cultural histories. Many times, these families leave their countries in pursuit of a better life for their families but continue to engage with their family members back home by visiting, providing financial support, and phone calls.

Gifted children often become our leaders and end up in positions of public service. They need to be more sensitive and aware of the experience of others.

So how can we teach our children to honor diversity, especially if we live in an area that is very homogenous?

If possible and if it is affordable, it is important for parents to travel with their children to other cities and

places where the people are different from them. Parents can take their children to museums where they can be exposed to the history of different cultures. Parents can read books with their children about people from other cultures to help the child connect on a deeper level.

If parents honor diversity, I really think that this will develop sensitivity and awareness in our gifted children. It will raise their awareness of other cultures and give them a better understanding of people. Whether a child enters into public service, becomes an

engineer, or takes a completely different path, this foundation will shape that child's world view. Instead of blaming others, it will enable him/her to see things from a different perspective.



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# POSITIVE THINKING

*"When they start to look at things from a more positive angle, they start to smile."*

**Roya Klingner** is the Head and Founder of the Global Center for Gifted and Talented Children. She was the German Delegate in World Council for Gifted and Talented Children (WCGTC), Lecturer and Liaison of SENG. Roya Klingner, a former gifted child, has a unique and diverse background, having worked in all year levels and many specialist areas. She is a Solution Oriented Therapist for Gifted Children, an Author and Illustrator. She is the author of *Dandelina*, *Let it Flow*, *Make them Shine*, *Creativity in Gifted Children* and *Gifted Underachiever*.





We have to create a very positive environment for children so that they can fully express their abilities. I am a big believer in Positive Psychology. According to Dr. Barbara Fredrickson, if you are optimistic, collect positive things around you, and make a positive environment for your child, this will give them a great start. The gifted kids I have met in my life are happy as long as they are able to create things, think outside of the box and make the world a better place. It is important for those very active brains who always have an urge to create better things to be happy.

Most gifted kids are perfectionists. Sometimes they are not happy with what they do. Their own self-criticism blocks and frustrates them. It's important that children know that even if they make mistakes, someone believes in them and loves them for who they are.

I was once speaking with Dr. Iraj Broomand who served as president in the early years of the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children. We were talking about identifying those children with positive leadership potential. He said that those children who have an urge to change things are really special. Not all gifted people have this

urge. It depends on many factors. Many of them are very special in the way that they think. In them, emotions and sensitivity are very high. Most of them care for things that most kids don't even think about. For example, one of my clients, who was eight years old, was crying because the birds didn't return after the winter and he was so upset about it. Those kids show you in a very special way that they are different. These kind of differences, you cannot teach. They are like a shining star.

There are things parents can do to foster positive thinking in their children. I suggest that parents read the book "Positivity" by Dr. Barbara Fredrickson. They can collect a positive portfolio, like a diary, that helps children to find positive things. For example, get children to think about situations from a positive perspective. I ask children who are dealing with bullying or jealousy with peers, "How can someone like you but hate you at the same time?" At first children may think this is impossible, but you get them to think about it differently. I say, "Maybe that person just needs your attention." When they start to look at things from a more positive angle, they start to smile.

I think the most important thing is for parents to think before giving advice to their child. Parents can be very performance oriented. I

encourage parents to just support the natural interests of the child. That was the one mistake my parents made. They made everything possible so I was able to study medicine. I studied four years in Vienna, but it was not my dream job. I have too much empathy. When someone was in pain, I was in pain too. It was hard for me to tell them that I changed my mind. I had known from the age of nine that I wanted to work with gifted kids. I wasn't brave enough to tell my parents. I was not brave enough to tell them because I noticed that they were so happy to have a doctor as a child. I was a very good medical student, but it was not my dream job. When I had to tell them what I really wanted to do, it was not easy for them to understand. It took me a long time to find my way, but I found it.



### **UPCOMING CONFERENCE!**

10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
of  
The Global Center for Gifted and  
Talented Children  
Conference  
Freising, Germany  
November 3-4, 2018

[www.conference.begabung.de/de](http://www.conference.begabung.de/de)

### **Roya Klingner**

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[www.gcgtc.com](http://www.gcgtc.com)

[Youtube: The Global Center for Gifted  
and Talented Children](#)

Blog: [www.begabung.wordpress.com](http://www.begabung.wordpress.com)

Facebook: [International Gifted Education](#)



# ENSURE APPROPRIATE CHALLENGE

*“When parents ensure that their child is appropriately challenged, the child learns how to learn, how to fail and get back up again, and social emotional skills, too.”*



Carolyn Kottmeyer

**Carolyn Kottmeyer** is the founder and director of Hoagies' Gifted, Inc., a non-profit that includes Hoagies' Gifted Education Page [www.HoagiesGifted.org](http://www.HoagiesGifted.org) and social media communities of over 50,000 members on various social media platforms. Carolyn speaks nationally and internationally on a variety of gifted topics. She is a past Director of SENG (Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted), and has written for a variety of gifted journals and newsletters.





It is important that all children receive appropriate academic challenge starting from the earliest grade levels, no matter what the child's academic level. It is even more important that the child receive that challenge both individually and in a group with other children learning on the same level. This academic learning will also provide social emotional learning when working with other kids of the same academic level. In other words, gifted children need to be grouped with other gifted kids to work at their own academic

levels. And this isn't as hard as it sounds!

Moderately gifted kids can learn at their own level by being grouped with other gifted kids, and allowed to learn at their own levels. Just grouping is helpful for social emotional learning, but to get the academic benefit, the children need to be allowed to learn at their own level. For exceptionally and profoundly gifted kids it may be a little more complicated, but can still be accomplished for free through subject and/or grade

acceleration or homeschooling.

What does this academic challenge with their peers give the gifted child? It allows the child to learn with others, learning that they're not always the smartest or the best. It gives the child the chance to learn study skills, because the assignments are hard enough to need those skills to solve. This is the best social/emotional lesson they can learn. And working hard to accomplish appropriate academics helps gifted kids learn to avoid perfectionism, and face difficulty and recover from failure alongside their academic peers. They avoid developing the fixed mindset that often accompanies years and years of perfect schoolwork without appropriate challenge that gifted kids face if they don't get appropriate challenge in school.

When parents and teachers ensure that the gifted child is appropriately challenged starting at the earliest grade levels, the child learns that school is about learning instead of just perfect achievement on simple assignments for years and years. And the gifted child gets to learn the same learning lessons that other kids learn in school.



**Carolyn Kottmeyer**  
Founder & Director  
Hoagie's Gifted, Inc.  
*Join Our Community!*  
[www.hoagiesgifted.org](http://www.hoagiesgifted.org)



# SELF-ACCEPTANCE



Dan Peters

*“We, parents, need to work on accepting ourselves in order for our children to accept themselves.”*

**Dan Peters, Ph.D.**, licensed psychologist, is Co-founder and Executive Director of the Summit Center, specializing in the assessment and treatment of children, adolescents, and families with special emphasis on gifted, talented, and creative individuals and families. Dr. Dan speaks regularly at state and national conferences on a variety of topics including parenting, gifted and twice-exceptionality, anxiety, and dyslexia, as well as writes for the Huffington Post and Psychology Today. Dr. Dan is author of *Make Your Worrier a Warrior: A Guide to Conquering Your Child's Fears*, and its companion book, *From Worrier to Warrior: A Guide to Conquering Your Fears*. He is co-author of *The Warrior Workbook: A Guide for Conquering Your Worry Monster*, as well as co-author of *Raising Creative Kids*. Dr. Dan is also Co-founder of ParentFootprint.com, an on-line interactive parent-training program, and Camp Summit, a sleep-over summer camp for gifted and 2e youth.



It is most important that gifted children accept themselves and feel that they are fine just the way they are. So the one thing is self-acceptance. Shame builds up over time in gifted kids for being different. It is important for them to know that it is normal for them to feel different, and experience intensities and sensitivities. This requires parents to be hyperaware of the messages they are giving their kids about themselves, their abilities, and their behavior.

We, parents, need to work on accepting ourselves in order for our children to accept themselves. We need to educate them on “how the world works.” There are lots of things that are not fair and human beings can act in unjust ways. Gifted youth need to have examples of how the world works and how to handle difficult situations to increase their social intelligence.

Children who receive messages about who they are and how the world works around them will have the best opportunity for a healthy, measured view of themselves while also understanding others in a world where the majority won't be gifted. We want them to feel good about who they are, understand others with whom they will work and relate to, and to be able to navigate life.



#### RESOURCES:

Books

[Make Your Worrier a Warrior](#)  
[From Worrier to Warrior](#)  
[Raising Creative Kids](#)

On-Line Parenting Support:  
[ParentFootprint.com](#)

On-Line Parent Training Program for  
Raising Happy & Healthy Kids:  
Parent Footprint Awareness Training  
Parent Footprint Podcast

**Dan Peters, Ph.D.**  
**Summit Center**  
**California**

<http://www.summitcenter.us>

<http://www.parentfootprint.com>

<http://www.drardanpeters.com>

Facebook [www.facebook.com/262665173745536](http://www.facebook.com/262665173745536)

Videos <http://www.youtube.com/user/summitcenterca>

Twitter@summitcenter@drardanpeters



# TOLERANCE OF AMBIGUITY

*“There is no perfect decision.”*



Jean Peterson

**Professor Emerita Jean Peterson, Ph.D.**, Purdue

University, has focused most of her clinical work and research on gifted youth, often exploring their experience of development longitudinally and qualitatively and often focusing on those who do not fit common stereotypes. She has received numerous awards for teaching, research, and service and consults internationally. Among over 100 books, journal articles, and invited book chapters are *Gifted at Risk: Poetic Profiles*; *The Essential Guide to Talking with Gifted Teens*; and *Counseling Gifted Students: A Guide for School Counselors*. Her first career was in K-12 education.

A focus on performance and “being the best” may not serve our gifted children well. That might even contribute to anxiety and a fragile sense of self. Success is what helps them feel secure, probably. Parental approval and respect from peers are part of that “success.” What happens when any of these aren’t available in a new context—a new school, a new school level, having multiple teachers instead of one main teacher, having less personal student-teacher relationships in college? We don’t prepare gifted kids well for social and emotional challenges of college life—and we should. We hope that negative coping won’t replace “performance” as a “coping strategy” when they face challenges.

My second career has been in counseling—and preparing counselors. Counseling requires tolerance of ambiguity—of “not knowing” or “not knowing for sure.” Counselors don’t get to see the “final product.” They work with people who are continually developing. If good things happen, a counselor cannot know what other aspects of a child’s life contributed to changes—that is, beyond the counselor’s expertise and investment.

How does tolerance of ambiguity apply here? Parents can help their gifted children learn to tolerate

ambiguity—and parents themselves can model it. The world beyond academics (but also including academics) is complex. Relationships are complex. If all 10 applications to prestigious universities result in acceptances, any of the 10 probably will be appropriate, provided the student invests there. There is no perfect decision.

Opportunities (currently unknown) will be there—and being flexible and adaptable will allow a gifted individual to be able to grab them. Jobs that today do not exist yet will be waiting for an adaptable person, ready to learn. Therefore, being broadly educated (with rigor) across many disciplines, exploring areas beyond the school curriculum, not limited to “vertical acceleration” in basic academic areas (a common curriculum in gifted education) will be an asset. Parents can encourage more than simply a “more and faster” curriculum—at home and, as advocates, at school.

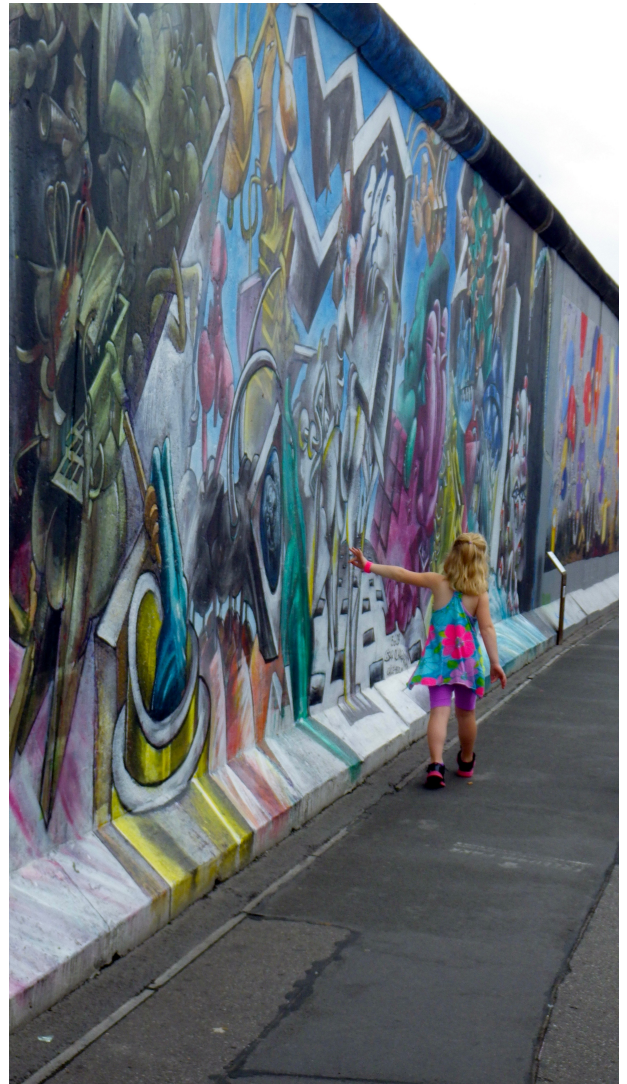
Regarding ambiguity, perfection is not a reasonable goal. A fear of failure probably is a key ingredient. Parents can monitor their own language as they encourage their children to “enjoy the trip” of learning—not just focus on the destination, the product, the grade. Ideally they can enjoy the process—without debilitating anxiety about the



product. Parental language is important.

The most important element in our language is to focus on strengths, empowering children and teens with credible feedback—not with empty cheerleading, but with genuinely noting what they have demonstrated. Statements like these focus on strengths: “You’re a good problem-solver. I’ve seen that in you. I remember when you . . . “ “I’ve seen you quietly pause, observe the rest of us, take a deep breath, and make sense of situations.” “I’ve seen that you are able to ask for help. Smart people ask for help when they need to.” “I’m confident that you’ll be able to do that even when you’re in high school, in college someday, and in life.” These are *credible* statements of strength.

Parental anxiety can be contagious. Even when commenting about personal strengths, it’s important to avoid an “anxious voice.” It’s much better for a parent to say, “I don’t know. It’s OK not to know.” Parents can say, “How to be in the future—you’ll figure that out—as you go along—because you have a good mind, and you have valuable strengths besides your ability to learn in the classroom. I have confidence in you.” Parents, if they say these lines, need to mean them.



### 3 unusual resources:

- [\*Gifted at Risk: Poetic Profiles\*](#)
- [\*The Essential Guide to Talking with Gifted Teens\*](#)
- [\*Counseling Gifted Students: A Guide for School Counselors\*](#)

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# LET IMAGINATION FLOW FREELY

*“If we didn’t have imagination, we could never have invented anything.”*



Michael Piechowski

**Michael M. Piechowski, M.S., Ph.D.,** received his M.Sc. in plant physiology from Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, his hometown in Poland, and a Ph.D. in molecular biology from the University of Wisconsin–Madison. He taught at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta where he met Dr. Kazimierz Dabrowski. They worked together for eight years. Not interrupting their collaboration, Michael Piechowski returned to the University of Wisconsin to obtain a Ph.D. in counseling psychology.

He has taught at the University of Illinois, Northwestern University, and Northland College. He is a Senior Fellow of the Institute for Educational Advancement and Professor Emeritus, Northland College in Ashland, Wisconsin. Dr. Piechowski is a contributor to the *Handbook of Gifted Education* and the *Encyclopedia of Creativity*. He taught at the Honors Summer Institute at Ashland University in Ashland, Ohio and has lectured in New Zealand, Australia, and Poland. Since 2002 he has been involved with the Yunasa summer camp for highly gifted youth, organized by the Institute for Educational Advancement. He is the author of *Mellow Out, They Say, If I Only Could: Intensities and Sensitivities of the Young and Bright*, and co-editor of *Living with Intensity* and *Off the Charts: Asynchrony and the Gifted Child*. He lives in Madison, Wisconsin. *(Sculpture in photo by Judeth Davis)*



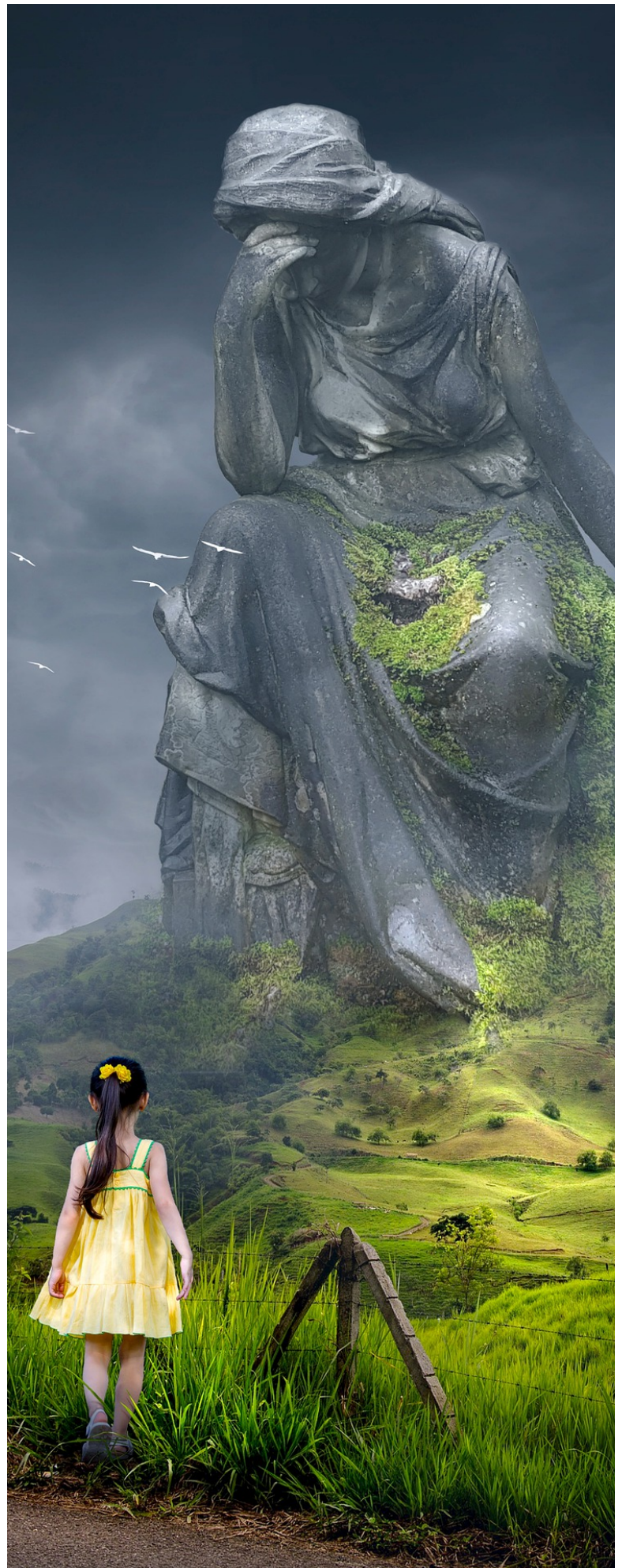
Parents should allow their children free flow of imagination because spending part of the day in an imaginary world will keep them sane in an insane world. Imagination is always active in children. They often have imaginary companions. Just accept them, but do not try to interact with them too much. Imaginary companions are children's own world under their exclusive control; they are their own friends and supportive characters. If adults start interacting with them, these companions often disappear. It makes children frustrated not to have free time without expectations or obligations. I remember one child who said, "I don't have enough time to read my books." Imagination is part of their lives. It is part of their person. Imagination is necessary to be able to solve problems. If we didn't have imagination, we could never have invented anything.



**Michael Piechowski, Ph.D.**  
**Email: [spirgif@earthlink.net](mailto:spirgif@earthlink.net)**

**COMING SOON!**

Look for Dr. Piechowski's recently completed translation of Dabrowski's 1938 paper on overexcitabilities. Appearing soon in *Advanced Development*, Vol. 17.





# TEACH SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL SKILLS

**Michael Postma, Ph.D.**, is the Executive Director of SENG (Supporting the Emotional Needs of Gifted). A former consultant, speaker, and author, Dr. Postma has dedicated his career to the holistic development of both gifted and twice-exceptional children. Dr. Postma has worked in the field of gifted/talented education as both a teacher and administrator in the public school system and was the architect of the Minnetonka Navigator Program, a magnet school for highly and profoundly gifted students. You can check out his latest book *"The Inconvenient Student: Critical Issues in the Identification and Education of Twice-Exceptional Students"* on Amazon. He currently lives in Surf City, NC and is the father of four children, three of whom are twice-exceptional.



*"We have to teach  
the brain new  
neural pathways  
to help develop the  
limbic system."*

The social and emotional development of children is of primary importance. There is some interesting brain research that has come out in the last few years. If the trends that I have seen in the last 20-30 years with gifted kids parallel the brain research then I know it is legitimate. We are finding that the brains of gifted and 2e kids have larger sensory prints and take in more information than the average population. In other words, the highly sensitive population has heightened experiences and longer-lasting memories. This research is telling us that all of those sensory experiences, even as a young child, whether positive or negative, can implant themselves in a very deep way. But there is a price to pay for that.

The limbic system in the brain is actually delayed in gifted and, especially, twice exceptional kids. This results in a child who is highly sensitive and overexcitable while lacking self-regulation. The social emotional piece is extremely important because, with that limbic delay, gifted children do not have strong self-regulation skills, executive function skills, or the ability to develop metacognition strategies that can help calm them when the limbic system goes off-line. The high sensory prints of stored memories are easily triggered, so it

is important that children learn these skills.

One way to teach these skills is through schematic regeneration which uses situational simulations to help children learn how to respond to various situations. We have to teach the brain new neural pathways to help develop the limbic system. Parents have to help children learn how to navigate peer relationships, overstimulation, frustration, depression and all of those different pieces that can be overwhelming. I am beginning to see signs of existential depression in kids much more often than I used to. This may be due, in part, to the overexposure to media. Those sensory prints are being triggered like crazy and our kids do not know how to handle it.

When I trained parents on schematic regeneration, I had them simulate situations in which a highly gifted child was having issues at school with peers. They would replay those situations and train the brain to metacognitively make better decisions. That exercise really helped parents to teach their children how to cope with the world around them. Gifted children come up against a world that may not accept them which can be very scary. They tend to be altruistic and have a

high sense of fairness and sometimes the world does not respond well to that. I see children shutting down because they don't have the mechanisms to handle those things.

Another thing parents can do is help children with social and emotional development is to teach them the "Habits of Mind" by Art Costa. "Habits of Mind" includes things like delaying gratification, organizational skills, and various coping mechanisms.

Children need to know their trigger points. Parents can observe and journal the trigger points they observe in their child and come up with a creative way to role play these situations with them. This process helps children to recognize the trigger points, learn strategies for managing them, internalize those strategies and make better decisions. My own son has Aspergers and he learned to use signals to let those close to him know his level of distress. This was an easy way for him to say, "I need a break. I need to get out. I need to move."

We can re-create neural pathways, but it takes time and effort. We must be cognizant of the fact that when the limbic system goes down, it is not a



function of behavior, but one of mental response.



### **SENG CONFERENCE 2018**

San Diego, California

July 19 – 22

[www.sengifted.org/seng-annual-conference-2018](http://www.sengifted.org/seng-annual-conference-2018)

### **SENG CONNECT SUPPORT GROUPS**

<http://sengifted.org/upcoming-seng-connect-support-groups/>

### **Michael Postma, Ph.D.**

Executive Director

SENG (Supporting the Emotional Needs of the Gifted)

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# UNDERSTAND YOURSELF AS A GIFTED ADULT



Paula Prober

*"The self-knowledge  
of the parent is key to  
the growth of the  
child."*

**Paula Prober, MS, MEd**, is a licensed psychotherapist and consultant in Oregon, USA. Over the 30+ years she has worked with the gifted, Prober has been a classroom teacher, adjunct instructor, and presenter at universities, conferences and webinars. She consults internationally with gifted adults and with parents of gifted children. Her writing on giftedness has appeared in *Advanced Development Journal*, the *Psychotherapy Networker*, the *Eugene Register Guard*, *ThriveGlobal*, and *Rebelle Society*. Her book, *Your Rainforest Mind: A Guide to the Well-Being of Gifted Adults and Youth* was released by GHF Press in June 2016. Her blog, *Your Rainforest Mind*, can be found at [rainforestmind.wordpress.com](http://rainforestmind.wordpress.com).

The most effective action that I've seen parents take for their gifted kids is for the parents to get to know themselves deeply and to understand their own particular insecurities, patterns, beliefs, and behaviors - to understand how their experiences with their own parents shaped their self-confidence or their own self-esteem. In this way, they don't unconsciously repeat the dysfunctional patterns that may have been handed down to them. They are less often triggered by their child's big emotions. They are better able to provide healthy limits and boundaries when their gifted child tests those limits. They're less prone to get into power struggles with kids who can argue like lawyers. They're better able to work with the schools. They will have less anxiety or depression and more energy and compassion. They take time to care for their own emotional, intellectual and spiritual needs and model self-care for their kids.

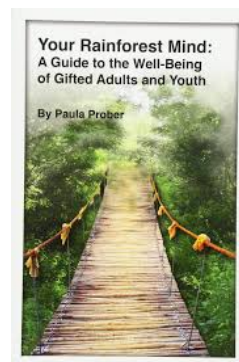
Of course, because I'm a psychotherapist, I've found therapy to be the best way to do this, particularly if there was trauma in the parents' background. It's not a short term fix but it creates deeply powerful stability and a solid loving foundation for the children and generations to come. There are other ways to get there, depending on each person's

particular situation and often it helps to approach this from multiple directions: support groups, journaling, arts, martial arts, soul collage, bodywork such as massage/acupressure/acupuncture, meditation or mindfulness practices, vision quests, hiking in nature, coaching, healthy eating... a combination of these things can make a big difference.

The self-knowledge of the parent is key to the growth of the child. It sounds obvious to me but I see many parents who don't realize this. So that would be the one thing I'd suggest to parents. Both parents and children can then thrive into the future.



Click here to Purchase Paula's Popular New Book, [Your Rainforest Mind: A Guide to the Well-Being of Gifted Adults and Youth](#)



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# SET REASONABLE EXPECTATIONS TO PREVENT UNDERACHIEVEMENT

*“If children’s expectations are unrealistically high, they will feel like failures even when they achieve success. Furthermore, they are more likely to underachieve.”*

**Dr. Sylvia Rimm** is a contributing correspondent to NBC’s Today Show and a favorite public radio personality.

She is also a psychologist, director of Family Achievement Clinic in Cleveland, Ohio, and clinical professor at Case Western Reserve School of Medicine. She counsels gifted children and families at Menlo Park Academy.

Dr. Rimm has written the following books: *How to Parent So Children Will Learn* and *Why Bright Kids Get Poor Grades*, *Growing Up Too Fast: The Rimm Report on the Secret Lives of America’s Middle Schoolers*, *Rescuing the Emotional Lives of Overweight Children*, *Keys to Parenting the Gifted Child*, *Raising Preschoolers*, *See Jane Win*, *How Jane Won*, *See Jane Win for Girls* and co-authored the textbook, *Education of the Gifted and Talented*.



**Sylvia Rimm**

**See Jane Win**, a New York Times Bestseller, was featured on Oprah Winfrey, the Today show and in People Magazine. Her newest book is *Jane Wins Again: Can Women Have It All? A Fifteen Year Follow Up*. Dr. Rimm has served on the Board of Directors of NAGC and received the Anne F. Isaacs, Robert Rossmiller and Palmarium awards for her lifetime contributions to gifted children.



Set reasonably high expectations for your children but avoid setting them too high. When parents expect too much of them, they are likely to feel anxious and depressed. If parents help their children set moderately high expectations, as they accomplish, they can gradually set slightly higher expectations. They will gradually build confidence with each small success. We don't want you to steal your children's dreams but you will need to help them temper their dreams with reality. They can set paths toward their dreams, but should recognize they may need to redirect their efforts and can nevertheless have good careers and happy achieving lives.

When gifted children underachieve, it is mainly caused by too high expectations and pressures they internalize. When they fear not being as "smart" as people say they are, they use defense mechanisms to avoid making effort to protect their fragile self-concepts. They may decide that it is better not to study because they are afraid that studying will not bring the hoped for "A" anyway. They are willing to take an honorable "C" without effort rather than risk only a "B" after actually studying.

Parents rarely deliberately set too high expectations for their children. Most parents only want their children to be happy. Because their children are gifted, parents, grandparents and teachers easily praise excessively. Those praise words are internalized and feel to the children like high expectations.

"You're brilliant! You're extraordinary! You've got the highest test scores that have gone through this school!" Those "est" words like best and brightest can set kids up for the impossible. They may not tolerate competition well. Just knowing "no matter how smart you are, there are others smarter than you" may reassure them that they're not required to be best at everything. It can become a nice surprise when they do better than they thought. Winning is motivating and exhilarating, but the rules of good sportsmanship apply to academics as well as sports. No one wins all the time.

When adults go to legislatures to request funding for gifted programming, they do and should deliberately set high expectations. They say things like, "These are our future Nobel Prize winners, inventors and heads of state." Those high expectations are set so



legislatures will fund gifted programming and are real for total populations.

Parents and teachers have to be careful about how they interpret these expectations to children. They should explain that great progress is made in small steps. People build upon what others have discovered and others will build upon what they have learned and added. Those who win Nobel Prizes are highly intelligent, creative and hard-working people but their discoveries are based on building blocks laid down by earlier scientists. Serendipity or “being at the right place at the right time” is crucial to all major breakthroughs.

Parents and teachers can help students set reasonable expectations. They can say, “We expect you to work hard and do the best you can. When you do the best you can, we will be satisfied and happy with you. There will likely be others who

do better than you and those who don't do as well. You should appreciate and value the strengths and contributions of others. They can energize you toward being a good team member and making your contribution. Of course, it's normal to feel competitive and disappointed in yourself sometimes, but if you're persistent, you can make a small contribution to helping our world become a better place and that's what being a gifted child is mostly about.”



Get Sylvia's latest book: [Jane Wins Again: Can Successful Women Have It All?](#)

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# RESPECT



Linda Silverman

*“My answer would be one word: respect. Your job as a parent is to respect your children. If you respect them, they will thrive.”*

**Linda Kreger Silverman, Ph.D.,** is a licensed clinical and counseling psychologist, author and researcher. For nine years, she served on the faculty of the University of Denver in counseling psychology and gifted education. Linda founded Gifted Development Center in Denver in 1979, where she has been blessed to work with well over 6,000 caring families. Passionate about giftedness throughout her entire career, she is a staunch parent advocate. To serve gifted parents, she founded POGO, PG Retreat, and *Advanced Development Journal*. Linda has been studying the psychology and education of the gifted since 1961 and has written over 300 articles, chapters and books, including *Counseling the Gifted and Talented*, *Upside-Down Brilliance: The Visual-Spatial Learner*, *Advanced Development: A Collection of Works on Gifted Adults*, and *Giftedness 101* (translated into Swedish and Korean).



Many of us were raised to respect our elders. But gifted children do not abide by this principle. They believe children have as much right as adults to be treated respectfully. They want to be seen for who they are, they want to be appreciated, they want to be consulted about decisions that affect their lives, they want to be listened to regarding their own needs. They want to be valued equally with adults.

We demonstrate that we value children in the way we communicate with them. Try this exercise:

*Close your eyes and imagine that you are asking your mother-in-law to get off the phone. Observe everything you can about yourself as if you were watching a movie. Now imagine asking your child to get off the phone. What differences do you notice in your choice of words, your tone of voice, your facial expression, your body posture, your amount of wait time? Why does your mother-in-law warrant being treated differently from your child?*

The power differential between parents and children needs to be carefully re-examined in the context of our increasing lifespan. The most important relationships you establish are with your children. Their

childhood is only a small slice of that relationship. If you are blessed, the largest portion will be when they are adults. Take a few moments to consider what kind of a relationship you want to have with your children when they reach adulthood? How would you like your adult children to feel about you? What do you have to do now so that this can happen?

My parents lived to be 94 and 98. In their later years, my sister—the eldest child—lived in the same apartment building and took care of them. Their parent-child relationship lasted over 70 years, and my sister spent more years being responsible for their welfare than they spent being responsible for hers. If you think about parenting from this longer view, it changes your priorities. The child you holler at for bringing home a B is going to decide when you go into a nursing home!

If you can look beyond the roles of parent and child, you can begin to appreciate that this presence you have brought into the world is your lifelong companion, friend, and fellow traveler on this journey called Life. Look deeply into your child's eyes and you will see a unique

individual with special gifts to bring you. Even the challenges they present are gifts to assist your own growth. If you have more than one child, you know how unique each child really is. This journey you are on together will hopefully last many decades, and, in the end, the roles will be reversed and they will parent you. It is important to develop a relationship with your children robust enough to survive throughout the lifespan and transform as developmental changes transform your roles. Your job is not to mold your children. You don't want to be molded by your adult children. Your job is to get to know who these individuals are, because you are going to be in relationship with them for the rest of your life.

Respect means seeing, appreciating and valuing each other as lifelong companions.

Respect is a dance among equals who have chosen to journey together. This is a sacred trust. Not only will your children thrive as a result—so will you.



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# RAISE SELF-ESTEEM

**Julie Skolnick, M.A., J.D.**, Founder of With Understanding Comes Calm, LLC, passionately guides parents of gifted and distractible children, mentors 2e adults, trains educators and collaborates with professionals on bringing out the best and raising self-esteem in their students and clients.

Julie serves as Secretary to the Maryland Superintendent's Gifted and Talented Advisory Council, is the Maryland liaison for Supporting the Emotional Needs of the Gifted (SENG), reviews parenting strand conference proposals and is a member of the Simultaneous Supports Committee for the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) and is on the Advisory Council for "The G Word" feature film currently in production. She is trained in the suite of tools "Putting the Person into Personalized Learning" through the 2e Center for Research and Professional Development.

A frequent speaker and prolific writer, Julie is also the mother of three twice exceptional children who keep her on her toes and uproariously laughing.



Julie Skolnick

*"Put the phones and computers away and shine a bright light on your child."*



In many cases, gifted kids know that expectations are high for them. They are better at some things than others. They may receive messages asking them, "Why can you do this so well, but you can't do that?" If they aren't receiving those messages externally, they may hear them in their own heads. So how do we bring out the best and raise self-esteem in our children?

The first and foremost way is through personal connection. It is imperative for parents to have a strong personal connection with their gifted children. How many times have we said that our children's success in school is teacher by teacher? It depends on how the student perceives the teacher feels about him/her, how well the teacher knows and is passionate about what he/she is teaching, whether the teacher is flexible and unwavering in the face of a student who is inquisitive and insatiably curious. For parents, how often do we see our kids regulate and take responsibility after we spend some quality one-on-one time with them? Put the phones and computers away and shine a bright light on your child. Be with them in an intentional way by doing something together or asking questions about what they are interested in. Request their

thoughts and opinions and comment on their thought processes. Enjoy them for who they are and what they are interested in.

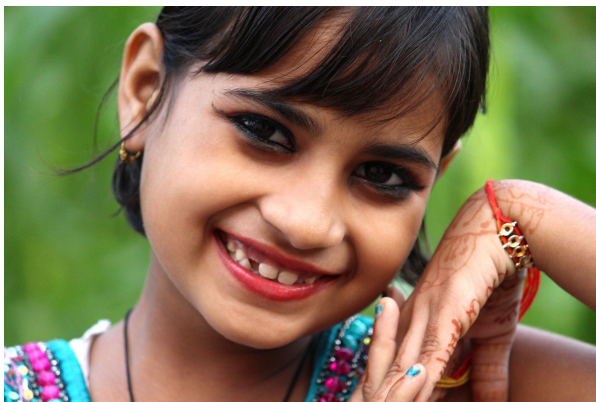
Gifted kids can be challenging. I often describe giftedness as a 3-layer cake. The ability piece is the frosting above and around and between all the layers. And then we have 3 layers of characteristics: asynchronous development, perfectionism (the other side of which can be anxiety) and intensities or overexcitabilities. These characteristics underlie the typical struggles of a gifted or 2e child. Typical challenges of gifted kids include emotion regulation, frustration tolerance, impulsivity, sensory issues, risk aversion, social skills challenges, anxiety, refusal of either school or a particular task, perfectionism and the need to move. These challenges happen because of various hardwired characteristics of gifted kids. Behavior is communication. The child is communicating a challenge he/she is having based on their hardwiring, based on who they are. But a lot of that hardwiring leads to amazing outcomes as well.

Another way to bring out the best and raise self-esteem is through strength-based thinking and positive reframe. Our gifted

and 2e kids ooze empathy, creative and out-of-the-box problem solving, curiosity, the ability to consider wide swaths of information and data, varied interests, organizational abilities, a strong sense of justice and fairness to just name a few.

This means that we have to advocate for our children. We have to pre-empt for them by letting educators, specialists, clinicians, coaches, camp counselors and anyone who interacts with our child know what behavior they may see and what it truly means. And this wrap-around process of knowing and enjoying the child, maintaining a strengths-based lens, and then advocating so others will understand and recognize the positives, all leads to strength and self-esteem for gifted and 2e children.

If parents make efforts to boost



self-esteem in their children, it will have long-lasting impacts. Throughout their lives, children will experience challenging situations. They will experience self-doubt. They will struggle with trying to do something for the very first time. They will experience challenging relationships with friends, loved ones or a partner. They will make a mistake and feel bad about it. They will have challenges whether it's intellectually, academically, or socially. Having this reserve of self-esteem is kind of like falling on a trampoline as opposed to falling on a concrete floor. You will have the ability to bounce back.



Subscribe to Julie's monthly newsletter, "Gifted & Distractible" at [www.withunderstandingcomescalm.com](http://www.withunderstandingcomescalm.com)

Watch "Let's Talk 2e!" live broadcasts on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter

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# PROCURE COUNSELING

*"I cannot think of anything more beneficial to a child than a mentally healthy parent."*



**Lisa Van Gemert**

Using a combination of neuropsychology, pedagogy, experience, humor, technology and sheer fun, **Lisa Van Gemert** shares best practices in education with audiences around the world. She is an expert consult to television shows including

Lifetime's "Child Genius," and a writer of award-winning lesson plans, as well as numerous published articles on social psychology and pedagogy and the book, *Perfectionism: Practical Strategies for Managing Never Good Enough*. A former teacher, school administrator, and Youth & Education Ambassador for Mensa, she shares resources for educators and parents on her website [www.giftedguru.com](http://www.giftedguru.com) and is co-founder with Ian Byrd of the Gifted Guild, a professional community for educators of the gifted. Lisa and her husband Steve are the parents of three sons and live in Arlington, Texas.



Most parents that I meet, with gifted children, are struggling with their own issues related to their childhood experience of giftedness. They may have been identified as gifted and were inadequately served. Maybe they were bullied. Some parents do not realize that they are gifted because they were not identified. There are places *now* that don't identify so we are going to be dealing with this for a long time. The number one thing that I think parents could do right now, that will have the greatest impact on their children in the future, would be to get some good solid counseling.

When I talk to teachers, one of the things I tell them is that when you are teaching a gifted child, you are not just teaching a child, you are serving an entire gifted family. A lot of parents had brutal experiences in school themselves and are naturally protective. They don't want the same thing to happen to their child. It is important for teachers to recognize that. It is equally important for parents to realize it. This protectiveness is not healthy. It doesn't serve children well to come to school defensive. The internal struggles of the parents can color the child's relationship with school, which can, in turn, impact their future. Many gifted kids drop out of school and have poor school experiences. While we

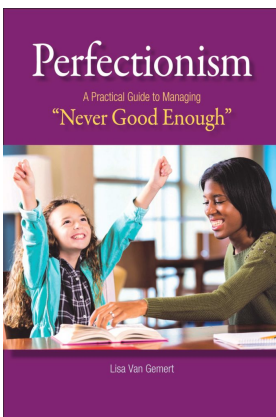
tend to blame the school or the child, sometimes it is actually the parents' own pain that was never really addressed.

A lot of gifted children feel like "square pegs in a round hole" and need some professional guidance. Parents who have sought out their own assistance will be more likely to notice when their child could benefit from help. Also, those parents would have already overcome their own reticence to seek help. Maybe they would have sought out a professional who has some experience with the gifted. Parents seeking their own counseling are often in far better position to help their children when that need arises. I am saying this from my experience in working, literally, with thousands of gifted families. I have yet to meet a gifted kid, who did not come through childhood scathed in some way and could have been helped. As parents, we have to ask, "What anxiety do I have?" or "What kind of things am I burdening my child with?" Maybe it's realizing things like, "My own parents had unreasonable expectations of me." We pass these things on to our children through seemingly innocuous statements we make to them such as, "I never got a B in my life, or "It never would have occurred to me not to turn in my homework."



Instead of seeing ourselves as gifted parents, we have to recognize ourselves as gifted individuals. We don't get a "get out of gifted free" card when we graduate from high school. The issues that we struggle with as gifted children often follow us into adulthood. It doesn't help that our culture prioritizes self-deprecation over self-celebration.

I cannot think of anything more beneficial to a child than a mentally healthy parent. Mentally healthy parents have reasonable expectations of the role that their children play. They don't look to their children as avatars. Taking that pressure off of children is incredibly freeing and a marvelous gift. Parents can send their children to the best summer institute for the gifted year after year, the best schools, the best colleges, the best world travel... none of that is as valuable as children having a healthy, balanced relationship with their parents as they move into adulthood.



GET LISA'S NEW BOOK!

[Perfectionism: Practical Strategies for Managing Never Good Enough](#)

**Lisa Van Gemert, M.Ed.T.**

Arlington, Texas

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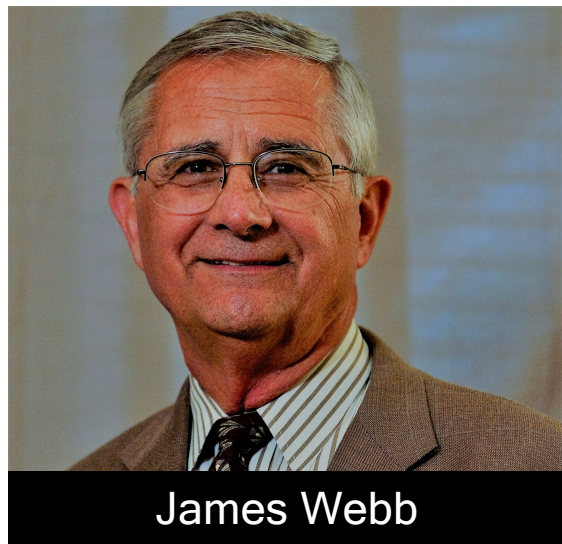
# PRIORITIZE RELATIONSHIP

*“The single most important factor is relationship.”*

**James T. Webb, Ph.D.**, has been recognized as one of the most influential psychologists nationally on gifted education. Dr. Webb has written 16 books, over 80 professional publications, three DVDs, and many research papers. Four of his books have won “Best Book” awards.

A frequent keynote and workshop speaker at state, national, and international conferences, Dr. Webb, a licensed and board certified psychologist, has appeared on *Good Morning America*, *CBS Sunday Morning*, *The Phil Donahue Show*, *CNN*, *Public Radio International*, and *National Public Radio*.

In 1981, Dr. Webb established SENG (Supporting Emotional Needs of Gifted Children, Inc.). In 2011, he received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Arizona Association for Gifted children, the Community Service Award from the National Association for Gifted Children, and the Upton Sinclair Award by EducationNews.org, and in 2015 the Lifetime Achievement Award from SENG. In 2017, he received the Palmarium Award from



**James Webb**

the Institute for Development of Gifted Education, and the Person of Significance Award from the National Society for Gifted and Talented.

Dr. Webb's books include, *Guiding the Gifted Child: A Practical Source for Parents and Teachers*, *Misdiagnosis and Dual Diagnoses of Gifted Children and Adults: ADHD, Bipolar, OCD, Asperger's, Depression, and Other Disorders*, *A Parent's Guide to Gifted Children and Searching for Meaning: Idealism, Bright Minds, Disillusionment, and Hope*



The single most important factor is relationship and children need to have a relationship with parents who understand them. If that relationship exists, then the door is open for the parent to be able to help the child.

The most powerful way for parents to develop a relationship and to connect with their child is to create a tradition of "special time." This technique has only three rules. First, the parent sets the timer for a brief, designated period of uninterrupted time and gives the child their undivided attention. Second, that time is led by the child doing whatever he or she wants to do. The third rule is that the activity must not be competitive because when there is competition, there are winners and losers. It is not the duration of "special time" that is important, but the frequency. In other words, having 5 minutes of "special time" every day is far more valuable than 5 hours occasionally.

Often parents put so much more focus on what children do instead of who they are. "Special time" involves relating to our children in ways other than watching them produce something.

Sometimes parents will tell me that their child does not want to

spend time with them. In this case, the parent can say to the child, "I am here if you want this special time with me." Then sit for that designated time and don't do anything. Don't knit. Don't read. Don't check email. The message you are then communicating to your child is this: "You are that important to me. I'm going to suspend everything and be here for you." The child may ignore you at first, but will often come back and participate. I simply cannot stress enough the importance of this message.

In our world today, everything seems to interrupt communication. I have six children. When they were young, I would take them on trips with me. I would call it "running away from home." I got this from a mentor of mine named Ray who was a busy professional man. When he came home from work one day, his son was sitting on the curb looking dejected. Ray pulled over, got out, sat down next to his son and said, "Derek, you look so sad." His son said, "I am. No one has time for me. I feel like running away from home." Ray said, "You know, I feel the same way. Everyone tries to take my time and I feel like I don't have time to spend with the people I want to be with, like you. Let's run away from home together." So they

marched into the house and announced to the family, "We're running away from home." They packed their bags and left. I'm not sure how long they were gone, but it was a life-changing experience.

I did this with my own children. I lived in Dayton at the time. I would be invited to give a talk in Cleveland and would say to the organizers, "I am glad to give a talk but have one request. I would like to bring one of my daughters." They would say, "That's fine. How old is she?" I would say, "five." There was always a pause, but they would usually agree. I would go home and announce to the family that I was going on a trip. I would ask, "Okay, whose turn is it?" The children knew exactly whose turn it was. When time came for the trip, that child would get so excited because we had two hours of "special time" in the car

together. We would stop at a museum, zoo or art gallery, then they got to stay in a hotel. To me, it was old hat. My kids now are almost 50 and they still talk about those special times.



#### **Great Resources:**

- SENG [www.sengifted.org](http://www.sengifted.org)
- Great Potential Press [www.greatpotentialpress.com](http://www.greatpotentialpress.com)
- *A Parent's Guide to Gifted Children*
- *Searching for Meaning: Idealism, Bright Minds, Disillusionment, and Hope*
- *Misdiagnosis and Dual Diagnoses of Gifted Children and Adults*

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To Linda Silverman, there is no greater gift than being seen. For all you are and all you do, thank you.

To Scott, Lance and Sara, thank you for making this life so beautiful.



# THANK YOU



Thank you so much for taking the time to read this ebook. I hope it serves as a source of inspiration and guidance in your parenting journey. I would be honored to have you stay in touch. You can reach me via email at [tina@guidingbright.com](mailto:tina@guidingbright.com). For ongoing resources, I invite you to visit my website at [www.guidingbright.com](http://www.guidingbright.com) and subscribe to my parent support blog.

