

Some Underlying Myths About Gifted Children

From *Guiding the Gifted Child*, by James T. Wee, Elizabeth A. Mechstroth,
and Stephanie Tolan

Myths common in public perception:

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

Myths common among parents and educators:

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

A Creed for Gifted Learners

I am gifted. What does this mean?

Being Gifted means I learn faster than most students my age.
It does not mean I am smarter than they are.

Being Gifted means I learn easier than most students my age.
It does not mean that learning should be easy.
I am in control of what I learn.
I must learn to challenge myself.

Being Gifted means that I have a head start in some areas.
I need to challenge myself to go further than my classmates,
if I am going to learn the same amount of information they do.

Being Gifted does NOT mean I have to be the fastest or the first one done.
Being first does not always mean being #1. I must learn to work carefully and correctly.

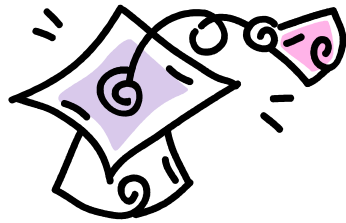
When I win, I must win kindly. But I am not the best at everything.
When I lose, I must lose graciously.

Being Gifted does NOT mean I have to be perfect.
I must learn to choose when to strive for excellence and when to relax.
Superior work does not have to be perfect all the time.

Being Gifted is not all there is to me. I am much more than just my brain.
I must learn to tolerate people who expect too much from me,
because they do not understand me.

Being gifted does NOT mean life is always fair.
I will learn to make the best of all situations because... I am Gifted!

Written by Terri Semmler, parent and teacher of gifted children
from Chugiak, Alaska



BRIGHT CHILD

Knows the answers.
Is interested.
Is attentive.
Has good ideas.
Works hard.
Answers the questions.
Top group.
Listens with interest.
Learns with ease.
6-9 repetitions.
Understands ideas.
Enjoys peers.
Grasps the meaning.
Completes assignments.
Is receptive.
Copies accurately.
Enjoys school.
Absorbs information
Technician.
Good memorizer.
Enjoys straightforward, sequential presentation.
Is alert.
Is pleased with own learning.



GIFTED LEARNER

Asks the questions.
Is highly curious.
Is mentally and physically involved.
Has wild, silly ideas.
Plays around, yet tests well.
Discusses in detail, elaborates.
Beyond the group.
Shows strong feelings and opinions.
Already knows.
1-2 repetitions for mastery.
Constructs abstractions.
Prefers adults.
Draws inferences.
Initiates projects.
Is intense.
Creates a new design.
Enjoys learning.
Manipulates information.
Inventor.
Good guesser.
Thrives on complexity.

Is keenly observant.
Is highly self-critical.

12 Traits of Giftedness

(Adapted from material from the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented
and Mary Ruth Coleman, Ph.D., University of North Carolina.)

Trait, Aptitude, or Behavior	General Description	How It May Look
Motivation Evidence of desire to learn.	Internal drive or encouragement that initiates, directs, or sustains individual or group behavior in order to satisfy a need or attain a goal.	Demonstrates persistence in pursuing or completing self-selected tasks (may be culturally influenced); evident in school or non-school activities. Enthusiastic learner; has aspirations to be somebody, to do something.
Interests Intense, sometimes unusual, interests	Activities, avocations, objects, etc. that have special worth or significance and are given special attention.	Unusual or advanced interests, topic, or activity; self-starter; pursues and activity unceasingly beyond the group.
Communication Skills Highly expressive with words, numbers, or symbols	Transmission and reception of signals or meanings through a system of symbols (codes, gestures, language, and numbers).	Unusual ability to communicate (verbally, nonverbally, physically, artistically, symbolically); uses particularly apt examples, illustrations, or elaborations.
Problem-Solving Ability Effective, often inventive, strategies for recognizing and solving problems.	Process of determining a correct sequence of alternatives leading to a desired goal or to successful completion of a performance task.	Unusual ability to devise or adopt a systematic strategy to solve problems and to change the strategy if it is not working; creates new designs; inventor.
Memory Large storehouse of information on school or non-school topics.	Exceptional ability to retain and retrieve information.	Already knows; needs only 1-2 repetitions for mastery; has a wealth of information about school and non-school topics; pays attention to details; manipulates information.
Inquiry/Curiosity Questions, experiments, explores.	Method or process of seeking knowledge, understanding or information.	Asks unusual questions for age; plays around with ideas; extensive exploratory behaviors directed toward eliciting information about materials, devices, or situations.
Insight Quickly grasps new concepts; sees connections; senses deeper meanings	Sudden discovery of correct solution following attempts based primarily on trial and error; putting disparate elements together in unexpected ways.	Exceptional ability to draw inferences; appears to be a good guesser; is keenly observant; heightened capacity for seeing unusual and diverse relationships, integration of ideas and disciplines.
Reasoning Logical approaches to figuring out solutions.	Highly conscious, directed, controlled, active, intentional forward-looking, and goal-oriented thought.	Ability to make generalizations and use metaphors and analogies; can think things through in a logical manner; critical thinker; ability to think things through and come up with a plausible answer.
Imagination/Creativity Produces many ideas; highly original	Process of forming mental images of objects; qualities, situations, or relationships which aren't immediately apparent to the senses; problem solving through nontraditional patterns of thinking.	Shows exceptional ingenuity in using everyday materials; is keenly observant; has wild, seemingly silly ideas; fluent, flexible producer of ideas; highly curious.
Humor Conveys and picks up on humor well.	Ability to synthesize key ideas or problems in complex situations in a humorous way; exceptional sense of timing in words or gestures.	Keen sense of humor that may be gentle or hostile; large accumulation of information about emotions; capacity for seeing unusual; uncommon emotional depth; openness to experiences; sensory awareness.
Intensity ("Overexcitabilities") Strength of reactions, responses, behaviors. (The term "overexcitabilities" comes from Polish psychologist Dabrowski.)	Very Strong, even extreme, responses to stimuli in five areas: emotional, intellectual, sensory, psychomotor, and imagination.	Intense desire for experiences in the area(s) of overexcitability; powerful emotions; seeks intellectual stimulation; sensory experiences evoke strong responses; constant or repetitive movement or gesturing; intense fantasy life; may need creative outlets for intensity.
Sensitivity Strong reactions to emotional stimuli	Events and situations in the affective and social domains elicit a stronger response than usual.	Strong sense of compassion; keen sense of justice; empathy; moral and ethical sensibilities; sense of being "different" socially; existential worrying; often overly self-critical.