

Jim Delisle Presentation - Parenting Gifted Kids: Tips for Raising Happy and Successful Children

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Davidson Institute for Talent Development

Jim Delisle provides parents a number of strategies to encourage and support their gifted students.

Presented by Dr. James R. Delisle

Is It a Cheetah?

By Stephanie S. Tolan

The child, who does well in school, gets good grades, wins awards, and "performs" beyond the norms for his or her age, is considered talented. The child who does not, no matter what his innate intellectual capacities or developmental level, is less and less likely to be identified, less and less likely to be served.

A cheetah metaphor can help us see the problem with achievement-oriented thinking. The cheetah is the fastest animal on earth. When we think of cheetahs we are likely to think first of their speed. It's flashy. It is impressive. It's unique. And it makes identification incredibly easy. Since cheetahs are the only animals that can run 70 mph, if you clock an animal running 70 mph, IT'S A CHEETAH!

Certain conditions are necessary if it is to attain its famous 70 mph top speed...it must be healthy, fit, and rested. It must have plenty of room to run. Besides that, it is best motivated to run all out when it is hungry and there are antelope to chase.

If a cheetah is confined to a 10x12 foot cage, though it may pace or fling itself against the bars in restless frustration, it won't run 70 mph. IS IT STILL A CHEETAH?

If a cheetah has only 20 mph rabbits to chase for food, it won't run 70 mph while hunting. If it did, it would flash past its prey and go hungry! Though it might well run on its own for exercise, recreation, fulfillment of its internal drive, when given only rabbits to eat, the hunting cheetah will run only fast enough to catch a rabbit. IS IT STILL A CHEETAH?

If a cheetah is fed Zoo Chow it may not run at all. IS IT STILL A CHEETAH?

If a cheetah is sick or if its legs have been broken, it won't even walk. IS IT STILL A CHEETAH?

And finally, if the cheetah is only six weeks old, it can't yet run 70 mph. IS IT, THEN, ONLY A "POTENTIAL" CHEETAH?

A school system that defines giftedness (or talent) as behavior, achievement, and performance is as compromised in its ability to recognize its highly gifted students and to give them what they need as a zoo would be to recognize and provide for its cheetahs if it looked only for speed.

From "Is it a Cheetah?" © 1996 Stephanie S. Tolan. Used with permission. The complete essay is available on the web at www.stephanietolan.com.

Giftedness is a greater awareness, a greater sensitivity, and a greater ability to understand and transform perceptions into intellectual and emotional experiences.

- Annemarie Roeper

Parenting Gifted Kids: Tips for Raising Happy and Successful Children
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James R. Delisle, Ph.D.

1. Understand what giftedness is...and what it is not

2. Know the distinction between "better at" and "better than"
3. Stop paying interest on a bill you never owed
4. Take charge of your child's education
5. Appreciate that less than perfect is more than acceptable
6. Live the nuanced life
7. Use the past to understand the present
8. Write your dreams in pencil
9. Make a life, not just a living
10. Understand that life is not a race to see who gets to the end the fastest

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INTENSITY

A salient descriptor that characterizes the personality of a gifted child is intensity. Intensity takes many forms that can be both strengths and weaknesses. Recognizing and understanding these intensities can help toward improving the social and emotional life of a child.

- INTENSITY OF THOUGHT
"Her mind is always whirring."
- INTENSITY OF PURPOSE
"Once he makes up his mind to do something, he's not satisfied until it's accomplished."
- INTENSITY OF EMOTION
"She internalizes anything anyone says about her."
- INTENSITY OF SPIRIT
"He's always looking for someone less fortunate who needs help."
- INTENSITY OF SOUL
"She asks questions that philosophers have asked for centuries and gets upset when we can't give her definitive answers to them."

From J.R. Delisle, Once Upon a Mind: The stories and scholars of gifted child education. 2000. Illustrations on subsequent pages are used with permission of Dr. James Delisle.

17 Ways to Show You Care

- Excerpted from the Research Institute of Minneapolis

1. Hide surprises for them to find. Contribute to their collections.
2. Clip magazine pictures and articles that interest them.
3. Help them to become an expert at something.
4. Tell them about yourself. Admit when you make a mistake.
5. Tell them stories in which they are the hero.
6. Notice when they grow.
7. Help them learn something new.
8. Be silly together.
9. Share a secret.
10. Help them take a stand, and stand with them.
11. Look in their eyes when you talk with them.
12. Tell them their feelings are ok.
13. Forget your worries sometimes and concentrate only on them.
14. Notice when they are acting different.
15. Send them a letter or postcard.
16. Give them a special nickname.
17. Create a tradition with them, and keep it.

How to Grow Up Creatively Gifted

1. Don't be afraid to "fall in love" with something and pursue it with intensity. (You will do best what you like to do most.)
2. Know, understand, take pride in, practice, develop, use, exploit, and enjoy your greatest strengths.
3. Learn to free yourself from the expectations of others and to walk away from the games they try to impose on you.

4. Free yourself to "play your own game" in such a way as to make good use of your gifts.
5. Find a great teacher or mentor who will help you.
6. Don't waste a lot of expensive, unproductive energy trying to be well rounded. (Don't try to do everything; do what you can do well and what you love.)
7. Learn the skills of interdependence. (Learn to depend upon one another, giving freely of your greatest strengths and most intense loves.)

(Torrance, Murdock and Fletcher, 1996, Preface)

86 words of encouragement for children.

If there is any single bit of advice to give parents to improve child behavior, it is positive reinforcement. In order to never run short of appropriate words for this purpose, use this list.

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|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| 1. You're on the right track now! | 30. SUPER! | |
| 2. You're doing a good job! | 31. Nice going. | 59. That's quite an improvement. |
| 3. You did a lot of work today! | 32. You make it look easy. | 60. That kind of work makes me very happy. |
| 4. Now you've figured it out. | 33. Way to go! | 61. Now you've figured it out! |
| 5. That's RIGHT!!! | 34. You're doing much better today. | 62. PERFECT! |
| 6. Now you have the hang of it! | 35. I've never seen anyone do it better. | 63. FINE! |
| 7. That's the way! | 36. Superb! | 64. That's IT! |
| 8. You're doing fine. | 37. You're getting better every day. | 65. You figured it out fast. |
| 9. Now you have it! | 38. WONDERFUL! | 66. You remembered! |
| 10. That's coming along nicely. | 39. I knew you could do it. | 67. You're really improving. |
| 11. That's great! | 40. Keep working on it, you're getting better. | 68. I think you've got it now. |
| 12. You did it that time! | 41. You're doing beautifully. | 69. Well look at you go! |
| 13. GREAT! | 42. You're really working hard today. | 70. You've got that down pat. |
| 14. FANTASTIC! | 43. That's the way to do it! | 71. Good work! |
| 15. TERRIFIC! | 44. Keep on trying! | 72. Outstanding! |
| 16. TREMENDOUS! | 45. You're the best! | 73. I like that. |
| 17. How did you do that? | 46. Nothing can stop you now! | 74. Couldn't have done it better myself. |
| 18. That's better. | 47. You've got it made. | 75. Now that's what I call a fine job. |
| 19. EXCELLENT! | 48. You're very good at that. | 76. You did that very well. |
| 20. That's a good (boy-girl). | 49. You certainly did well today. | 77. Congratulations! |
| 21. That's the best you've ever done. | 50. I'm very proud of you. | 78. That was first class work. |
| 22. Keep it up! | 51. You're learning fast. | 79. SENSATIONAL! |
| 23. That's really nice. | 52. You've just about got it. | 80. That's the best ever. |
| 24. WOW! | 53. That's good! | 81. You haven't missed a thing. |
| 25. Keep up the good work. | 54. I'm happy to see you working like that. | 82. It's a pleasure to teach you when you work like that. |
| 26. Much better! | 55. I'm proud of the way you worked today. | 83. You really make my job fun. |
| 27. Good for you! | 56. That's the right way to do it. | 84. You've just about mastered that! |
| 28. Good thinking! | 57. You're really learning a lot. | 85. One more time and you'll have it. |
| 29. Exactly right! | 58. That's better than ever. | 86. You must have been practicing. |

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