

Giftedness: Living with it and Liking It: A Workshop  
for Gifted Kids and Their Parents

Presented by

Dr. James R Delisle

For

(INSERT SPONOSRING GROUP HERE)

(INSERT TOWN/LOCATION HERE)

(INSERT PRESENTATION DATE HERE)

## GETTING TO KNOW YOU . . . BETTER

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS WILL HELP ME TO GET TO KNOW YOUR INTERESTS . . . DREAMS . . . QUIRKS . . . AND PERSONALITY. PLEASE ANSWER EACH QUESTION IN ONE OR TWO SENTENCES (OR, AT TIMES, A SINGLE WORD).

1. What is your favorite word? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is your least favorite word? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is your favorite sound? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is your least favorite sound? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What is your idea of perfect happiness? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. What is your greatest fear? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. What trait or behavior of yours do you dislike the most? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. What trait or behavior do you dislike the most in others? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. On what occasion do you lie? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. What do you consider your greatest achievement? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. What is your greatest regret? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. What is your most cherished possession? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. Where would you most like to live? \_\_\_\_\_
14. What do you value the most in your friends? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
15. Who are your real-life heroes? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
16. Who are your fictional heroes? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
17. What is it that you most dislike? \_\_\_\_\_

Your name \_\_\_\_\_

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

**--Annemarie Roeper**

# Maddening Myths

There are many misconceptions about what it means to be gifted. Here are ten of the most common myths we've encountered over the years:

**Myth #1:** Gifted kids have it made and will succeed in life no matter what. They don't need any special help in school or anywhere else.

**Fact:** Everyone needs encouragement – and help – to make the most of their abilities and succeed in life.

**Myth #2:** Gifted kids should love school, get high grades, and greet each new schoolday with enthusiasm.

**Fact:** Most schools are geared for average learners, not gifted learners, which makes it hard for gifted students to get excited about going. Some of the most talented students in the United States actually choose to drop out of school altogether.

**Myth #3:** Gifted students come from white middle – and upper-class families.

**Fact:** They come from all cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups.

**Myth #4:** Gifted kids are good at everything they do.

**Fact:** Some gifted students are good at many things; others are exceptionally able at only a few things. Some gifted students are also learning disabled, \*which means that they might not be very good at schoolwork.

**Myth #5:** Teachers love to have gifted students in their classes.

**Fact:** Some do, some don't. Certain teachers feel uncomfortable with gifted students and get defensive when they suspect that their students know more than they do.

**Myth #6:** If gifted students are grouped together, they will become snobbish and elitist.

**Fact:** Some will, some won't. What's especially pernicious about this myth is that some adults use it to rationalize decisions about not allowing gifted students to work or study together or not providing them with opportunities that meet their learning needs.

**Myth #7:** All gifted kids have trouble adjusting to school and forming friendships.

**Fact:** Some do, some don't – just like other kids.

**Myth #8:** Gifted students don't know that they're "different" unless someone tells them.

**Fact:** Most gifted kids don't need to be identified or labeled before they know that they're not quite like their age peers.

**Myth #9:** Gifted students must constantly be challenged and kept busy or they'll get lazy.

**Fact:** They might get bored, but they won't necessarily get lazy.

**Myth #10:** Gifted kids are equally mature in all areas – academic, physical, social, and emotional.

**Fact:** That would be convenient, but it's not a reasonable expectation. On the other hand, it's not fair to assume that just because someone is advanced intellectually, he or she will lag behind in other developmental areas.

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\*We prefer the term "learning different" because we believe that it more accurately reflects individual characteristics

Excerpted from *The Gifted Kids' Survival Guide A Teen Handbook*, by Judy Galbraith, M.A. and Jim Delisle, Ph.D.  
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## Eight Great Gripes of Gifted Kids

1.

No one explains what being gifted is all about—it's kept a big secret.

2.

School is too easy and too boring.

3.

Parents, teachers, and friends expect us to be perfect all the time.

4.

Friends who really understand us are few and far between.

5.

Kids often tease us about being smart.

6.

We feel overwhelmed by the number of things we can do in life.

7.

We feel different and alienated.

8.

We worry about world problems and feel helpless to do anything about them.

Do you have other gripes that aren't on this list? Write them here:

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# GIFTED PEOPLE SPEAK OUT

Vamir, 15

I was classified as “gifted” in second grade. This was really driven home when I skipped two grades, going from fifth grade to seventh over winter break. Though the social adjustment was rough initially, since then I have been fine both socially and academically. My major problem now is relationships with girls – I don’t know too many my own age, and college girls are rather reluctant to have a relationship with someone so young.

Throughout the years, I have found myself and my gifted classmates to be motivated, curious, creative, and strong-willed (well...stubborn). In high school, especially, I noticed the independence of gifted students.

I don’t know about you, but I’ve never liked the word “gifted,” I don’t think “capable” or “special” are specific enough, and “intelligent” isn’t at all subtle. “Talented” seems to be okay, but if you’ve got a better word, I’m all ears.

A little bit about myself: My parents are both highly educated professionals, and I think that I am gifted entirely because of them (but my accomplishments are my own). My mother is a physician and my father is an engineer. Both of them apply science to their jobs. At the University, I am majoring in physics and math, possibly with another major and at least a substantial minor in economics. After college, there’ll be more study, but I’m not sure what – either graduate physics or business (or possibly both, in time).

I am interested in science (especially physics), mathematics (algebra), philosophy (logic) and finance (futures trading). I like to read about these topics and some science fiction and espionage, as well as the “classics” that I started reading in my Humanities and Social Science classes. I participate in College Bowl and Model United Nations, too.

Here are some of my concerns as a “gifted student.” I hate it when adults are condescending to me simply because of my age (if it’s because I’ve done something stupid, it’s my fault). Most people don’t give kids enough credit, so I try to treat younger children like they are my age, and those that can talk are usually mature enough to act that way. I also hate it when my parents (usually my dad) show me off to friends and acquaintances. I talked to him about it and he does it less and less, but he still does it.

I hate it when I have so many thoughts that I lose one (which has happened to me at least a dozen times while writing this). I also hate it when I cannot think of anything, and when I have a really neat thought that I can’t investigate more deeply because I just don’t have the educational background.

I worry too much. I worry about “losing my talents.” I worry about becoming average. I worry about my “lost childhood” and the opportunities I’ve missed because of my advancement. I worry I will burn out or overspecialize. I worry about how successful I will be in my career and whether my colleagues will accept me (and whether they do now).

Competition, standards, and records I am striving for confuse me. Do I really want to do this? I cannot decide. Should I keep speeding up? The answer must be no, right? These questions make me doubt myself, my abilities, my sanity. It hurts.

About deciding on a career. Just like a little philosophy makes one an atheist while a lot makes you religious, a little knowledge makes you certain about your career, while more makes you uncertain once again. I have so many ideas for what to do and who to be.

I wish you luck as you grow up gifted. Always examine how you feel about school, learning friends, and yourself.

*Vamir is a freshman at a major midwestern university.*

# Highly Gifted .....

## A Personal Response to Affective Issues of the Highly Gifted

Christine Badawy

I am highly gifted. I don't normally go round telling people or wearing a badge that identifies me as such. However, for the purposes of this article I thought it better to be straight with you.

So to the topic under discussion: affective issues of the highly gifted. The thought did cross my mind to write profoundly on the topic but then I quickly dismissed it. I'm trying to cut down on the number of deep and meaningful thoughts I have before breakfast. Instead here is a spontaneous response to the topic that will be posed as a series of questions arising from my own experiences.

- Why is giftedness linked to achievement, i.e., what I can or can't do instead of what and how I feel?
- Why do adults compare people to one another instead of seeing the individual person?
- Do psychologists/psychiatrists and educators understand that when they use terms like intelligent, creative, oversensitive, hyperactive, achieving, disciplined, etc., their language reflects their values and not me?
- Why can't adults readily accept that a four year old can have profound thoughts and breakdowns and to think seriously about suicide when I'm seven doesn't necessarily mean I'm depressed – rather, I'm considering all my options?
- Isn't it frustrating that the majority of teachers appear to be extraverts with no real understanding of the meaning of introversion or the needs of introverts?
- Why do teachers act as counselors if they can't listen or stand not having a quick solution? No wonder I piss them off when they ask me what's wrong and then quickly move into solution mode instead of staying with me in the unknown?
- Where are the adults who are willing to stand up and say I don't know; I'm still searching; I'm not sure if the questions ever stop; some questions just keep on coming back; I get more sure of myself as I age; etc.?
- Who says that growing up gifted necessarily means wanting to get high grades, going to college and getting a good job?
- How hard would it be for schools to allow open access to quiet places to people like me who find being around people draining and need time to reflect?
- What alternatives do educators and psychologists have to offer or am I expected to accept their frame of reference?

Why do psychologists say, "I take your point but...?"

On the question of achievement (yes, it is one of my pet topics) – if I live a responsible life where I take care of myself and live in harmony with my fellow human beings and the environment, aren't I an achiever?

How come adults, especially parents, who put so much emphasis on gifted people *fitting in*, can't see that they're dealing with their own issues through me?

Why is it when I put aside the masks and talk honestly people feel threatened?

Do educators have any idea how frustrating school can be when I can't have the time needed for in-depth study or how irrelevant it becomes when I develop my interests out of school?

Why ask me questions if you're not prepared to wait for or consider my answers?

Do teachers understand that while introverts hate calling attention to themselves they will go out of their way to be noticed when students are treated as a group and that this is not exhibitionism, merely a desire to be recognized as an individual?

Where are the alternative positive role models?

Have you noticed that adults expect kids to wear the label *gifted* when they won't?

Have you watched adults squirm and listened to their responses when you ask them if they're gifted? What does this say about how they define giftedness and what messages does this send people, especially kids, about giftedness and being OK?

Do adults understand that my black humor helps me deal with the intense pain, anger, and frustration I feel?

How come parents and teachers persist in the belief that school underachievement will be reversed by taking away my passions or interests or by holding them to ransom; and then seem surprised when I lose the will to co-operate or even live?

I am intuitive; I know things and I don't know how I know, I just do. I can sometimes work out how I got certain responses while others I just have to accept. Understand?

Can you really accept that I know what's best for me?

# 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 the 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 everything 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.  
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# Ten Tips for Talking to Teachers

Are you having a problem with a class or an assignment? Can you see room for improvement in how a subject is taught? Do you have a better idea for a special project or term paper? Don't just tell your friends. Talk to the teacher!

Many students have told us that they don't know how to go about doing this. The following suggestions are meant to make it easier for everyone—students and teachers.

- 1. Make an appointment to meet and talk.** This shows the teacher that you're serious and you have some understanding of his or her busy schedule. Tell the teacher about how much time you'll need, be flexible, and don't be late.
- 2. If you know other students who feel the way you do, consider approaching the teacher together.** There's strength in numbers. If a teacher hears the same thing from four or five people, he or she is more likely to do something about it.
- 3. Think through what you want to say before you go into your meeting with the teacher.** Write down your questions or concerns. Make a list of the items you want to cover. You may even want to copy your list for the teacher so both of you can consult it during your meeting. (Or consider giving it to the teacher ahead of time.)
- 4. Choose your words carefully.**  
Example: Instead of saying,  
"I hate doing reports; they're boring and a waste of time," try, "Is there some other way I could satisfy this requirement? Could I do a video instead?"  
Strike the word "boring" from your vocabulary. It's a buzzword for teachers.
- 5. Don't expect the teacher to do all of the work or propose all of the answers.** Be prepared to make suggestions, offer solutions, even recommend resources. The teacher will appreciate that you took the initiative.
- 6. Be diplomatic, tactful, and respectful.** Teachers have feelings, too.
- 7. Focus on what you need, not on what you think the teacher is doing wrong.** The more the teacher learns about you, the more he or she will be able to help. The more defensive the teacher feels, the less he or she will want to help.
- 8. Don't forget to listen.** Strange but true, many students need practice in this essential skill. The purpose of your meeting isn't just to hear yourself talk.
- 9. Bring your sense of humor.** Not necessarily the joke-telling sense of humor, but the one that lets you laugh at yourself and your own misunderstandings and mistakes.
- 10. If your meeting isn't successful, get help from another adult.** "Successful" doesn't necessarily mean that you emerged victorious. Even if the teacher denies your request, your meeting can still be judged successful. If you had a real conversation—if you communicated openly, listened carefully, and respected each other's point of view—then congratulate yourself on a great meeting. If the air crackled with tension, the meeting fell apart, and you felt disrespected (or acted disrespectful), then it's time to bring in another adult. Suggestions: a guidance counselor, the gifted program coordinator, or another teacher you know and trust who seems likely to support you and advocate for you. Once you've found help, approach your teacher and try again.

Just asking . . .  
Questions to ask gifted kids

1. How much information (e.g. test scores, IQ scores) should parents tell you about your intelligence?
2. Is grade skipping a good alternative for gifted kids? Why or why not?
3. Is there anyone in your class not identified as gifted but who should be identified as gifted? What makes you think so?
4. Is there a circumstance under which you would not choose to earn an "A", even though you could? Explain.
5. Does having a mature mind make you more prone to stress? Explain.
6. In what situations is competition helpful? In what situations is it harmful?
7. Is it possible to spend too much time alone? Distinguish how you might know if this were the case.
8. Under what circumstances, if any, is disobedience a virtue in a child or adolescent?
9. How do you deal with adults who are your intellectual inferiors?

# Journalism as Life

## Thomas L. Friedman

The following quotes are excerpts from Friedman's commencement address, given at Williams College, June 5, 2005

Whatever you plan to do, whether you plan to travel the world next year, go to graduate school, join the workforce, or take some time off to think, don't just listen to your head. Listen to your heart. It is the best career counselor there is. Do what you really love to do and if you don't know quite what that is yet, well, keep searching, because if you find it, you'll bring that something extra to your work that will help ensure you will not be automated or outsourced. It'll help make you an untouchable radiologist, an untouchable engineer, or an untouchable teacher.

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The best way to learn how to learn is to go around and ask all of your friends who are the best teachers in your school and then just take their classes, whether it is Greek Mythology or physics. . . When I think back on my favorite teachers, I am not sure I remember much anymore of what they taught, but I sure remember learning it.

#####

In this age of laptops and PDAs, the Internet and Google, mp3s and iPods, remember one thing: all these tools might make you smarter, but they won't make you smart; they might extend your reach, but they will never tell you what to say to your neighbor over the fence, or how to confront a friend in need, or how to write a lead that sings or how to imagine a breakthrough in science or literature. You cannot download passion, imagination, zest and creativity--all that stuff that will make you untouchable. You have to upload it, the old fashioned-way, under the olive tree, with reading, writing and arithmetic, travel, study, reflection, museum visits and human interaction.



Consider what you have learned in our course this semester, in our course meetings, your outside activities (Special ed. presentations, NEOEA Day, Open House, etc.) and in your classroom-based field experiences. Then, with those experiences as your base, answer the following:

1. Who (and what) has *engaged* you?
2. Who (or what) has **ENRAGED** you?
3. Who (or what) has *inspired* you?
4. Who (or what) has *confused* you?
5. Who (or what) **worries** you?
6. Who (or what) makes you *excited* about becoming a teacher?
7. Who (or what) causes you **ANXIETY** about the thought of becoming a teacher?
8. What do you know now (about schools, kids and/or teaching) that you didn't know in August?
9. What **DON'T YOU KNOW** yet (about schools, kids and/or teaching) that you still need to learn?
10. On a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high), how *confident* are you in your career choice--to become an educator? Is this score higher or lower than it was at the beginning of this term? **Explain** yourself.