

Parenting Perspectives: Parenting the Gifted Child 101
Skinner North: April 26, 2017

1. Opening remarks
 - a. Try to avoid traps (with gifted children) & use tools
 - b. What we choose to do as parents is probably most important
 - c. Important to have a plan and be consistent
 - d. Parents need to parent consciously and take responsibility for ourselves as parents
 - e. Sometimes parents forget to nurture our kids in all ways, including emotionally
2. Examples of some of the traps parents of gifted kids could accidentally fall into:
 - a. Trap 1 - Forgetting their actual age
 - i. Child may speak intelligently about seem to be advanced areas of interest, and then have a temper tantrum over what type of cookie they want.
 - ii. Even though some experiences can suggest they are older, some of the behaviors are not (but are actually their age)
 - iii. Should be careful about expecting too much
 - iv. Need to avoid loving your kids for their IQ (or falling in love with their IQ)
 - v. Google: what to expect for ___ year old (as a reality check to what to really expect at ___ age)
 - b. Trap 2 - Strong verbal reasoning skills
 - i. Child doing research on the computer (global warming, for example) but then asked to do a chore (clean their rooms). The child does everything possible to convenience the parent that they don't need to clean their room because they are researching something.
 - ii. Child actually changed the subject and took control of parent
 - iii. Child setting the rules and makes convincing arguments
 - iv. Parent gets trapped "how could I stop my child from expanding their brain?"
 - v. Parents need to be mindful that their child's "expanding" brain should not keep them from their responsibilities
 - c. Trap 3 – Perfectionism
 - i. Child comes home and wants to tell parent about a story, but the parent starts looking through graded work and notices a few wrong answers
 - ii. I got this wrong, thinks the child, and then panic attack) Parents may unknowingly send this message when focused on grades that child is only "worthy" when getting As.
 - iii. Gifted kids have emotional intensity that can overwhelm
 - iv. Mistakes do not equal failure (need to re-assure them as parents)
 - v. Kids may then resist trying something new for fear of failure or feeling inadequate
 - vi. Gifted kids can get stuck; get into negative self-talk
 - vii. Want to pro-actively help

- viii. Need to normalize mistakes; Celebrate and talk about learning from mistakes
 - ix. Do not want to praise grades, but want to praise the effort
 - x. Proactively teach calming down (deep breath, explain it to me, break into small parts, take your time)
 - xi. Resist urge to minimize. Focus on empathy
 - xii. Parents should tell kids when they've made mistakes and how they have managed through them
 - xiii. Be proactive. Notice when your child uses calming techniques and point out all the things they did to help them regulate themselves to a calm place
- d. Trap 4 – Having Unreasonable Expectations
- i. Parents sometimes try to project their ideas of childhood onto their kids. Parent may think the child should want to go outside and play, but all the child really wants to do is stay inside and read
 - ii. Accept that they may not want to do what you/we think is typical child behavior (or is important to normally develop life skills etc)
 - iii. Don't be overly worried
 - iv. Over 50% of gifted kids are introverted. Introverts usually get their restorative downtime by being alone, and this could be what they need to refuel
 - v. Want to accept them for who they are and help them develop their social skills; loud places could easily overwhelm a gifted and introverted child
 - vi. Tune into interests, skills, talents and work around that
 - vii. Parent for long run... approach with love and acceptance
 - viii. Put yourself in your child's shoes
 - ix. Don't focus on the unacceptable behavior
 - x. Hypersensitivity - want to understand their temperament
 - xi. Need to focus on helping with the emotions. What their behavior is about
 - xii. Don't punish based on temperament
 - xiii. Need to pay attention to ourselves as parents – when we encounter the following behaviors:
 - Whining
 - Why
 - Transitions
 - Technology
 - Sibling altercations
 - xiv. Look out for triggers to push our buttons. Our reactions typically “in the moment” (but try and mitigate/eliminate):

-Don't threaten with consequences

-Don't over-react

- Don't Yell (back)

-Worrying/anxiety

xv. How do the kids feel

xvi. Need to CHOOSE how to react. Keep in mind that it is difficult/not easy to consistently react because:

-Conscious mind 5%

-Subconscious mind 95% (which often overrides; based on how are parents raised us, life experiences, parent's pain or worry; sometimes just comes out of nowhere).

d. Tools

i. Tool- Hit the PAUSE button

ii. Parents pay attention to what pushes our own buttons because when we react by yelling, shaming, saying things we wish we didn't, ignore, shame, threaten, we usually always feel horrible. Kids end up feeling sad, mistreated, blindsided. Instead, hit the pause button

1. Get some space - breath

2. Ask yourself: How can I be a loving teacher to my child in this moment? Help my child learn how to manage emotions?

ii. Tool 1- Acceptance

1. Avoid categorizing

2. Our culture seems to see some feelings as acceptable when others (like anger and sadness) are deemed wrong

3. Feelings aren't right or wrong

4. Need to help teach how to manage (but need to first accept)

5. Don't minimize feelings or scold

6. Empathize with the child

7. Let child have space to calm down

8. Gifted kids often sense our feelings and then adopt whatever feelings we are experiencing (our worry, anger, frustration, sadness, etc)

9. When we block or minimize emotions, we may accidentally send the message that those feelings are wrong. This could make the child feel invisible, kids could then become pleasers and push their feelings inward

10. PROVIDE PAUSE AND POISE

11. CALM IS KEY. DO NOT TAKE THE BAIT

iii. Tool 2 – Limit Setting- kids need to know what to expect, get clear on the rules; kids will still push! Follow these steps:

1. A - Acknowledge feelings, empathize

2. B - Briefly state the rule (or have the child state the rule)

3. C - Choices - offer 2 choices (if child is 4 or younger) or have an older child offer better alternatives; tell the child you have confidence in them to find a solution themselves (if appropriate)

4. D - Be done/detach/disengage when the child keeps pushing; otherwise you are likely to get into a power struggle

5. Do all four steps CALM. Having a plan helps
 6. Tell them you love them too much to fight with them
- iv. Tool 3 - Self Calming; need to teach them how
1. Try a family exercise: write down what makes you feel calm?
 2. Take your time
 3. Create a new family plan; if anyone gets upset or out of control, everyone is going to think about what makes you feel calm (exclude electronics); play music, writing, doing a puzzle, etc.
 4. Encourage your child to think "what does calm look like in my body?"
 5. Do a role play
 6. Go around and read each others lists
 7. When out of control, need to pick something from list
 8. This will help children learn how to find their own ways to "calm"

Ran out of time; did not review the following tools in detail

- v. Tool 4 - Help develop their EQ & social skills
- vi. Tool 5 - support your child's passions and interests
- vii. Tool 6 - support finding friends w similar interests

3. Summary

- a. Consequences don't have to be immediate; it's okay to pause and calm down before coming up with a consequence