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Strategies for Parenting Your Gifted Child

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1. Talk with your child about "being gifted" and what it means to them. Understanding giftedness leads to self-acceptance. Use giftedness to explain, not excuse, behavior.
2. Listen to gifted children. Many gifted children are incredibly verbal, so much so that some parents get tired of the chatter and begin to tune them out. Actively listen to your child, particularly when they are sharing personal information, and use reflective listening to emphasize emotional content and reflect feelings.
3. Foster understanding and acceptance. Help your child identify and accept talents and strengths as well as weaknesses. Most gifted children are not gifted in all areas, and some may have learning disabilities that cause frustration and affect personal growth.
4. Challenge your gifted child and provide encouragement to stretch. Allow the freedom to explore and provide the necessary support as they take on increasing challenges.
5. Encourage intellectual risk-taking and make "failure" acceptable in certain situations to help combat perfectionism. Perfectionism, a common trait among gifted, can lead to avoidance. Focus on effort rather than outcome alone to help build strong work habits and decrease perfectionist tendencies.
6. Avoid sarcasm with young gifted children—even if they use it—because they may not understand it as such. Some gifted children take comments literally and will not see the irony. Sarcastic comments taken literally can chip away at a child's self-esteem.
7. Separate the behavior from the child. Remember to praise or reprimand the behavior rather than the child by using specific comments directed at the undesired behavior rather than broad, negative generalizations about the child. "That behavior is not allowed here" is better than "I have just had it with you today!"
8. Model what you want. Children learn communication and self-discipline from your behavior. What do your actions say about you? Remember, "Do as I do" is better than "Do as I say."
9. Do not use a child's ability to point out his shortcomings, such as, "You're so smart, why can't you _____?" This creates internal negative feelings toward a child's inherent gifted characteristic. Doing this makes no more sense than blaming a child for eye color or criticizing height.
10. Provide your child with learning experiences by allowing natural consequences to occur. This will help you avoid being the "bad guy" some of the time. Instead, you can play a supportive role by helping your child see how to avoid such negative consequences in the future.
11. Avoid unnecessary power struggles by being consistent. Set only those limits you can and intend to enforce. Don't threaten or promise if you are unwilling or unable to follow through. Gifted children will remember and be quick to engage you in non-productive power struggles if you fail to follow through.