

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GIFTED AND TALENTED

By Annemarie Roeper (1977)

- Gifted children need a great deal of physical activity and opportunity for creative experience.
- The young gifted children often develop their own method of learning. Their style of learning may differ from all others around them.
- Young gifted children use verbal ability for communication instead of actions.
- Young gifted children may be more dependent on adults for communication. In fact, they may interact better with adults than with their peers.
- The gifted child is sensitive to any kind of image making, to any kind of behavior that is a cover up.
- The young gifted child will notice if one tries to fool him/her.
- Young gifted children are often perfectionists. They feel that they must live up to high standards. This often makes them anxious and inhibits their interest in trying to do something new.
- Gifted children are often more dependent on adults than other children because they understand that they don't have the skills to carry out their own research and their own projects. They are often frustrated, in fact, for these reasons. They can figure out things very well but don't have the ability and the skills to carry out that which they understand intellectually. They need help from the adults to carry out their projects and to limit their projects so that they can be realistically accomplished.
- Young gifted children have great problem awareness. Therefore, they sometimes act particularly infantile. The world is too dangerous to take on its responsibilities.
- Therefore, it is not unusual that gifted children are toilet trained particularly late.
- Gifted children need rules and regulations for their own inner securities because they are so overwhelmed with impressions that they may not want to follow them all and end up with more than they can handle. They need help to understand the structure of the world.
- Most of all young gifted children need to feel they are understood. They often know they are different and suffer from this feeling.
- Gifted pre-school children need other gifted children with whom to communicate. In fact, where there are only two in a group, you will find that they gravitate to each other.
- They often have a more sophisticated vocabulary than other children and truly feel not understood by other children.

- The kind of activities they get involved in with each other are also more sophisticated than those activities of average children. They often like to play chess, for instance, at the age of four or five.
- Young gifted children often develop a great fear of death because they are aware of its inevitability.
- They often develop fears and anger about war and any other kind of injustice and violence.
- They often struggle with the fact that adults are sometimes inconsistent and unreasonable. It is a great shock to them.
- Young gifted children often have an extremely good memory, which also helps them to learn.
- Their manual dexterity is usually not advanced and may even be behind others. This grows from the fact that their knowledge and understanding go way beyond their ability to do something with their hands.
- Gifted children love to define words.
- Gifted children love projects to be developed by them but they need the help of the teachers. They are not interested in projects that are completely structured but more in the kind that are based on the inquiry method.
- Young gifted children are not particularly daring. They will not make a quick commitment to something before they understand what it is all about, how it will work and what it will entail. Some children do not walk until later.
- Gifted children may need more sleep than other children.
- They need opportunity for solitude and for reflection.
- Gifted children often have a true thirst for knowledge. They may be like the true scientist and philosopher who want to learn without an ulterior motive. They want to incorporate the world by knowing about it.
- Most gifted children love books.
- Even though gifted children are very active, they often have a long concentration span when something interests them.
- The gifted child may be interested in many areas but may also concentrate on one specific interest. They may become specialists at a young age. They may, for instance, develop a consuming interest and gather an amazing amount of information about dinosaurs.

- Gifted children often have a mature sense of humor. With their advanced understanding of the world, certain jokes and puns seem funny to them while the average child may not see anything humorous in them.
- Gifted children may, as do others, develop emotional problems. These take on different form and expression in the gifted. For instance, an average child who is dealt with too strictly may become angry and aggressive with other children. This may be true for the gifted child also, but in addition, he/she may develop skills in lying and stealing. In most children the expedience of dishonesty is not discovered until a later age.
- Sometimes gifted children try to outsmart their parents and teachers and in this way gain control. Yet they feel lost and confused when they realize that they are actually able to manipulate their parents.
- Gifted children are often self-taught readers, are able to learn simple mathematical concepts, very eager and able to learn science and social studies concepts.
- Gifted children have an outstanding verbal ability.
- Gifted children are extremely sensitive.

These are only a few of the characteristics that I have observed over the years. I think this list may become much longer, but even as it is, it may be helpful in identifying and understanding gifted children.

- In the young gifted child there is a difference between the emotional level of development and the intellectual one. They are not in balance. Emotionally a child may be three years old and intellectually, eight. This makes for a completely different personality structure than in a child where both these areas are on the same level. Physical development may again be on a different level.
- The young gifted child becomes an abstract thinker before he/she is emotionally ready to deal with this cognitive understanding.
- Young gifted children are sometimes actually driven to explore the world and anything in their surroundings.
- They may be extremely active in a goal-oriented manner, but are confused as being the hyperactive child.
- The gifted child wants to master the environment. He/she wants to learn for learning's sake rather than living up to someone else's standards.

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