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Gifted Adults and their Careers

By Cathy Goodwin, Ph.D.

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"James is so restless and energetic. I wonder if he's hyperactive."

"Nancy seems to be all over the place. She's got a dozen projects going at once!"

"Harley does things so fast! He put up a website in two weeks."

"Marlene is so intense. She needs to lighten up."

While it's possible that James is hyperactive, Nancy is scattered, Harley skates on thin ice and Marlene is depressed, it is also possible that each of these people wears the label, "gifted adult."

Gifted children often lose interest in school because they're bored. They don't always get top grades because they think in unconventional patterns.

Gifted adults can be misunderstood. Those who read books like Jacobsen's *The Gifted Adult* often feel relieved: "Finally, someone understands where I'm coming from!"

Gifted adults often face unique career challenges. Job environments rarely reward creativity, a hallmark of the gifted, and frequently punish anyone who threatens to color outside the lines. Corporations often resemble football games, where players are rewarded for being in position to receive the ball everyone wins by executing the coach's play. Gifted people function better when their game resembles playground basketball, where you can scramble and make plays as you go.

And when gifted adults seek career guidance, they must filter feedback they receive from well-meaning advisors who are not familiar with their situation.

"Whoa! You're trying to be a jack-of-all trades and you'll end up a master of none."

"Wow! I've never seen anyone move as fast as you do. I'm sure you're going to be a success."

"You need to slow down."

"Focus on one thing at a time."

"I can't understand --- you need to focus."

"Boy, you're catching on fast! You must be well-suited to this field."

If you're gifted, you probably already have some idea that you're "different." Read a few books and articles. Browse websites. Understanding how you operate can help you avoid, "Why is this happening" questions and reach success on your own terms.

Cathy Goodwin, Ph.D., author of *Making the Big Move*, offers straightforward career and business consulting to midlife professionals. *When your career means business" Your Next Move ezine:
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Gifted Children

By Rexanne Mancini

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There has been much discussion on the difficult child. Let's look at the gifted child. Not to imply that gifted children aren't difficult ... as a matter of fact, I hold the belief that most difficult children are probably gifted and therein lies a part of their social problem. For clarity, let's refer to the gifted child in this article as the one who excels at academics and extra curricular activities of an extraordinary nature.

My older daughter has a friend, Megan, who is highly gifted ... highly gifted being a step grander than gifted in the public school system. In her special class, she has massive amounts of homework, incredibly difficult assignments and a rigorous school schedule, including mandatory extra hours. Her after school activities include piano lessons, singing lessons (she's great!) and any other challenging activity she can persuade her parents to pay for. Megan is an incredible child ... sweet, personable and kindhearted. We rally round her with each new accomplishment. This is a child who clearly shines in her highly gifted classes and is happy to be there.

My older daughter is very bright, too. OK, bragging but she really is! ;-) She was pegged by her preschool teachers as destined for the gifted groups in elementary school. Well, turns out she was never tested, which, in California, must be done only on the request of her teachers. She graduates with honors each year but her social life is much too important to her and she has never shown the focus or passion for learning that other gifted and highly gifted children we know have demonstrated.

I've come to the conclusion that gifted children have a burning desire to achieve academic excellence, whether in a competitive atmosphere or not. One gifted child we know had taught himself to read at

two years of age, learned a foreign language (French) by age 4 and loved nothing more than to read historical novels and advanced math books. By age 11, he had acquired an amount of knowledge that most of us would be happy to acquire in a lifetime.

Highly gifted children can be found in all walks of life, in any economic class and from parents who are themselves high achievers or not. These are children who are born to learn, excel and accomplish. There is also the consideration of the child who is gifted in more subjective or artistic talents, not necessarily academic, but gifted nonetheless. These children are not as often identified but need as much stimulation and advanced learning as academic achievers.

For parents or caretakers, there is a responsibility that goes with the nurturing of such a personality. These children need to be intellectually stimulated more than average and need greater outlets for their mental creativity. Sometimes, parents of these kids are hard-pressed to keep up, either financially or intellectually. The more parents and caretakers can offer these remarkable young ones, the greater their chance of reaching their potential as outstanding individuals in our society.

Rexanne Mancini is the mother of two daughters. She maintains an extensive yet informal parenting

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<http://www.rexanne.com/rwr-archives.html>



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