

香港資優教育學院
The Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education

Factsheet

EMOTIONAL MANAGEMENT OF GIFTED CHILDREN

By Dr Iris Chau

Gifted children have high potential and excellent learning abilities but they need to be emotionally stable and healthy in order to realise their potential. Parents should pay more attention to the affective development of their gifted children instead of focusing only on their academic achievement. Listening to and accepting children's emotions can encourage them to express their emotions. For example, if your child tells you in a happy mood that his teacher praised him for being a good boy today, you can respond by saying that "I can tell you're really very happy." If your child cries and complains about his younger brother breaking his toy again, you should not dismiss his emotion by saying, "It's nothing serious!" What you could say is, "Oh, you are very mad at him for breaking your favourite toy." If the emotions of children are acknowledged, they will feel that their feelings are being shared and the negative emotions can be alleviated. Knowing that their parents understand them, children will feel safe to confide in them.

Help your children manage their temper tantrum

A child needs to learn how to manage his emotions and not to throw a tantrum. Parents need to stay firm and should not let their children's tantrum dominate a situation. Otherwise, their children will use temper to manipulate others and not learn how to manage their emotions. Giving in to children for fear that they will make a fuss will only result in an even worse situation. Parents should insist on their decision and not give in to their children. They should also allow some time for their children to calm down. Gradually, they will understand that they cannot manipulate others by throwing tantrums.

It is normal to have a temper. What matters is how we manage our emotions. Children's ability to control or express their emotions is very limited, so it is common that they sometimes cry or bawl. Such emotions will not last long. It is unacceptable for them to vent their anger by hitting others, throwing things even hurting themselves. Parents should stop such undesirable behaviour by telling them, "I know you are upset. You can be mad at me but you cannot hit me." If your children continue to express their anger with violence, they should be told the consequences. You may say: "You choose to hit me, and therefore you'll have 10 minutes of TV time deducted!" Parents should carry out what they say and have their children face the consequences if they cross the line. They should avoid using corporal punishment to stop children's temper tantrums. Children will then realise that there are consequences and learn proper ways to manage their emotions.

How to manage the rebellious behaviour of children

Rebellious behaviour is common in gifted children. They mature earlier and are more aware of the shortcomings of adults. Some of them may use drastic measures to get people's attention, recognition and appreciation. When managing such children, parents should avoid condemnation or corporal punishment which not only sours the parent-child relationship, but also destroys the children's self-esteem and makes them more rebellious. If your children make mistakes, you can punish them by reducing their time for TV, computer and other entertainment. If they comply and follow the rules, you should praise them immediately. Recognising the positive behaviour of children and letting them understand logical consequences is the most effective way to develop self-discipline.

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Parents should refrain from arguing when their gifted children talk back. A dispute will only make everyone angrier. When there is a disagreement, parents should tell their children their decision in a calm manner without making any attempt to persuade the agitated children. For example, if your child insists that he should go to school alone, you can firmly say, "You are too young to do so." It is not necessary to argue with him. If he talks back rudely, you can calmly tell him to stop. Calming the child is more important than convincing him of your argument.

Gifted children are no different from other children. They need the love, appreciation and acceptance of their parents. Parents should bear in mind that though gifted, they are after all still children.

