

# Helping Gifted Children Soar, 2nd Ed.

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## Introduction

Parenting a gifted child is like living in a theme park full of thrill rides. Sometimes you smile. Sometimes you gasp. Sometimes you scream. Sometimes you laugh. Sometimes you gaze in wonder and astonishment. Sometimes you're frozen in your seat. Sometimes you're proud. And sometimes the ride is so nerve-racking you can't do anything but cry.

Any and all of these reactions are normal, depending on your child and his development at any given time. Gifted children can be an enormous challenge for parents. These children go through the same developmental stages other children do, but often much earlier, more intensely, and not in the same way. A gifted child's intellect and thinking ability are typically "older" or more advanced than his other abilities, such as his judgment and social and emotional development. This situation is called asynchronous development because the child's intellect is out of sync with his less-developed emotional, social, and sometimes physical abilities. Asynchronous development can leave a gifted child, as well as parents or teachers, feeling frustrated and confused. Adults may say, "For someone so bright, he seems really immature sometimes."

Imagine, if you can, that you are five years old, but you can think like a fourth grader. Where do you find your friends? The other five-year-olds are too immature, and the 10-year-olds don't take you seriously. If the older kids want you around at all, it's as a sort of mascot, not as a peer. Physically, you can't do the things the fourth graders can: you can't hit a ball very well; you have trouble riding a two-wheeler; you can't run as fast. No matter how hard you try, you'll always be behind the physical and emotional curve set by older classmates. It's like being a person who speaks only German and travels to Italy and France. You like being there, but because the language and cultures are different, it's hard to be understood and to get what you need.

Fitting in with neither their average-ability age peers nor their older intellectual peers, gifted children all too often are teased, put down, and ridiculed by both other children and adults. It's no wonder, then, that they sometimes feel out of place, weird, inept, and even angry, particularly because they are generally more intense and sensitive than other children. Their emotions, already exquisitely sensitive, often are exposed, raw, and tender, and their lack of emotional maturity can make their lives—and yours—a challenge at best and a nightmare at worst. Gifted children have many wonderful, enjoyable qualities, but when those qualities are combined with emotional and social immaturity, the flip side of those same attributes can look a lot less appealing.

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