

Your child's future depends on you

The most important thing you are ever likely to do in your life is the rearing of your children. What you do now with your children will determine what kind of adults and parents they themselves will become. Your influence, therefore, extends far into the future, long after you have died.

Many parents are themselves involved in work and other affairs and because of this they are often resentful of the responsibility they have for their children. They say they are too busy. The result is that they neglect and misunderstand their children. The gift of good parentage is the greatest gift that any child can have.

Who are the children of high intelligence?

Children of high intelligence come from every walk of life and they differ like any other children. Some are active, alert and sociable; others are shy and withdrawn. Some come from good homes where they receive encouragement and help; others come from bad homes where the adults give little time and thought to the development and education of the young. Some will succeed, other will fail. It is a mistake to believe that these children can make it on their own. They need your help as much as any other children and in some ways they need it more.

As babies children of high intelligence are often very alert. They may need little sleep. They tend to raise their heads early and follow objects with their eyes. They sometimes peer thoughtfully at strangers as if weighing them up and later they may probe and pinch at food rather like a weights and measures inspector. They learn to talk early. As toddlers they are often good at such activities as block building, bead threading and drawing with a pencil. Some begin to walk at ten or eleven months of age. Most children are at least a year old before they can walk even when taken by the hand and independent walking does not normally arrive until fourteen months and onwards.

Generally speaking a child of superior intelligence will make a high score on a properly administered test of intelligence. Such a test is given individually by an educational psychologist and measures the child's abilities in a wide variety of areas. The test can take over an hour to administer and should not be confused with group tests which are sometimes used in schools. These latter tests often fail to identify high intelligence.

The right to know

Should parents be told that their child has high intelligence? The answer to this question is straightforward. Should parents be told that their child has been selected for the school football team, has been made a prefect or has been chosen to represent the school at a music festival? Of course they should, and likewise the information that he has outstanding intelligence should be conveyed to them.

Some warnings

But having learned that your child has high intelligence you should be careful on certain points. You should never, for instance, boast about his or her ability. If you do talk a lot about the child your friends may grow to dislike you, and they may also begin to dislike your child, however pleasant he or she really is. Of course, you cannot be expected not to talk about your clever child, but when you do you should also make a point of talking about your other children, if you have others, or better still inquire about your friend's children. Show that you have an interest in all children and not just in your own.

Some parents make the mistake of treating their highly intelligent child in an entirely different way from other children and from his brothers and sisters. This is wrong and can make the child conceited. It can also make other children in the family anxious or envious. They may feel that the clever child is given

preferential treatment. The answer here is for parents to give equal recognition to the various achievements of all their children.

The child of high intelligence will, of course, need some special consideration but this need not apply to his whole life. We should also remember that high intelligence does not necessarily carry with it a disposition to honesty and generosity. In the long run qualities such as these may be more important.

Respect for the child

All children need respect but it is particularly important when trying to understand the child of high intelligence. Parents should accept that bright children do not necessarily wish to have the usual toys or play the games so popular with other children of their age. At birthday and Christmas time they can sometimes be very awkward, taking more interest in other people's presents than their own. It is perhaps safer to treat them according to their mental ability rather than their age, though we should remember that emotional development does not always keep pace with intellectual growth.

Many children of high intelligence express individual opinions at an early age. There are times when they will appear disrespectful and rude. They should not necessarily be allowed to get away with this, but equally it would be wrong to suppress their precocity and enthusiasm. The bright child is often impatient of conventions. The answer here is to have a frank talk with the child about the importance of conventions. The example of driving on the left hand side can be referred to. Here the social advantages are apparent and equally it can be pointed out that other conventions such as politeness, good manners and a regard for others are also based on experience. We expect children to respect adults, and likewise adults should respect the individual differences among children. In doing so, however, parents need not feel worried and apprehensive about coping with the clever child. They can be reassured that their own greater maturity and knowledge of life will