



First Steps

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Nurturing Toddler's Gifts

Our children do not come with instructions. Parents Reaching Out provides resources that help families make informed decisions about the care and education of their children. We thank the Parent Education Network, a project of Parents Helping Parents of Wyoming, Inc. for permitting us to share their *Thoughts for Tots* in this information series.

Children all have special areas of gifts and talents in which they can excel. The child who appears to be average takes on a whole new look once parents and caregivers see his or her gifts. This understanding opens a new set of possibilities for each child. Imagine how exciting it would be for your child to find areas in which he or she excels, and imagine how much joy there is in parenting when the purpose is to nurture and to encourage those special traits that your child possesses. Source: Guthrie and Matthews: *The Trouble With Perfect*

Every Child has a Gift

The gift of leadership: Leadership is the ability to influence other people's actions or thoughts toward a common goal.

The gift of creativity: Creativity is the ability to act on ideas, facts, and materials in new, unusual, or unique ways.

The gift of social consciousness: Social consciousness is the ability to be interested in and compassionate about the larger world, rather than being concerned solely with the child's own immediate surroundings and happenings.

The gift of humor: Humor is the ability to see that something is funny, amusing, or ludicrous.

The gift of peacemaking: Peacemaking is the ability to see both sides of the problem and to assist others in seeing both sides. **The gift of kindness:** Kindness is the ability to touch other people's lives in a way that makes them feel cared for.

The gift of encouragement: Encouragement is the ability to motivate others to do their best and is an important part of being a team member.

The gift of determination: Determination is the ability to stay with a project or work on a problem to the end, even if there are barriers.



Ways to Develop Your Child's Gifts and Talents

- A. Assume that all children have special gifts and talents. A popular belief is that people have multiple intelligences or areas of talent in which each individual can excel.
- B. Observe children openly and without judgment. Look at your child and see him for who really is. Sometimes parents are so busy guiding their child's choices, teaching correct values and proper behavior that they fail to see the individual standing before them.
- C. Praise children. When your child comes up with a creative way of dealing with a situation, let her know she may have a special talent that not everyone else has.
- D. Identify children's gifts and talents. By openly watching your child, you can begin to see your daughter or son in a positive way, and you can also start to identify his or her specific gifts and talents.
- E. Allow opportunities for gifts to grow. One of the most important ways to encourage gifts and talents is to find ways to use them.

Activities to strengthen gifts and talents:

To encourage leadership, follow-the-leader is a great game.

To encourage creativity, find a spot in the house where you "need" some artwork. Have your child come up with an idea to decorate the area.

To encourage humor, make one day each month "silly meal day". Serve dishes that are different and unusual.

To encourage kindness, find ways to help those who are shut-in, have special needs, or are in need of some small favor.

Developing your child's gifts will. . .

...increase self-confidence because she feels good about what she can do.

...build pride from knowing there are things he can do well. This helps him when he is facing tasks that he cannot do as easily.

...encourage a strong work ethic because she must work hard to develop her gifts to the fullest.

...help him feel unique, and allow him to discover his individual importance.



For more information call Parents Reaching Out. We offer phone consultations and provide workshops in English or Spanish to communities throughout New Mexico. This publication was developed under a grant from the New Mexico Department of Health Family Infant Toddler program. However, the views here expressed do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Health and should not be assumed to be an endorsement by the New Mexico Department of Health.