

Parent Detectives: How Well Do You Know Your Child?

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By creating a family culture of respect, tolerance for diversity, and teamwork, parents allow children to be exposed to multiple activities and stimulants to maximise their potential.

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Being able to identify a child's strengths and weaknesses is empowering. It allows parents to identify the appropriate activities for the child to grow into his/her full potential.

There was a viral video of a side-by-side interview between moms and nannies who were asked questions about their child. The questions were simple enough: "What's his favorite subject?," "What does she want to be when she grows up?," "Who's his best friend in school?," and so on. Their answers were matched with the child's answers. The video showed nannies getting all the answers but the moms...at best they were able to give only 3 correct out of 10 questions. This raised several serious issues on child care and current parenting practices among netizens.

So why is it that these moms were clueless about their own child's inclinations and preferences? Some say it could be that the enormous distraction brought about by technology (hello, phone zombies!), or career, home, and relationship concerns, that hindered some parents from really knowing their own child. Another theory raised was that the parents were probably more concerned about the physical needs of the child that their emotional, psychological, and mental needs were less of a priority.

Whatever the reason, inaccurate or false understanding of children can lead to devastating consequences. On the other hand, an intimate knowledge of each child - their preferences, their personality, "intelligences" (based on the Multiple Intelligences Theory of Dr. Howard Gardner) - allows the parents to accurately identify the appropriate activities the child needs to grow into their full potential. Those activities will be able to hone their strengths/intelligence and work on resolving their areas of concern. Ultimately, these activities and interactions will have a huge impact on how the child will be able to look at himself and set his self-worth,

successfully manage relationships, and deal with school work in the future.

For entrepreneur and homeschooling mom of 3, Rea believes that “the key to understanding today’s generation is intentional parenting, quality over quantity.” Simply put, **intentional parenting** is setting goals with the end in mind. Intentional parents deliberately and purposely guide their children to successfully achieve a meaningful and significant life.

Mommy Rea shares her insights on how to understand children, which she said works for her family:

Firstly, we can start to understand our children by understanding ourselves as parents. Always remember that a child is made of 50 percent Dad and 50 percent Mom. What the parents' inherent intelligences are could be used as the starting groundwork for trying to understand their children.

Secondly, **expose them to positive influences**, but make them aware of negative realities, so they can bloom into their own persons early on.

Lastly, **have an open mind; be flexible and patient** as you try to establish your child’s strengths. A child, like adults, are dynamic beings and we should be their anchor as they explore this world and their place in it. It will take time, not all siblings are alike, and our children may not inherit our intelligences as well.

Dr. Genevieve Rivadelo-Caballa, PHD, PTRP, a pediatric physiotherapist in Early Intervention and a Special Education expert, says, “Children's preferences can be noted in the everyday scheme of things. Watch how he spends his day: What activities does he enjoy doing and can sustain interest in? What is he actually good at without even trying? Who does he hang around with? Listen to what he talks about often.”

To further assist parents in their quest to intimately know their child, she recommends these techniques:

1. **Spend quality time.** To know our kids, we need to spend time with them. We cannot just depend on others, like our kids' teachers or athletic coaches, to tell us who our kids are and what they are good at or whether they need to improve and work on certain attitudes or areas of skill and potential. We should know our kids best. This requires an investment of time and attention . Take note, attention. In this day of gadgets, and so many other distractions that can keep us from fully spending quality time with our kids, we may be with them, but not actually be present.
2. **Create a family culture of respect, tolerance for diversity, and teamwork.** To recognize the different multiple bintelligences at work, one has to be respectful of individual differences. The theory of multiple intelligences contradicts the traditional view of intelligence as "one size fits all." Every child is created differently. He is unique in many ways. This can best be exemplified at home and how we treat each other and respect each other's time, need for privacy, space to grow, and how we relate to one another. No athlete who is

body smart has ever been successful without being backed by a strong support system mostly made up of family. This requires some sacrifice of time, family resources, and changes in schedules and routines to be able to accommodate the rigors of practices and competitions. For a child to succeed, he needs to function within a family system that encourages learning, especially at the point of failure when the greatest lessons are learned.

3. **Expose kids to varied experiences outside of school through after-school** and summer programs, or explore extra-curricular activities provided by the school to maximize opportunities for discovering strengths. As they say, nature and nurture should work together. A child may have inherent talents, but without the opportunity to discover and demonstrate these talents, then such talent would be put to waste. Having a broad range of experiences teaches children to be flexible, open to new learning, resilient, and well-balanced.
4. **Check the "Why."** As parents, we can create experiences and open up opportunities for our children. However, whether they would enjoy these experiences or not would depend on the child's unique personality and abilities. Parents sometimes have the tendency to want to live out their own dreams and frustrations in their children. Not succeeding in becoming a prima ballerina or an international math olympiad is not reason for us to push our children to continue our dreams, in spite of the opportunities available to them, which we may not have had in the past. Respect our kids' uniqueness. Success in any field of endeavor is a combination of motivation, aptitude, and grit.

For some parents, being able to identify their child's strengths and weaknesses is empowering: There are no tantrums on the way to a class or a game, the kids are cooperative and even enthusiastic. As a result, their children are happier and more self-confident.

References:

Side note: Here are the eight (8) different intelligences as identified by Dr. Howard Gardner:

Ul. References:

- Linguistic intelligence ("word smart")
- Logical-mathematical intelligence ("number/reasoning smart")
- Spatial intelligence ("picture smart")
- Bodily-Kinesthetic intelligence ("body smart")
- Musical intelligence ("music smart")
- Interpersonal intelligence ("people smart")

