

**Parenting the Gifted Child for Achievement
How to Parent So Children Will Learn**

(Presentation at Lisle Sr. High School, Lisle, IL 12/4/06, ~150 attendees.

Notes provided by parent attendee and are to be used for information purposes only)

Note: for highlights of this presentation, go to <http://www.sylviarimm.com/articles.htm> and download (right column) the article entitled “The Foundational Principles of Parenting” which contains many points discussed below.

Bio of Presenter: Dr. Sylvia Rimm (www.sylviarimm.com) – Director of the Family Achievement Clinic at the Cleveland Clinic Westlake Family Health Center. She obtained her Ph.D. in educational psychology from the Univ. of WI –Madison in 1976 and currently serves as clinical professor of psychiatry and pediatrics at Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine.

You can view Dr. Rimm's most recent newspaper columns released through Creators Syndicate. [Click Here](#).

Dr. Rimm has offices in OH & WI. She still does work with gifted children to prevent underachievement and to do testing. Her first major book was “Why Bright Kids Get Poor Grades – And What You Can Do About It”.

- **The V of Love – Take Charge; Don’t Overempower Your Children**

When children are little, they should have little freedom, little choices, little responsibility, little power. Permit children the security of growing gradually toward adulthood.

As they move up the V, give more freedom, power & choices as long as they are responsible. PROBLEMS: When the V doesn’t open up, kids are over-protected and this encourages dependency and oversensitivity.

Many children today fall into the inverted-V, Λ ; here the child has too much power, too much freedom, too many choices and this leads to irresponsible behaviors. A problem with rearing children with an inverted V is that parents assume more independence makes children better decision makers. Consequently, children feel like they can make the rules. Parents still need to guide their children.

Gifted children tempt us to believe that they are more mature, or knowing, than they actually are.

Children that argue to prove they are right are sometimes called “lawyers” by their parents. These “lawyers” can sense when you are vulnerable and they tend to ask you for something usually inappropriate. Eventually, parents may start reasoning with the “lawyer”. The child is planning to win, and the parent is trying to be reasonable. These are 2 different agendas!

As Dr. Rimm states, “If children were meant to run our homes, God would have created them bigger”. Don’t let the “lawyers” take over your household. In today’s schools, middle school children typically have powers in school that were reserved for high school & college students a generation ago.

- **Praise Moderately to Avoid Pressure; Postpone Superpraise**

Praise conveys your values to your children and sets expectations for them. Reasonable praise statements, like “good thinker”, “hard worker”, “smart”, “creative”, “strong”, “kind”, and “sensitive”, set high expectations that are within children’s reach. Words like “perfect”, “the best”, “most beautiful” and “brilliant” set impossible expectations. Children internalize those expectations, and the expectations become pressures when children find they can’t achieve those high and impossible goals. Eventually these on-going

high expectations can lead children to be “de-throned”, leading to negative, sad, aggressive, and possibly under-achieving behaviors. De-throning can occur at home or school.

There are a lot of high energy, attention-addicted children that may exhibit symptoms of ADHD children, though medically they are not ADHD.

Perfectionism Problems

Girls suffering with perfectionism can create problems that will plague them later in life. Once they get to middle school, school work becomes more complex, so being perfect is more difficult to achieve. Also, peer pressure to be popular is very dramatic. By 3rd grade, 15% of our children are already worried about being popular with the opposite sex. Be careful with comments to children about acceptability of dating, the “cuteness” of being sexy, having sexy clothes, etc...

RIMM’S LAW #1:

Children are more likely to be achievers if their parents join together to give the same clear and positive message about school effort and expectations.

RIMM’S LAW #9:

Children become oppositional if one adult allies with them against a parent or a teacher, making them more powerful than the adult.

As parents: It’s important to stay united, be willing to compromise, try to say good things about your child’s other parent.

RIMM’S LAW #2:

Children can learn appropriate behaviors more easily if they have an effective model to imitate.

As such, parents make (or should make themselves) good role models.

Questions & Answers from audience

Q: What to do with bright children that can do the work but shy away from more challenging work.

A: Use praise/encouraging words/phrases. E.g. “she is starting to like more challenging work” when the child is nearby and will hear you. “Johnny is getting much better at more difficult work”, etc.

Q: What should you do about an arguer?

A: 2 books recommended: “How to parent so children will learn” and “Keys to parenting the gifted child” Occasionally ok to say yes if justified. Though, saying “no” with good reason is also an important lesson for children to learn.

Q: How to differentiate between ADHD & high energy gifted?

A: This can be tricky. Make sure the child is challenged, respective of teachers/parents, etc. Possibly seek psychologist’s help to see if altering learning environmental circumstances eliminates/minimizes ADHD type symptoms. There are some gifted that are also medically ADHD.

Q: Is it common for gifted children to lack social skills

A: The most profoundly gifted kids typically have more challenges with social skills due to significant differences in thinking from their age peers.

Q: What do you do for the de-throned child?

A: Get into alliance with the child based on their interests/strengths. Areas where they will shine.

RIMM'S 12 LAWS

(please notify Dr. Syliva Rimm at srimm@sylviarimm.com before circulating these laws)

1. Children are more likely to be achievers if their parents join together to give the same clear and positive message about school effort and expectations.
2. Children can learn appropriate behaviors more easily if they have an effective model to imitate.
3. Communications about children between adults (referential speaking) within the children's hearing dramatically affects children's behaviors and self-perception.
4. Overreaction by parents to children's successes and failures leads them to feel either intense pressure to succeed or despair and discouragement in dealing with failure.
5. Children feel more tension when they are worrying about their work than when they are doing that work.
6. Children develop self-confidence through struggle.
7. Deprivation and excess frequently exhibit the same symptoms.
8. Children develop confidence and an internal sense of control if power is given to them in gradually increasing increments as they show maturity and responsibility.
9. Children become oppositional if one adult allies with them against a parent or a teacher, making them more powerful than the adult.
10. Adults should avoid confrontations with children unless they are sure they can control the outcomes.
11. Children will become achievers only if they learn to function in competition.
12. Children will continue to achieve if they usually see the relationship between the learning process and its outcomes.