

SEVEN WAYS TO BE SMART

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Did you ever think about what intelligence is? Did you know that there are seven different ways we can consider ourselves and our children to be smart?

First of all when people start discussing intelligence there is a lot of disagreement. How people define intelligence depends on their age. A study of 6 to 22 year-olds, on their view of intelligence, revealed three age related views. Six to nine year-olds said that intelligence was the ability to perform difficult tasks (with difficult being subjective: what is hard for the child is considered generally hard). Children 10 to 13 years believed that intelligence was involved acquiring information and making an effort to learn. They saw being smart as dependent on the amount of information one could memorize. Finally, people 14 years and older thought intelligence consisted of two parts: abstract skills (problem solving, reasoning and common sense) and one of verbal skills, vocabulary level and accumulated information. They saw the second group as being more easily improved with training than the abstract skills.

In addition there are theories and tests developed by psychologists that define a more formal concept of intelligence. Many of our children have probably taken intelligence tests which are often reported as I. Q.'s (Intelligence Quotients). The problem with these tests is that they are usually developed in one culture and people of another culture will probably not do as well on them. By culture, I mean Afro-American vs. Native American vs. Hispanic vs. Caucasian, etc. Care must be used in interpreting I.Q. tests. They may predict how well a person may do in school and higher I.Q.'s are some indication of success in life. But remember there are exceptions to these reported patterns. A high I.Q. does not guarantee high achievement and/or happiness. What is important is to look at the different ways we and children can be smart. Rather than asking how smart is that person-- let's ask how is that person smart?

The Multiple Intelligence Theory by Howard Gardner, indicates that we each possess seven intelligences or ways of being smart. Some of us are more talented at one or more of these than others.

Here are the seven different ways of being smart.

- Word smart-Journalists, lawyers, and storytellers often demonstrate linguistic or language intelligence. These people are best at using the written or spoken word to communicate.
- Logic smart-People with a logical-mathematical intelligence are good at reasoning and thinking in terms of cause and effect. Scientists, accountants, and computer programers are in this group.
- Picture smart-Otherwise known as spatial intelligence, involves thinking in pictures or images. Such individuals may be able to follow directions best, or visualize and draw more accurately.

- Music smart-Musical intelligence is the ability to keep time with music, sing in tune, and tell the difference between music selections. These folks can best perceive and appreciate melodies.
- Body Smart-Individuals with bodily-kinesthetic intelligence are best able to control their own movements. This involves outdoor and indoor sports as well as tasks like sewing and carpentry.
- Person smart-Such persons have the ability to respond to understand, and work with other people. This interpersonal intelligence is the gift of being able to see from other's perspective.
- Self smart-These people tend to be contemplative and can easily access their own feelings. Those with intrapersonal intelligence may be introspective and enjoy meditating.

So remember by exploring our intelligences, we become well rounded individuals who are successful in many aspects of life. Parents and early childhood professionals need to recognize these different strengths in children as they emerge. Some children respond better to words others to music--the point is to let children express themselves. Having the opportunity to learn in areas they prefer and improve in those areas that are not as strong, will allow them to become intelligent in more ways than one.

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