

“7 Tips for Helping Your Child Discover His/Her Strengths and Weaknesses”

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It's a given that everyone has their own strengths and weaknesses. What is not a certainty, however, is *at what point in life* people recognize their strengths and weaknesses – and begin to act in order to make the most of who God has created them to be. The earlier in life that we come to understand our strengths and weakness, the more satisfied and productive we can become in our lives. One helpful gift that parents can offer their children is that of helping them discover their own gifts and weaknesses. Here are seven tips that can help you, as a parent, help your child come to a better understanding of who God is creating them to be.

1. Spend lots of time observing your kids in various settings.

Watch them at work and at play. What kinds of tasks come easy? Which tasks seem difficult? What activities and tasks do they enjoy? Which ones do they dislike?

2. Affirm and/or challenge your kids.

Provide lots of affirmation for strengths you can identify in your kids. Challenge them when you recognize weaknesses in areas they need to develop life skills in. Challenge them to develop increasing skills in their areas of giftedness.

3. Evaluate with your kids.

Get your kids feedback regarding how they feel about various task-related areas of their lives. Tasks they enjoy may be signs of giftedness. Tasks they dislike may be signs of weaknesses. Help them to process these areas to help them recognize both strengths and weaknesses.

4. Encourage experimentation.

Kids should have many opportunities to experience and experiment. Kids often stumble onto both hidden strengths and weaknesses through new experiences. So, make sure your kids don't get into a rut of always doing the same old things.

5. Don't force improvement of weaknesses in areas that aren't important.

Sometimes parents want their kids to succeed in *everything*. This desire can work its way out into real life by requiring kids to spend a lot of time and fixing weaknesses. While there are some life skills that are necessary to learn in order to function as an adult (and parents should have their kids focus time and energy to improve in these areas of weakness) realize that your child may not have “giftedness” in a given area – and in fact – may have a “weakness” instead. Be aware that focusing your child's time and energy on fixing weaknesses can take time and energy away from developing their strengths.

6. Don't “button-hole” kids early in life.

Your kids will excel in some areas and falter in others. The wise parent, however, will allow their kids interests and abilities change over time, rather than “buttonholing” kids in any specific area.

For example, a child may excel in mathematics and pursue math related courses and activities in their earlier school years – but want to move in a different academic direction in high school or college. A good parenting strategy in a case like this would be to affirm the child’s mathematic skills, while encouraging them to experiment in other academic areas.

7. Encourage dreaming, creativity and passion.

Strengths and weaknesses are not only matters of being able to perform a task well or poorly. A big part of the meaning of strengths and weaknesses has to do with the *context* of where those tasks are carried out. For example, a child may discover that they have strength in the area of teaching others. That strength may also be connected to a passion for a certain type of teaching (such as age groups or location). The child may dream of being a teacher to children in a developing country, not in a local, public middle school. Encourage your child to dream about the *how* and *where* God would give them a passion for using their strengths.