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Host Mary Tsui: Now, I get a lot of emails from parents of gifted children who are often pretty desperate. And they're desperate because while these children are amazing for sure, they can also bring challenges and undermine parents' confidence in their parenting skills. So, I'm delighted have with me today Lionel Driscoll. Lionel, thanks for coming on the show. Now you have a beautiful little girl—Marianne—who's been identified as gifted. Can you give us some insight as to what this has meant for you and your wife Joanne as parents?

Guest Lionel Driscoll: For sure, Mary. Needless to say, we love Marianne more than anything in the world, but raising her has been pretty tough.

Host: Difficult raising her? From the time she was a baby?

Guest: Well, we realized she was gifted at the age of about 18 months and we started noticing then the difficulty she was having socializing—interacting with others. She's now almost three—and, from an intellectual standpoint, she's basically too advanced for kids her own age. Ideally, she should be mixing with older kids, but they're at school and they see her as too young to play with. Child psychologists call this “asynchronous development.”

Host: Asynchronous ... meaning she's developing cognitively at a much faster rate than she's developing physically, emotionally, and socially.

Guest: That's right. So it makes it hard to fit in. But also it means she becomes aware of things that she's not yet emotionally ready to handle. You know, on the one hand, she can ask philosophical questions like “What makes people happy?” But on the other hand, she has tantrums and can't tie her shoelaces. For a parent that can be so confronting and confusing.

Host: And there are sleep issues, right?

Guest: Yes. Kids like Marianne because their brains are intellectually racing, they often don't sleep much. The longest Marianne's slept on her own is four hours.

Host: Which must be tiring for you?

Guest: You have no idea!

Host: And I guess that leads us to another well-documented issue: keeping these bright young things stimulated.

Guest: Indeed. We struggled with this for quite a while.

Host: And what did you end up doing? What advice would you give to others in a similar situation?

Guest: Oh that's easy. Join Mensa—the best thing we

ever did. It helped us get a support network going and has really turned things around for us and Marianne.

Host: Oh really? Interesting advice.

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Speaker: OK. Now, it's important to understand that there are many kinds of special talents. For example, the ability to do math, the ability to dance, and the ability to sing are quite different from one another. In addition, some special talents, such as leadership ability, are very general because they involve such a wide range of skills. On the other hand, other talents are fairly specific and narrow. An example would be the ability to play a musical instrument well—for instance, a guitar. One more example would be the ability to do mathematics. Great talent for mathematics doesn't necessarily mean that the person has great talent in other areas ...

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Professor Nadine Clarke: E01 Let me begin by asking you to think about someone you believe is exceptionally talented—someone you were in school with or someone in your own family. OK? Have you thought of someone? Now, my question to you is, how did that person become so talented? Were they born that way? Were they a fast learner? Did they seem to love learning? Were they unusually alert and curious? My guess is that your answer to most of these questions is “yes.” **(COACHING TIP 1) E02** Well, today I'd like to talk about children who are very talented, children often referred to as “gifted.” And I'll talk about three points concerning this topic. First, I'll explain how these gifted children are identified. Second, I'll talk about some of the personality characteristics of these children. Third, I'll talk about how these gifted children approach learning. They have very good learning strategies that all of us can learn to use. All right. Let's move on to the first point. **E03** Now, how would you identify a gifted child? Think of when you were in elementary school or high school. I'm sure that you knew some students who exhibited exceptional talents. Maybe they were particularly good at sports, mathematics, or art. They were easy to notice, right? Well, see if these ideas make sense to you. First, giftedness is partly the result of untrained natural abilities. You could call this “an aptitude” for something. So when we see a very young child who shows above-average athletic ability, for example, we often conclude that the child has an innate ability for sports. **E04** Now, I just said “above-average ability”, and that's a second thing that we notice—the quality. The

child's performance is special because it's surprisingly good, particularly when we consider the child's age. For instance, a six-year-old who could play Mozart's Sonata in D Major would be considered gifted. **(COACHING TIP 2)** The third way we can identify children is by the speed at which they learn. They generally learn faster, make fewer mistakes, make the same mistake fewer times, and need less practice than other children. Some psychologists believe that this third point—speed of learning—is perhaps the best indicator that a child has special abilities. **E05** Now, I'd like to highlight some personality characteristics of gifted children. Of course, gifted children have many types of personalities, so what I'm going to describe here are characteristics that are often, but not always, found in gifted children. For one, gifted children are often very intense. When they do something, especially something they enjoy, they devote all their energy and determination to it. They can concentrate for a very long time. Secondly, they tend to have high energy levels. When they are young, they are constantly moving, and this degree of physical energy is often matched by a similar amount of mental and emotional energy. Their minds are always in motion, always thinking, always looking for the next interesting puzzle to solve. A final predominant characteristic is that they are often idealistic about the world, the people they know, and their environment. They can be perfectionists, especially where their own work is concerned. **E06** OK, now let's look at some of the ways that gifted children approach learning something—practical strategies that you and I can try. The first approach is related to motivation. Gifted children appear to be intensely curious about any and every topic. They typically don't care whether the knowledge or skill is useful or not. A second trait is that they are observant and they notice many details about things. This allows them to thoroughly understand whatever they are studying and to notice any inconsistencies. **(COACHING TIP 3) E07** Finally, they want to know the inner workings of things, so they are very interested in causes and effects. In other words, they want to know the underlying principles and use those principles for making generalizations and predictions about the thing they are studying. I might also add here that they enjoy using their imagination. **E08** Now, let's pause a moment to think of what I've just said here about approaches to learning. Gifted children are motivated, they are alert and observant, they concentrate intensely, they try to understand cause-and-effect relationships, and they make an effort to think creatively. **(COACHING TIP 4)** How well could you and I learn to do something if we approached it like I've just described? My guess is that we could do pretty well.

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- 9 Gifted children are motivated, they are alert and observant, they concentrate intensely, they try to understand cause-and-effect relationships, and they make an effort to think creatively.
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Michael: You know, the lecture actually reminded me of this idea called the "10,000-hour, 10-year rule." Has anyone else heard of it?

May: Uh-uh.

Qiang: No.

Yhinny: Oh yeah, I have, I have. It says something like: You have to study something or practice something really hard for either 10,000 hours or 10 years to become really great at something.

May: Whoa, well, that's encouraging. That means that I just have to study English for another five years to be really good at it.

Qiang: Well, I have to say, I found it a little surprising that the instructor really didn't talk about—or she didn't really emphasize—that the importance of innate talents more.

May: Like, talents that we're born with? I don't know for like music and literature, art, science.

Qiang: Yeah.

Yhinny: I think she actually did cover that, in a way. I think she just wanted to stress the parts of genius that we can control. Kind of like being motivated, being curious or creative when you approach something.

Qiang: OK. But you have to acknowledge the innate part is a huge factor. I mean, look at Mozart and his innate talent for music. Or Emily Dickinson and her innate talent for literature. You think anyone can do what they did just by being curious or practicing a lot?

May: No, you're right they had talents, but they built on them. I mean, Mozart, he practiced for hours! His father forced him.

Qiang: So, he was born with talent, but he had to work really hard to develop it.

May: Yeah.

Michael: Well, speaking of working hard, maybe we should get back into our notes? All right. So how do I identify a gifted child?