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Keys to parent hardiness –
staying healthy despite the stress of parenting
very difficult children

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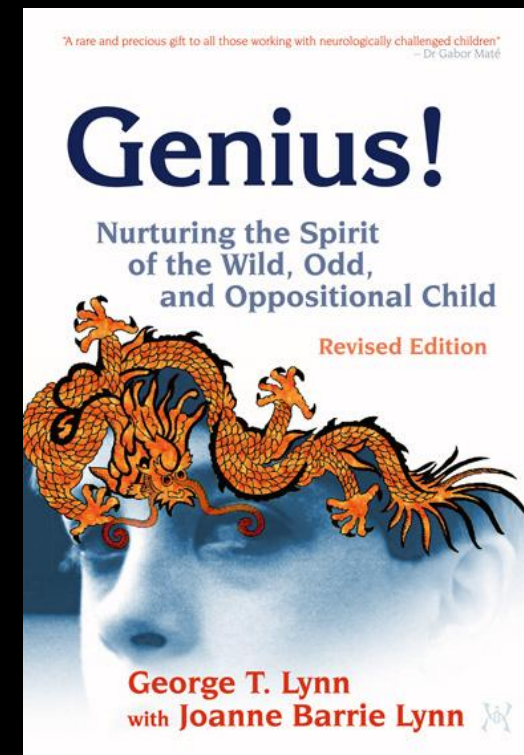
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Parents' ordeal: guiding the genius of very difficult children.

"Genius:" from the Roman for "guiding spirit."

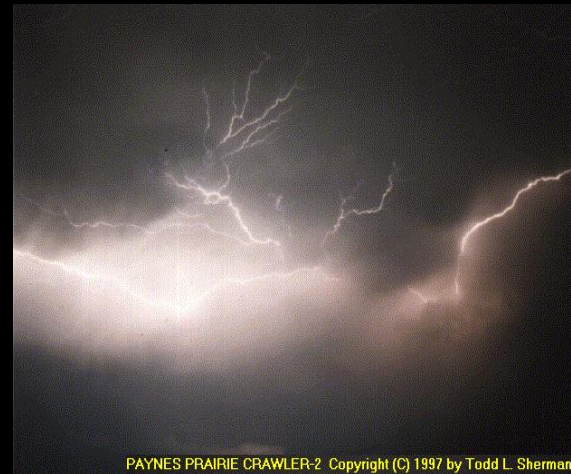
- A broad pattern of personality that possesses positive and negative features.
- The European myth of the *Spirit in the Bottle*.
- Know a child's genius and you have the positive vision required to help him.



System disturbers, system inventors.

"Systems require
disturbance in order
to grow."

Dr. Ilya Prigogine



PAYNES PRAIRIE CRAWLER-2 Copyright (C) 1997 by Todd L. Sherman

Inescapable predicaments of parenting very difficult children

- Their central gift is that they are disturbing and they are out of control. For them to realize their gifts we have to be able to contain their desire until they can contain it themselves.
- For them to grow, they must attach to us and we to them. Once attachment occurs, we feel their pain. Because they may suffer continually, we may feel their pain continually.

Inescapable predicaments of parenting very difficult children, continued

- For them to grow they must be protected but they must also learn from their own experience. The better we are at protecting them the less able they may be to take care of their own troubles.
- As parents we feel ontological guilt—it is inescapable. In some of us, we can sense it in the rise in our blood pressure or other psychosomatic issues.

The hardiness attitude: self-love

- The belief that you deserve love as much as anyone else in the world.
- Forgiveness for yourself: The understanding that people learn from their mistakes and so (as Ralph Nader's father puts it) "Your best teacher is your last big mistake."
- The ability to be nurtured by the little things—the combing of living hair. The expression of love to your child and others in your life.

The hardness attitude: freedom to be yourself

- Stated as, "I cannot steal his trouble. His troubles are his teachers. I have no right to deprive him of their teaching." The willingness to look at yourself and your adult relationships and understand how to prevent your child's issues from devouring your own life.
- The determination to live honestly with those you love and to be honest with others in your work life and who provide services to you and your family.

The Hardiness Attitude: live your own *purposes*

...Goals are a survival necessity for they allow us to structure the pursuit of meaning.

The resolve to take your own gifts into the world and “have a life” even in the face of the enormous power of your child’s troubles to devour your life.

The changes you experience

- A tempering of your spirit that can only happen through fire and water. Tempered steel.
- A quantum leap of your ability to discern what is true in your relationships.
- And understanding and acceptance of paradox and contradiction in life.
- An appreciation of the beauty in everyone—especially chance meetings—happenstance that sometimes leads to happy-ness.
- An increase in your sense of coming into yourself and so becoming more real to everyone.

Love After Love
Derek Walcott

The time will come
When, with elation,
You will greet yourself arriving
At your own door, in your own mirror,
And each will smile at the other's welcome,

And say, sit here, Eat.
You will love again the stranger who was your self
Give wine. Give bread. Give back your heart
To itself, to the stranger who has loved you

All your life, whom you ignored
For another, who knows you by heart.
Take down the love letters from the bookshelf,

The photographs, the desperate notes,
Peel your image from the mirror.
Sit. Feast on your life.