

Association for Children's Mental Health
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Nurturing the genius of your wild, odd, and
oppositional child.

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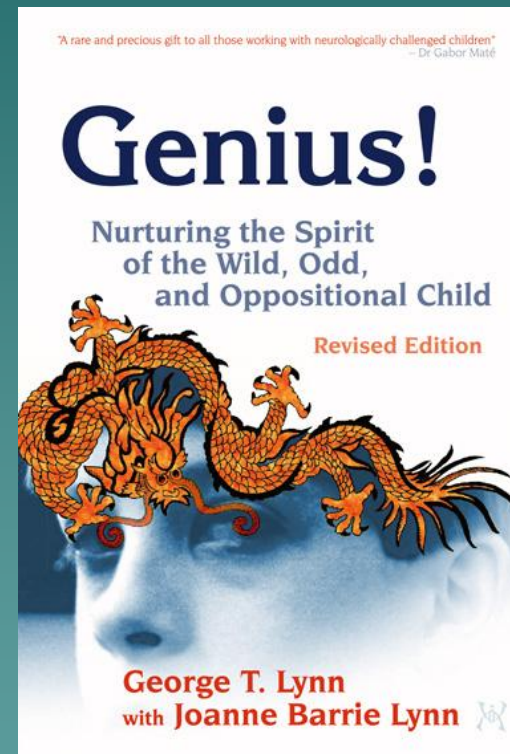


“Call me ‘Thomas the Dragon’:” Gregory’s genius speaks.

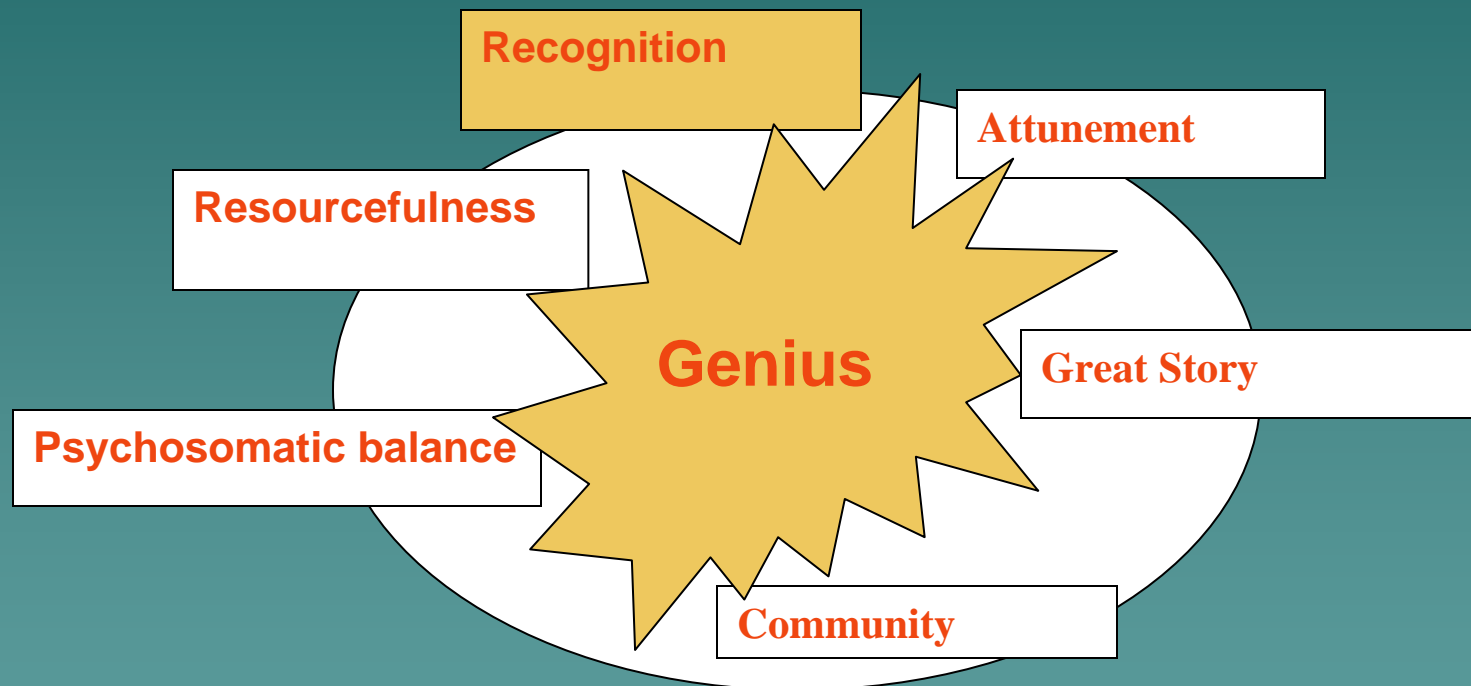
“Genius:” from the Roman for
“guiding spirit.”

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- ◆ 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.



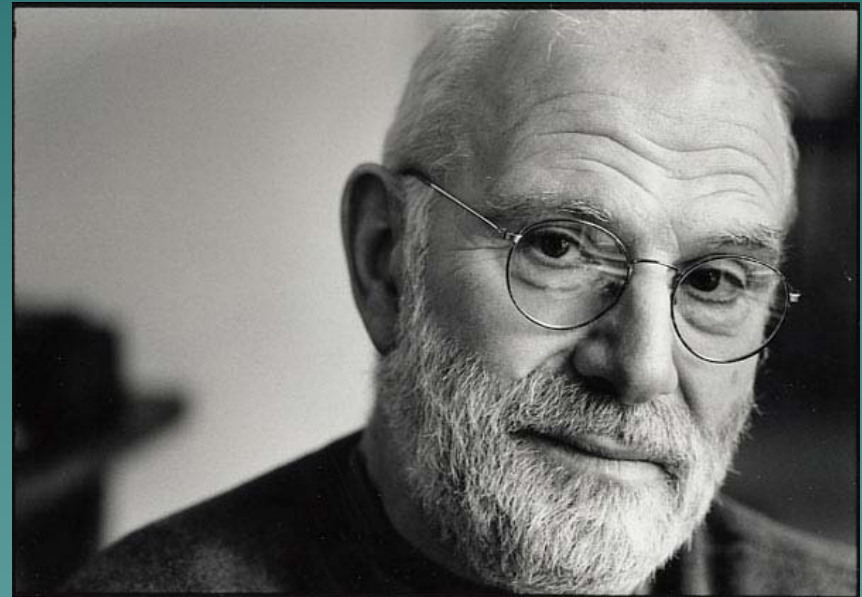
Six criteria for nurturing a child's positive genius.



Recognize the child's genius in his or her gifts and symptoms.

“But it must be said from the outset that a disease is never a mere loss or excess—that there is always a reaction, on the part of the affected individual to restore, to replace, to compensate for and to preserve its identity, however strange the means may be.”

Dr. Oliver Sacks



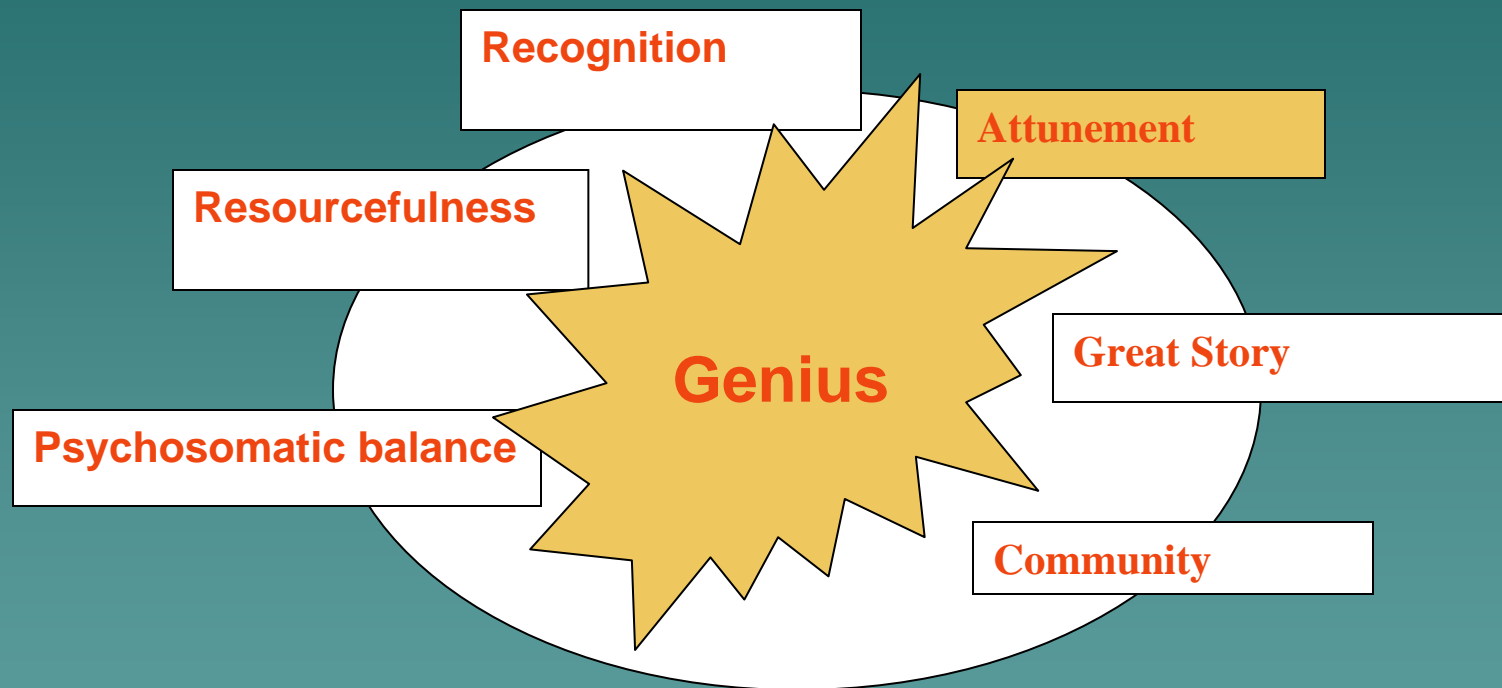
Patterns of genius: bundles of wounds and gifts: what makes children wrong may make them strong.

- ◆ *ADD*: Small inattentive anarchists grow into powerfully willful and creative adults. Marching to their own inner desire, they 'live out loud' and teach us how to do the same.
- ◆ *Tourette Syndrome*: Their bodies scream with energy and the need to repeat things. They are earthy and combative and hyperscrupulous. Later in life we may see powerful physical and musical intelligence and great compassion driven by awesome levels of personal energy.

What makes them wrong makes them strong, continued.

- ◆ *Bipolar Disorder*: As youngsters they are given to raw impulsivity, emotionality, and intellectual brilliance. Once they learn humility, they may become courageous and self-disciplined adults who will make their mark on the cutting edge of whatever they do.
- ◆ *PDD, AS, and autism*: They do not understand *human nature* but delight in the beauty of *perfect function and perfect creation*. In their adult lives they may give us useful beauty in many forms.

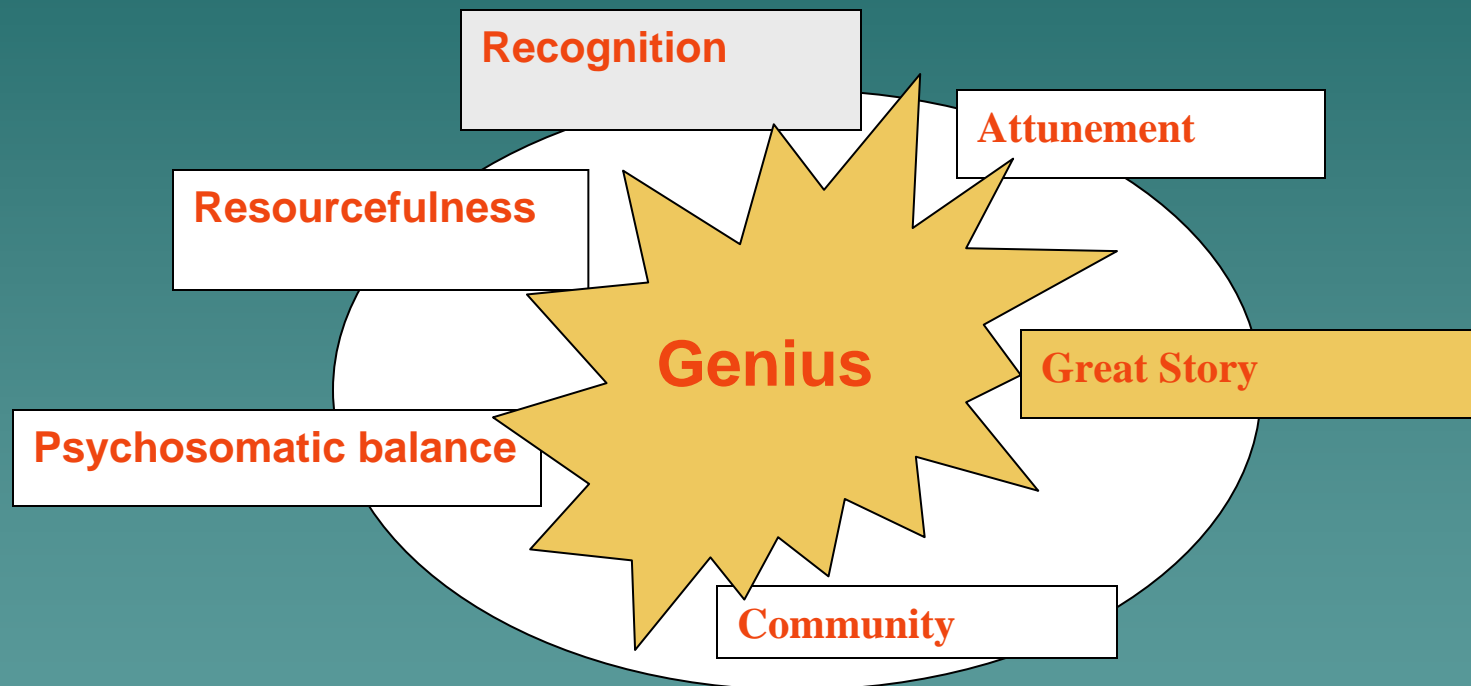
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Attunement

- ◆ The child is given respect, from the Latin *respicere*, “to look at again” or “to give attention to.”
- ◆ There is a lot of positive communication behavior—the PBS philosophy.
- ◆ There is a low level of destructive emotional volatility.

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Great Story



“By Great Story, I mean story that enables us to see patterns of connections, as well as symbols and metaphors to help us contain and understand our existence.

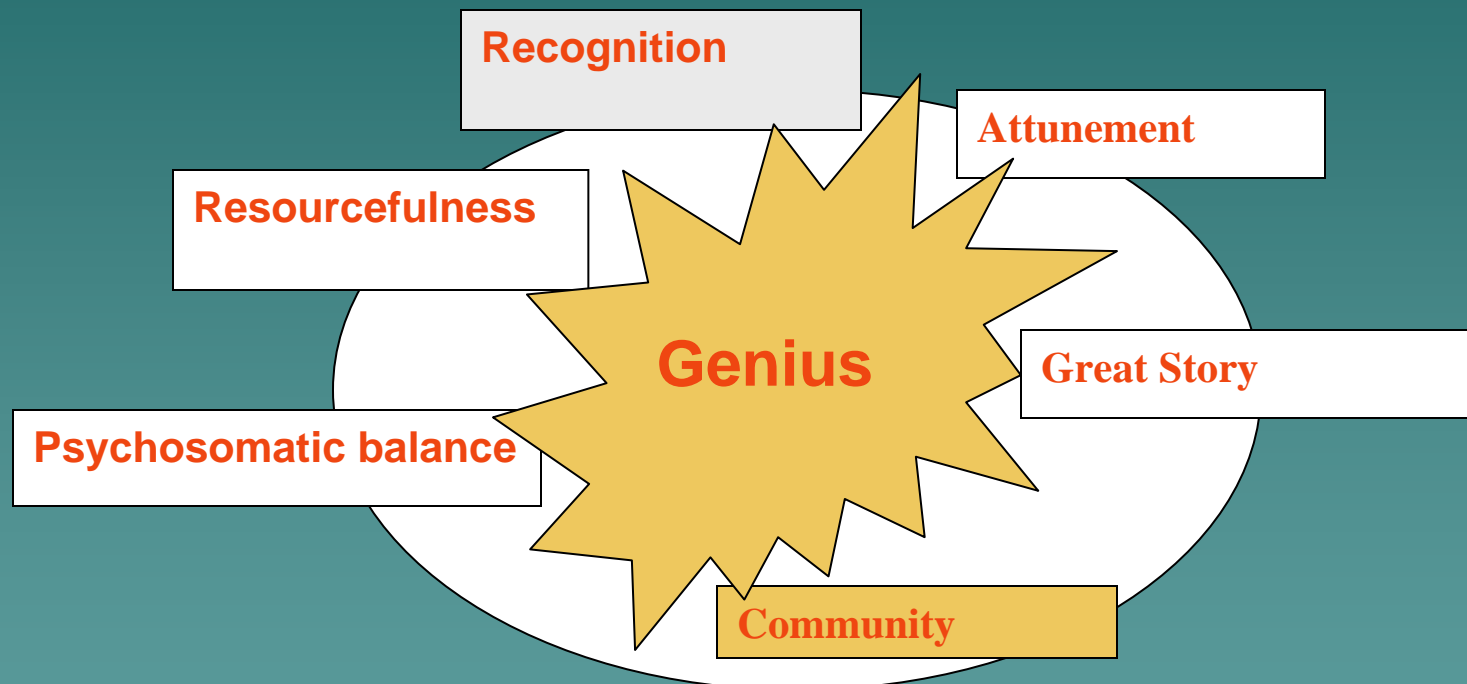
“Great Story is powerful and primal, capable of unlocking levels of the deep psyche. You become who you really are—and you know it.”

Dr. Jean Houston

How to help a child build his own Great Story.

- ◆ Listen as he tells you about his life. Help him see himself as a *challenger* not a victim! Look at his capabilities with soft eyes (receptive, welcoming, listening).
- ◆ Remember positive themes in his narrative and note his particular patterns of vulnerability and life suffering.
- ◆ Tell him what he has told you in such a way that his story is positive, purposeful, and powerful.

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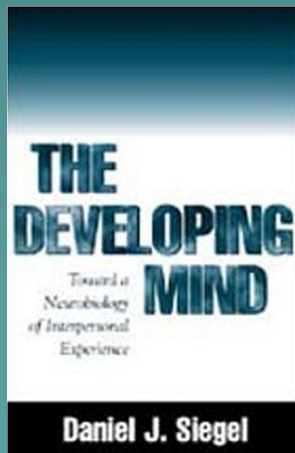


Community and brain development

Participation in community is a developmental need and a balance for genius:

“The capacity for self-integration is continually created by an interaction of internal neurophysiological processes and interpersonal relationships.”

Dr. Daniel Siegel



Community and mentorship

- ◆ Are there adult mentors in the child's life?
- ◆ Is the child given consequences that affirm his connection to the community? Restitution and reconciliation.

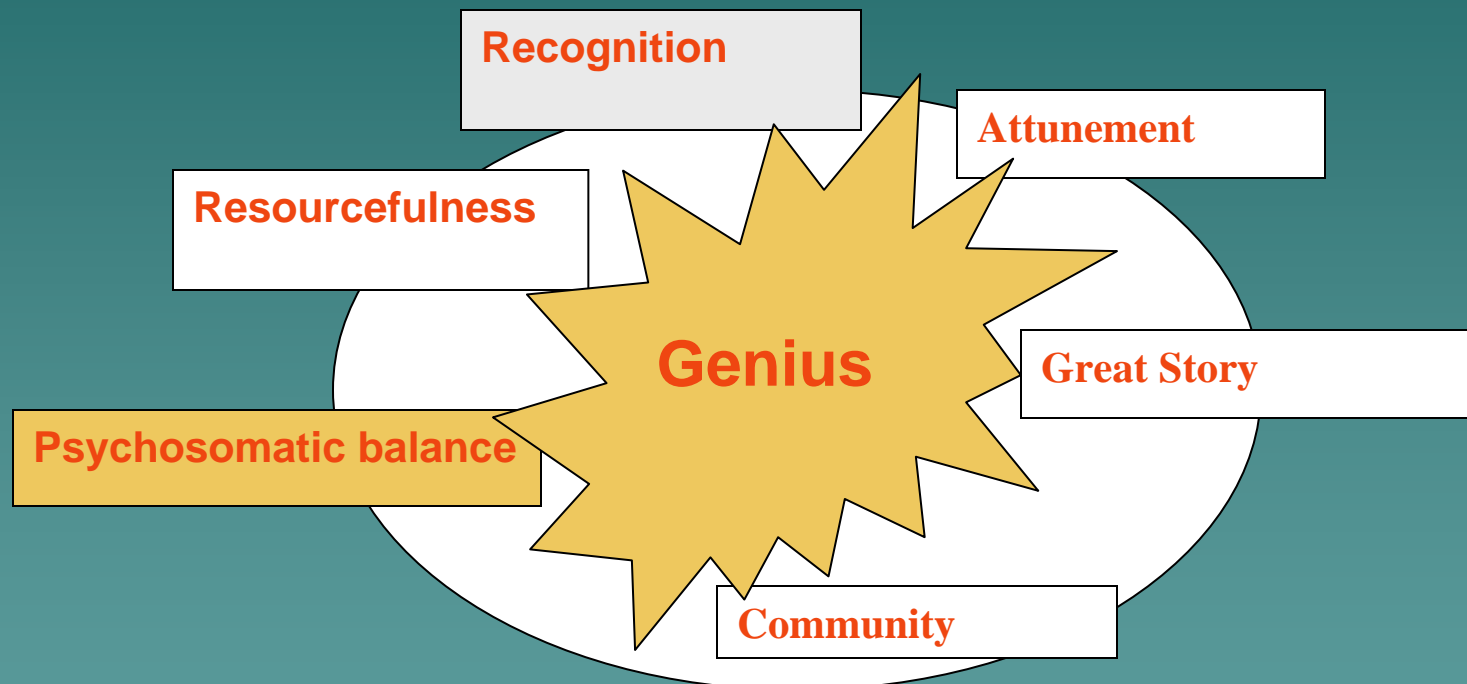
The power of community in special education.

(Measured improvements from a post-secondary degree program for a community of unique learners—the Passport Program. *)

- ◆ Critical thought.
- ◆ Asking, not just answering, questions.
- ◆ Ability to “see outside themselves.”
- ◆ Ability for “give and take” conversation.

*Rethinkhighered.com

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Psychosomatic balance

Major physical vulnerabilities:

- ◆ They are subject to great instability-- (the gyroscope model).

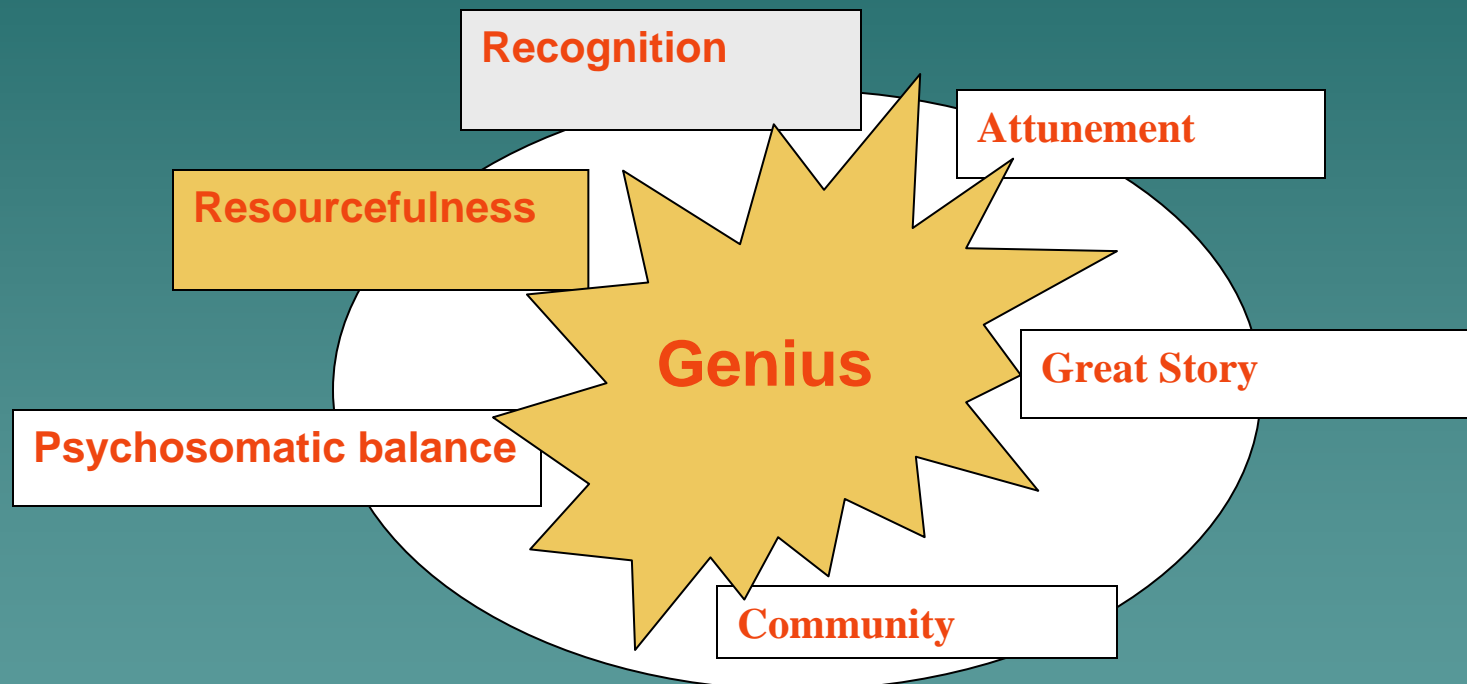
And,

- ◆ They are limited in the ability to *inhibit* themselves and manage behavior.

Stability is necessary for the emergence of genius.

- ◆ Good sleep habits.
- ◆ Good eating habits.
- ◆ A stable and appropriate school environment.
- ◆ Avoidance of addictive substances, including cigarettes.
- ◆ Reasonable and consistent limits.
- ◆ Regular, vigorous, exercise!
- ◆ Appropriate medication.

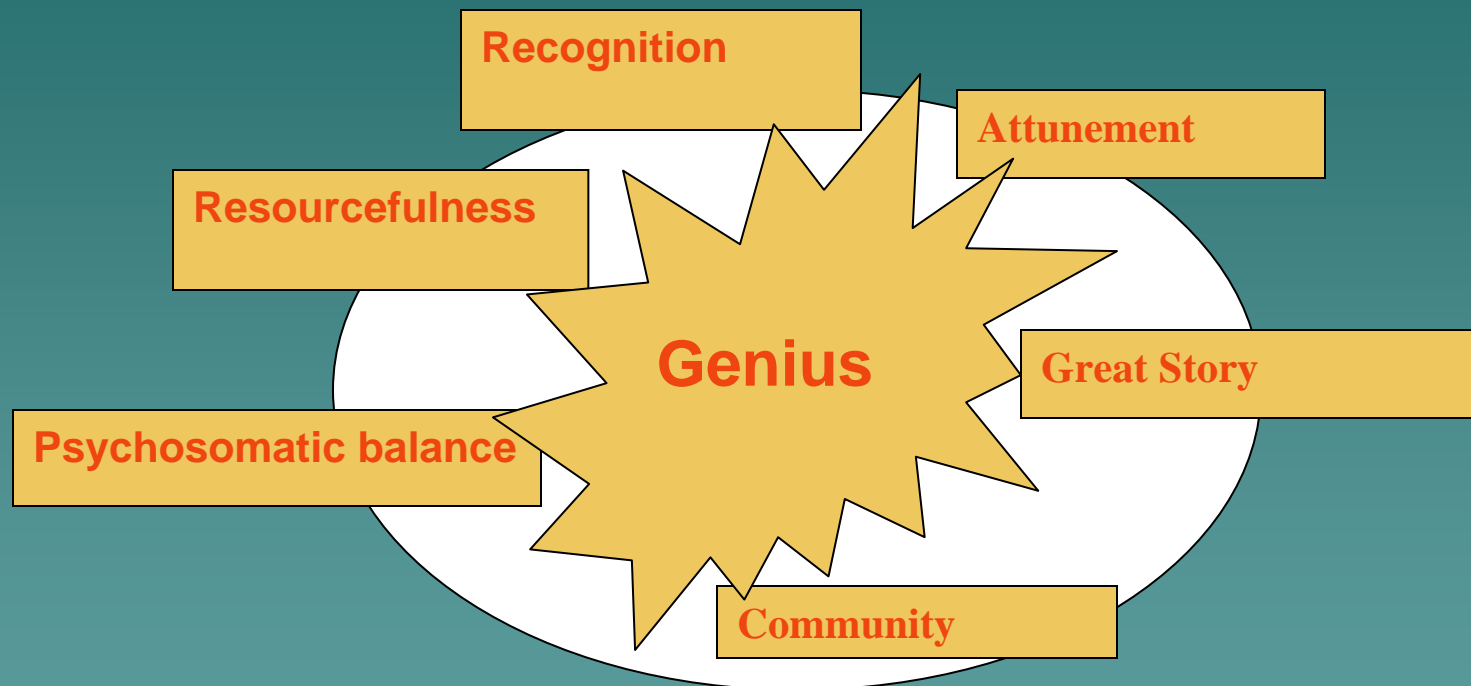
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Resourcefulness

- ◆ Temple Grandin's advice: raise the bar.
- ◆ Repetition is essential.
- ◆ Deprogram learned helplessness.

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System disturbers, system inventors.

"Systems require disturbance in order to grow."

Dr. Ilya Prigogine



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Guardian Angel
by Rolf Jacobson.

I am the bird that flutters against your window in the
morning,
and your closest friend, whom you can never know,
blossoms that light up the blind.

I am the glacier shining over the woods, so pale,
And heavy voices from the cathedral towers.
The thought that suddenly hits you in the middle of the day
And makes you feel so fantastically happy.

I am the one you have loved for many years.
I walk along side you all day and look intently at you
and put my mouth against your heart
though you're not aware of it.

I am your third arm, and your second shadow,
the white one,
whom you cannot accept,
and who can never forget you.