



# Keys to Success for Gifted Kids

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If you could give your  
bright, curious,  
preconscious, possibly  
*gifted*, seven year old  
the keys to a  
successful life what  
would they be?



We all define success differently,

but let's use the definition of *living life with the optimum use of our talents and with rewards, both in term of prestige and financial advantage.*

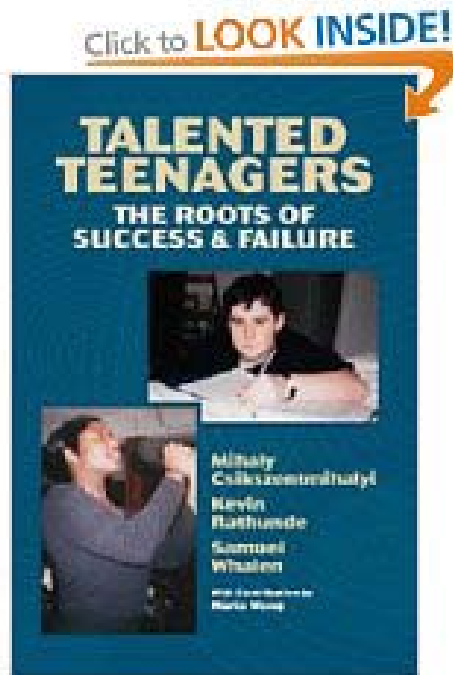


# My keys are inspired by the work of :

- Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Kevim Rathunde, and Samuel Whalen – *Talented Teenagers, the Roots of Success and Failure.*
- Malcom Gladwell – *Outliers: The Story of Success*

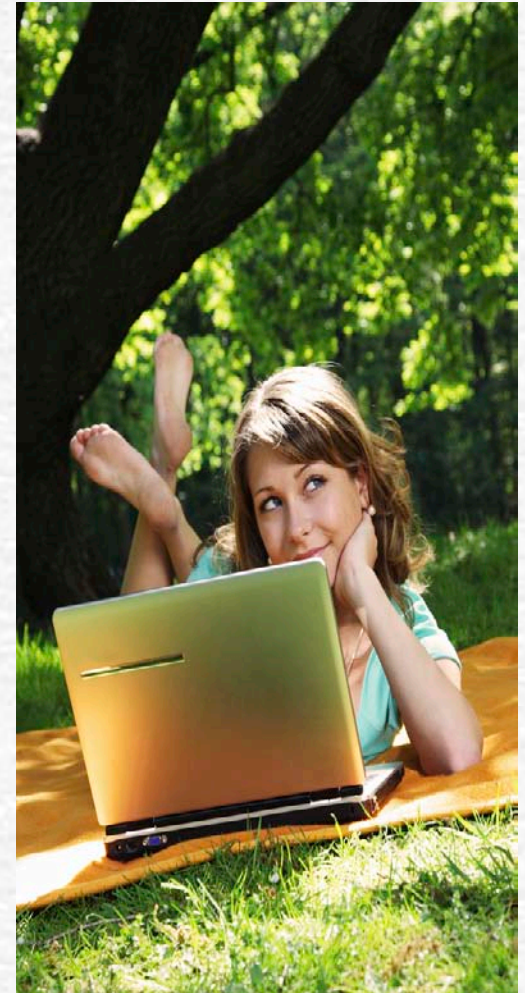


Csikszentmihalyi is best known for his work on boredom and anxiety, creativity, and the concept of FLOW – *the state of being completely involved in something to the point of losing track of time and of being unaware of fatigue and of everything else but the activity itself.*



This book details the findings of an extensive five year study that strove to answer two questions: **How do young people become committed to the development of their talent?** And **why do some young people become disengaged from their talent?**

In other words, they searched for commonalities and differences between those who used their talents and became successful with them, and those who drifted away from their areas of talent into jobs that required only average skills.



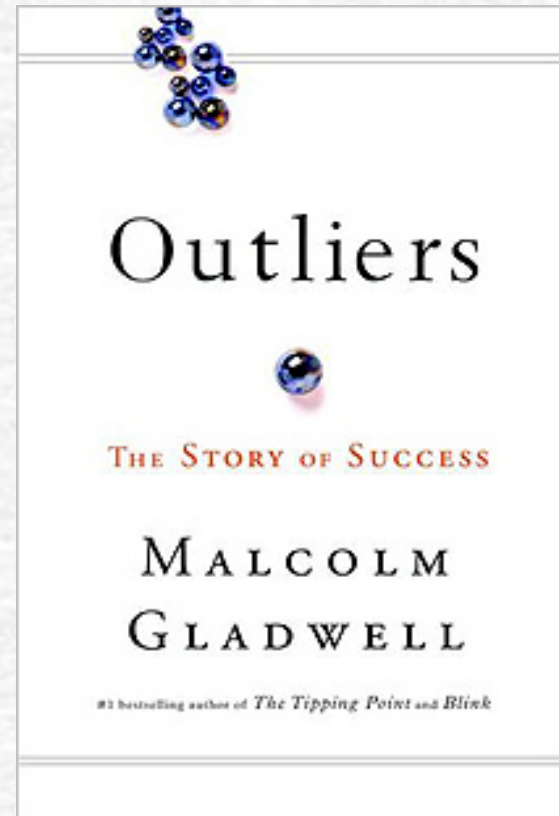
# Primary method of gathering data was the ESM

Experiential Sampling Method: At various times through their high school years, students had a pager for 7 consecutive days. The pager “went off” between 7 to 9 times during the hours of 7 AM and 10 PM. Students were asked various questions (**for example – who are you with, what is the challenge level of the activity, how do you rate your skills in the activity, how important is this activity to you, if you had a choice would you be doing this..**) and they responded in booklets within 30 minutes of the pager’s beep. Follow up interviews completed the picture.

Note that this was done in the mid-eighties.

Malcolm Gladwell wrote **Tipping Point** and **Blink**. "Gladwell is a poufy-haired showman with a knack for explaining anything to everybody, from dog whispering and fads to disposable diapers and snap judgments..."

*Gregory Kirschling from Entertainment Weekly*





# When asked what an outlier is. Gadwell replied with an illustration

"Outlier" is a scientific term to describe things or phenomena that lie outside normal experience. In the summer, in Paris, we expect most days to be somewhere between warm and very hot. But imagine if you had a day in the middle of August where the temperature fell below freezing. That day would be outlier. And while we have a very good understanding of why summer days in Paris are warm or hot, we know a good deal less about why a summer day in Paris might be freezing cold. In this book I'm interested in people who are outliers—in men and women who, for one reason or another, are so accomplished and so extraordinary and so outside of ordinary experience that they are as puzzling to the rest of us as a cold day in August.



# First let's look at Csikszentmihalyi's findings

- What are talented teens like?
  - Families have educational and financial resources considerably above that of the community in which they live.
  - Families are flexible yet cohesive
  - These teens entered high school with high scores for persistence, desire to achieve, curiosity, and openness to new experiences
  - Yet – they saw themselves in a slightly less positive light than “regular” teen in relation to their sexuality.

# What distinguished the talented teens over time from regular teens?

- Time
  - The amount of time they spent on any particular area – especially their area of talent. It amounted to about 13% of waking hours or 13 hours a week.
  - Most of this time was through school sponsored activities
  - When they were working in their area of talent, they were focused on it – about 80% of the time

# Why do talented teens spend 13 hours a week in pursuit of their talent?

- When asked why they were doing this at this time on the ESM, the three highest ranking answers were:
  - Enjoyment
  - Satisfaction from learning
  - Interest



# Are you curious about what was ranked lowest?


I am doing this because of:

Peer pressure


Required for school

Gender stereotyping





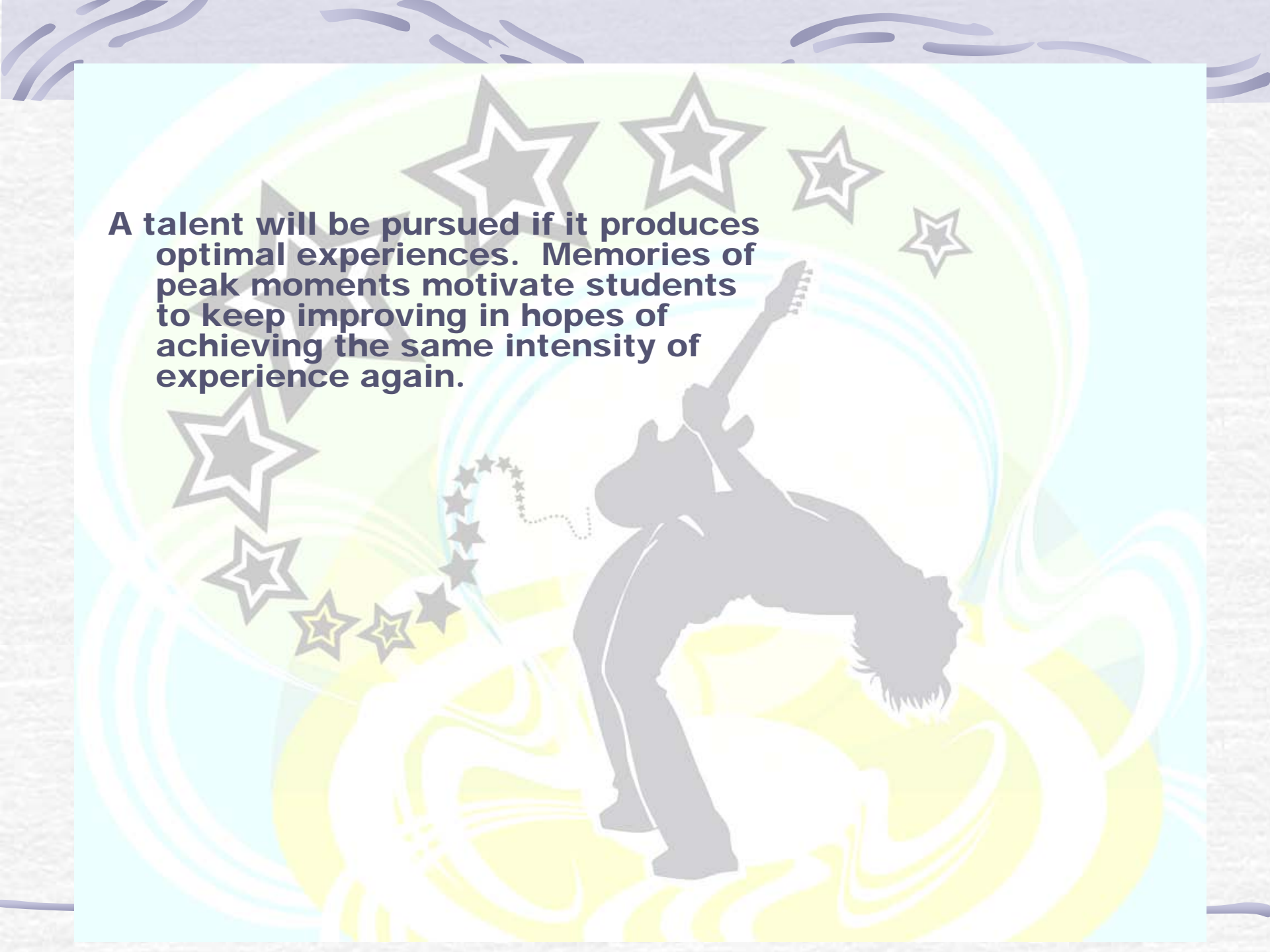
When given vignettes that showed people having FLOW experiences, the talented teens were asked if they ever had an experience like that?

- 63% identified that they had had such an experience in their talent area.
  - Musicians, artists, and athletes were much more likely to identify this Flow experience than scientists or mathematicians.
- 



# Conclusions

- Students foster emerging talent by spending time on it.
- Teenagers spend time on activities they enjoy.
- There are conflicts inherent in the development of talent.
- School is essential for talent cultivation, yet it places particular obstacles in the way of its development.
- No child succeeds unless strongly supported by adults.



A talent will be pursued if it produces optimal experiences. Memories of peak moments motivate students to keep improving in hopes of achieving the same intensity of experience again.



# How does Gladwell's theory jive with this?



- The 10,000 hour rule
  - No “naturals”
  - No “grinds”
  - With “good enough” talent– those who work longer do better
- The Mathew Effect
  - Hockey players born in January



## Gadwell's theory:

- Success is not as much focused on personal traits or actions of the individual but in the culture, community, family, and generation.
- He says we've been looking at the trees and we should look at the forest.
- Examples of
  - Jewish immigrant garment workers sons
  - Asian children and math
  - High tech success

# The power of entitlement

- Annette Lareau found two parenting philosophies – divided along “class” lines –
  - Concerned cultivation
    - Lots of activities – scheduled
    - Talk with students – act on any “hints” of talent
    - Sense of “entitlement”
  - Others didn’t know how to customize whatever environment they were in for their best use.

# Sternberg calls practical intelligence...



Knowing what to say to whom and knowing when to say it.

# A non-success story – what does it tell Gadwell?

- Chris Langan
  - Born smart – talked at 6 months, taught himself to read at 3
  - Fractured family – financially without resources
  - Offered two full scholarships – University of Chicago and small preppy college in Oregon
  - Lost in college – lost scholarship
  - Tries again – can't get classes around work schedule
  - Run ins with professors left before end of 4<sup>th</sup> semester.
  - Wrote The Cognitive Theoretic Model of the Universe
  - Ruminates on what if he had a chance to work at Harvard
  - Contrasts this all with Robert Oppenheimer

Is this still troubling?

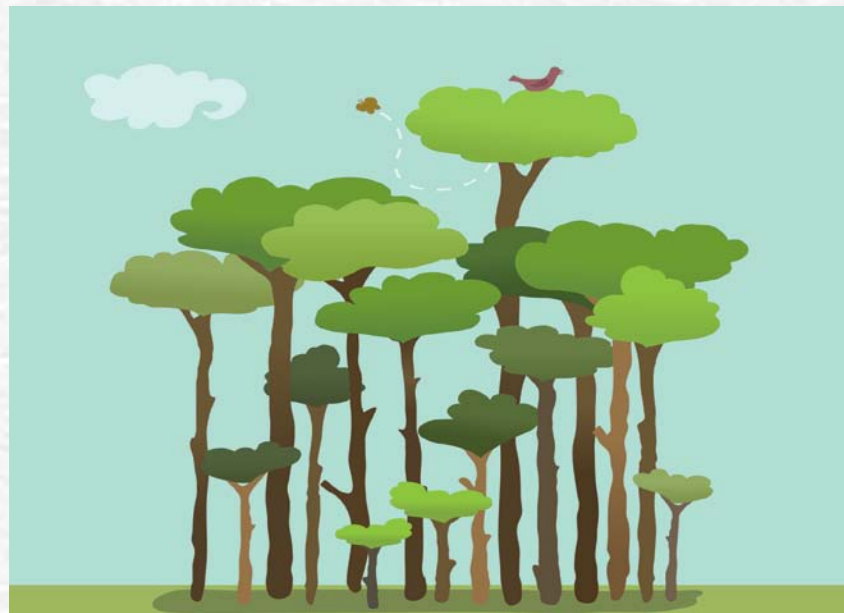
# What does he have to say to schools? To parents?

- Allegory of the airline pilots
  - Korean Air
  - Avianca
  - Culture and power scales
- How do we teach empowerment or self-efficacy to our gifted students and to their teachers.

# His message...



We as a society, as institutions have a lot more control over who succeeds – and how many of us succeed - than we think.



“ Take out” food for thought:

How does my institution  
– my family or my school  
foster the keys for success?

