

Indroction by Dina Kirnarskaya
(“Grandpa Hat and the Best Game of All”)

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Professor Kirnarskaya is the author of the book *The Natural Musician- On Abilities, Giftedness, and Talent* (Oxford University Press), which was praised by highly distinguished figures such as the renowned Professor Howard Gardner.

What do parents want for their children besides good health and personal happiness? They want them to be successful, to have jobs that are respected in society, well-paid, and secure. And of course there are personality traits that are needed for all future employees and employers, both businesspeople and self-employed people, that are highly appreciated in the present-day economy.

What are these traits? Let's name what we can immediately think of:

IQ (Intelligence Quotient), being logical and thinking in the correct order, finding steps to solve problems one after another.

EQ (Emotional Quotient), being sensitive and empathetic, having well-developed intuition, allowing you to find solutions by insight, without thinking.

Creativity, the ability to make non-trivial, original decisions leading to novelty and discovery.

Teamwork Skills, the ability to do things together in order to find where your input is most necessary and desirable.

Positive Thinking, the ability to see the goal and follow your path in spite of inevitable complications.

Those are five skills that lead to success in modern society, and each parent wants to develop them in his/her child.

Lots of questions pop into parents' heads because all of us want to make sure our children have those precious qualities or personality traits. As parents, our main questions are:

- 1) Is it possible to develop IQ, EQ, Creativity, Teamwork Skills, and Positive Thinking altogether, or must we concentrate on each of them separately and give them full attention in a limited time span? Is it possible that these qualities are interconnected and that you can't develop one without having the other already in place?
- 2) Is there a so-called “sensitive period,” when your child is particularly receptive to developing these skills?
- 3) Are there exercises that develop these skills and if so, what are they?

If we answer “yes” to all these questions, we are getting nearer to the description of Bella Bleicher’s and Lavi Sigman’s book series, *Elevate Your Child’s Strengths*.

Yes, those stories help us create firm psychological ground for developing “The Golden Five Personality Traits” in our children, and all of these traits are developed simultaneously due to reading, discussing, and staging in this wonderful **book series**..

Yes, there really is a sensitive period, let’s say under 12 years old, when our children’s psyches can be formed and structured by purposeful actions that we take, and *Elevate Your Child’s Strengths* may very well help us use this sensitive period to its greatest potential.

Yes, there are exercises that are particularly helpful for shaping our children’s personalities and behaviour, and these exercises are offered to us in the final portion of each book in this series.

These stories are accessible for children 3 years old and older; they are simple, colourful, and easy to follow; they are realistic and well describe your child’s experience; they teach without being boring or didactic; they are natural, easy-going, and emotionally engaging. Having read these stories, you feel that you don’t want to part with their characters; they show effective methods of influencing your child’s development through games and fun.

How does this work? Let’s examine “Grandpa Hat and the Best Game of All” using our “Golden Five Personality Traits”:

IQ. The narration is very logical and teaches logical thinking subconsciously, as any good teaching does. Nothing appears from nothing, and everything has its follow-up. Before grandfather and grandson decide to change life roles, they arrive at this idea through some fun “pre-play,” in which they are putting on different hats and acting accordingly. Thus, the first action has its outcome in the second, and the second action has its push-forward in the first.

EQ. Why bother entertaining your grandma and grandpa? Because you are happy when your loved ones are happy. It’s as simple as that. And the children in the story come to know this through very telling examples.

Creativity. In the story, the narration appears only when I want to be you, and you want to be me. Again, Eureka! Why not change roles, change places, take on and off grandpa’s green beret that used to be taboo before the role-switching idea was born? Our little readers learn that everywhere we need this final decisive step that lets us have our story. If we don’t have an idea, there is no story.

Teamwork. In the story, we have three pairs of children and adults. Why three? Isn't one enough? No. Because good ideas are infectious, and they are like magnets. There were leaders and beginners, whose idea was noticed and appreciated by others, and now they are a team that has developed the initial idea and made it a successful product. Didn't Microsoft and Apple emerge in this way? Likewise, both grandchildren and grandparents are attracted by a wonderful idea and assist in developing and broadening its scope and meaning.

Positive Thinking. We entertain ourselves and have fun - that is key to any success and development. We entertain ourselves and our grandchildren and our grandparents: we enjoy life, we are happy, and along the way, we come up with great ideas and do great things. That is an easy lesson of this book series.

Not only are the stories very intense in promoting necessary ideas and attitudes and pointing to our "Golden Five," but the authors also give us easy exercises to plunge us deeper into the books. We can twist them, touch them, play out their situations, and feel ourselves as the characters of these stories. Interaction means action—not sitting and listening, but doing, and in the final reading segment of each book - the 'after-reading' activity, the authors actively involve us, causing the readers to become actors. What could be more convincing than acting: making a new film, , playing new roles, drawing images based on what we've just read about? This active reading, a new approach that the authors are creating, is wonderful in its simplicity. Simply repeat and develop what you've just heard. Simply participate in what you've just been reading about: step into the story, tell others about it, play it, film it, draw it – live with it and in it!

What is unique about *Elevate Your Child's Strengths* is its natural simplicity. You can't explain it or prove it. You feel it; it's in both stories and around them. It is a "cloud" of pleasant simplicity, easy and enjoyable as the life of a child whose parents care about his/her future and ensuring that this future is brilliant.