

**Indroction by Dina Kirnarskaya**  
**(“Grand Kitty and the Search for New York”)**

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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 “Grand Kitty and the Search for New York” using our “Golden Five Personality Traits”:**

**IQ.** When the children in the story about the lost cat finally figure out how to get the cat down from the tree, they’ve already tried several wrong steps that nevertheless had to be tested in order to culminate in the final success. Build each step of the ladder until the full ladder is ready for you—that is the moral of the story, teaching us to make a correct succession of actions in order to form the final one. Thus it teaches us logic.

**EQ.** Everybody sympathizes with everybody; nobody wants to be left out. Oh, the cat is lost! Let’s try to use sound; let’s try to use good food; or maybe we’d better use our own shoulders to help us climb up; possibly the rope can help? No, everything helps, all of these methods combined. But why do the children, their parents, and the cats continue their search and not stop? Simply because they can’t stand to see others in need or grief: no personal gains, no money paid for their work, no selfish ends.

**Creativity.** In both stories, the climax is a moment of “Eureka, we’ve found it!” You need to solve the problem, but something is lacking. The tree is not only high, but its branches are intertwined, the cat is little, and you can’t see it or get to it through those thick branches. How to do it? Ah, Eureka! There is rope and the little hands of a little girl.

**Teamwork.** Naturally, we need help all the time and in all that we do. Only those who do nothing don't need help. Can you find a small cat on your own in a large, busy neighborhood? You need the ideas of other people to help! Now we have our mutual success and we move forward together; success lies in always brainstorming even when wrong ideas foster right ideas – our final victory can't be achieved without everyone's participation!

**Positive Thinking.** We entertain ourselves, and we have fun, and these things are key to any success and development. If we are not yet there, we still have fun. If we need additional efforts, we have fun anyway. Nothing is discouraging, and everything leads us to further steps – making new plans and finding new approaches. We never stop, just like the characters of the stories, who have shown us wonderful examples of positive thinking. The sound didn't work, the food didn't work, and even climbing up the ladder didn't work by themselves. OK, let's think, let's hope, let's move forward. And finally—victory!

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.