

Book Reviews

Enjoying the Gift of Being Uncommon: Extra Intelligent, Intense, and Effective. By Willem Kuipers. Voorburg, the Netherlands: Kuipers & Van Kempen, 2011, 196 pages, price: \$ 18.95 (paperback, printed in the USA), ISBN 978 1461 185567.

In this compelling and engaging book, Willem Kuipers integrates a broad range of knowledge into a specific, cohesive, and concrete model that deftly circumvents the elitist connotation of the word *gifted* and replaces it with *Xi*, a more extensive and acceptable perspective. *Xi* represents *extra intelligence* or *extra intense* and “indicates a subjectively verified, uncommonly high level of one or more kinds of intelligence” (p. 2). Identification of *Xi* does not require professional credentials to be identified. *XIP* describes an *extra intelligent* or *extra intense person* who holds three or more of the five defining characteristics: intellectually able, incurably inquisitive, autonomous, zealous in pursuit of interests, and demonstrating a contrast between intellectual and emotional self-confidence.

XIPs are intense, uncommon, driven individuals. As well, they are diverse, “brilliant, exasperating, full of ideas, dramatic, galvanizing or depressing, hilarious... aloof or overwhelmingly helpful” (p. viii). *Xi* and giftedness differ in the way they identify uncommon intelligence. Kuipers affirms “all gifted people can be recognized as XIPs with the aid of the five characteristics of *Xi*, but not all XIPs will succeed in being designated as gifted through formal IQ testing” (p. 20).

In the past ten years Kuipers and his partner Annelien van Kempen have offered coaching and counselling to *Xi* adults. They have delved into how uncommon intelligence affects adults in their personal and professional lives. *Enjoying the Gift of Being Uncommon*, a comprehensive guide that facilitates reflective practice toward increasing awareness, offers an opportunity for readers to discover, track, and actualize their potential.

The book, organizationally strong, is primarily dedicated to the introduction of three Practices that facilitate an individual’s development and well-being through acknowledging, exploring, and investigating *Xi*. These practices, described in detail in three corresponding parts of the book, require repeated exercise to maintain proficiency. Part 1: “Acknowledging *Xi*” discusses the characteristics, complexities and challenges that accompany uncommon intelligence. Acknowledging *Xi* helps an individual not only to recognize and accept uncommon intelligence but also to discover other XIPs and value the special interaction with them. Part 2: “Exploring *Xi*” addresses how individuals through the discovery of their *Xidentity*, a combination of *Xi* and identity,

realize they are uncommon. The Model of Xidentity, informed by the research literature in psychology and gifted education, is a practical and useful model that describes how Xi is demonstrated through nine characteristics linked to intensity, complexity, and focus. Part 3: “Applying Xi” describes how to chart a course in this final practice, often complicated in part because there is no standard procedure to follow. Applying Xi requires the individuals to permit expression of mastery and excellence and move forward with persistence and passion. Finally, the two appendices offer a practical application of the underlying theory and a short personal reflection on Xi. The references provide an abbreviated list of relevant sources.

This valuable resource aptly reframes negatively perceived behaviours, associated with uncommon intelligence, to those demonstrating great richness and intensity of inner experience. Unfortunately, too often the gifted remain unheard and misunderstood and therefore marginalized in their life journeys. As Kuipers underscores, it becomes critical not only for XIPs to gain self-awareness and empathy but also for others to hear the authentic voices of Xi individuals to begin to more ably understand their struggles in defining who they are, and to support the experience of their developing selves.

Enjoying the Gift of Being Uncommon is for seekers and gifted individuals across the lifespan, parents of gifted children, and inspiring organizational leaders who hold a commitment to empathic understanding, authentic identity, and an ethic of care toward a higher good.

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