



**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**  
for *Smart Parenting for Smart Kids*  
by Eileen Kennedy-Moore & Mark S. Lowenthal

The book opens with the sentence, “‘Potential’ is a dangerous word.” What does this mean to you?

To what extent do you feel the “pressure to perform” is an issue in your community? How has that affected your parenting?

In what ways do you think achievement concerns can interfere with children discovering who they are and who they want to become? Have you had any personal experiences with this?

What do you think causes an over-focus on grades, test scores, awards, and other measures of what kids “do” as opposed to who kids are and how they contribute to the community?

The authors write, “Test scores and grades are good predictors of academic performance, but whether our children will be able to develop happy, productive, and fulfilling adult lives depends on much more than school smarts.” What do you consider the key values and/or life skills you want your child to learn?

What role do you think parents can or should play in encouraging their children’s success? How can we help our children develop a healthy perspective on achievement?

Most parents want their kids to be happy AND to do well in life. What do you see as a parent’s role is supporting both of these goals? What do you think does or doesn’t work? How does this relate to Carol Dweck’s research about the downside of telling kids they are “smart”?

The authors write, “The path of development is a journey of discovery that is clear only in retrospect, and it’s rarely a straight line.” To what extent does that statement describe your own life course?

What messages did your parents deliberately or inadvertently give you about what “success” means and what matters most in life? In what ways do you want to pass on or change these messages for your own child(ren)?

Do you think children are more stressed nowadays than when we were kids? Why or why not? What does that mean for how we should parent?

Do you think parents are more anxious today than they were a generation ago? Why or why not? How does this affect parents' behavior?

Was there a particular vignette or chapter that reminded you of your child(ren)?

Was there a particular vignette or chapter that reminded you of yourself as a child? To what extent are those issues still relevant for you today?

What are your expectations for your child(ren)? How can parents tell if their expectations are realistic? In what ways have you had to adjust your expectations regarding your child(ren), such as accepting that your child is not the scholar/athlete/musician/dancer/social star that you were or that your child has different interests than you did?

The media is full of examples of either neglectful parents or helicopter parents. How do you personally find the line between support versus intrusion? In what ways are you more or less involved with your child's life compared to how involved your parents were in your life?

The authors mention a quote from John F. Kennedy (and Luke 12:48), "Of those to whom much is given, much is required." They say that Kennedy meant this as a call to service but nowadays it seems like a demand for individual accomplishment. Do you think children (and adults) today are more self-absorbed? What do you think can help children learn to value and contribute to the greater community?

The book ends with the sentence, "By loving them for more than their abilities, we show our children that they are much more than the sum of their accomplishments." What does this mean to you?

What is one idea or strategy from the book that you want to put into practice with your own child(ren)?