

GIRLS ARE SMARTER THAN BOYS. MEN ARE MORE INTELLIGENT THAN WOMEN. WHAT HAPPENED?

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Actually the truth is women and men are similar in overall intelligence. However, beginning about the age of six and continuing throughout life both women and men believe men are smarter than women. Both are sure women are worse at math. Their perceptions did not change in spite of the fact that girls slightly outperform boys in academic performance. This has a significant impact upon the academic decisions and life choices girls make and is one of the factors that cause girls to shy away from some types of careers. It also has a negative influence on self-esteem. Why do we believe these false perceptions and what can we do to counteract this almost universal phenomenon?

IQ tests and social/cultural beliefs are two factors that leads girls and women to believe they are less intelligent. Traditionally men outscored women slightly on these tests. Recently women are doing better than men overall. Studies indicate that women may have always had the ability to perform as well or better than men but the self-perception of being less smart may have hindered their confidence in taking the exam. This is very significant on areas of the exam the girls perceived as "math". They expected to do worse than boys before lifting the pencil to begin the test. It has been

suggested that the tests may be gender and racially biased which affects results.

Some studies suggest that gender stereotyping leads girls to be less interested in "male-occupied" occupations like math, leadership, and science. The reason for this might be societal lingering belief that these professions are for people with the innate talent and brilliance and that women do not possess these talents. This activates women's negative self-perception and lowers their belief in their intelligence and ability.

Women under estimate their abilities and blame themselves when something goes wrong. Confidence plays a vital role in intelligence. If tests and culture are inhibiting the confidence and self-knowledge women need to feel smart and capable what can we do to change this? How do we enable all girls and women challenge themselves to achieve everything they are capable of?

Did you see the Superbowl AUDI Ad "What Do I Tell My Daughter?" There is an answer. From birth on girls should be taught they are smart and capable and there is no glass ceiling for them. Encourage your children to feel comfortable with their intellect, their personal power, and help them to enjoy challenging themselves. Think

about your own perceptions. Act the part. Do you as a mother, grandmother, friend act intelligent and confident? Dads do you let your daughters know they are smart? Teach boys from an early age girls are their equal. What you believe and how you behave will have a huge impact upon what your child believes. If you believe men and women are equally able and can do the same things so will your children. Ask your children questions about their ideas about intelligence and have discussions with them. Make sure teachers are imparting similar messages.

Encourage a mastery oriented style of learning. This is the belief intelligence is malleable and can be developed through education and hard work. When children believe intellect can grow they want to learn. Struggles are not a sign of being stupid but a part of developing skills. This belief is backed by tests and performance. The children with the highest self-esteem believe this about themselves and often out perform the children who have been told how smart they are but have not been taught to work hard to achieve.

Our world is a better place when men AND women know they are bright and capable and live up to their potential.