

# Gifted seniors not everyone is average

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Gifted Adults Foundation  
The Netherlands

&  
SENG gifted elders initiative



*EMAG Krakow, 12 August 2016*

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## Who are these gifted seniors?

- Achievements?
  - Academic
  - Creative
  - Politics
  - .....
- Looks, appearance?
- Intuition? We just see it, feel it, know it...?
- IQ test necessary?
- Or .....? Some examples, please add

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- Annemarie Roeper (1918 – 2012)
- Founded schools for gifted
- Wrote article 'Growing old gifted'



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- Carmen dell'Orefice (1931)
- Model since her 15th (cover Vogue), still is (now 85)



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- Fauja Singh (1911)
- First marathon at 89; also at 104 in 2016



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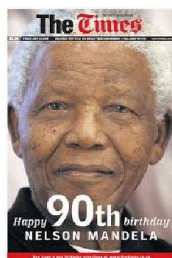
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- Nelson Mandela (1918 – 2013)



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- Marian Diamond (1926)
- Neuro-researcher, still working



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- Toyo Shibata, (1911 – 2013)
- Wrote first book of poems when 99



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*Your examples of gifted seniors?*

- Well-known
- Known to you
- Unknown

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and many other seniors ...



- not showing their talents or giftedness
- hiding their needs
- becoming lonely and sad
- waiting for the end



• or: happy and lively?



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### Why paying attention to this group?

#### • Negative reasons

- Loneliness
- Mental problems
- Critical and difficult people
- Conflicts with care givers
- Dementia and giftedness?



#### • Positive reasons

- Understanding themselves
- Less lonely
- More suitable activities
- Adding talents to society

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### My personal motivation

- Gifted adults: publications, presentations
- Gifted Adults Foundation (IHBV) since 2010: knowledge institute
- Now 68
- My character
- Many stories
- No research on this subject



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**Small study 2013**

6 interviews (Nauta, unpublished)

Questions

- Brief description of your life and work?
- What means giftedness for you?
- Discovering your giftedness?
- What are your activities now?
- Advice for others like you?

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**Interview group**

- Female: 4
- Male: 2
- Ages: 71 – 91
- 1 married, 2 widows, 2 divorced, 1 single
- Living: 5 independent, 1 in residential home
- Health: 5 fairly good and mobile

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**Life and work**

- 3 from parents with lower education
- 2 had military father
- 1 had academic parents
  
- 2 women and 1 man only secondary school
- 2 women higher educated
- 1 man university later in life
  
- Many searched long for good and fitting work, not always found it

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### Discovering of giftedness

- As a child: 1
- During military service: 1
- Because of (grand)children: 2
- Late in life: 1
- Because of the interview: 1

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### Meaning of giftedness

- Understanding own life (retrospective)
- Looking for fitting activities
- Good contact with (grand)children
- Happy to know about giftedness

Also:

- Loneliness
- Searching

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### Example innovative project (1)

Axioncontinu 'De Ingelanden':  
living, care and wellbeing in Utrecht

- Residents live together in small groups
- Focus on gifted, educated and other residents
- Asking input what *they* want to do and learn
- Let seniors participate in organizing activities



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### Needs of residents

- Future-oriented
- Meeting like-minded residents
- Conversing at their own level
- Challenging activities
- In-depth topics



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### Steps to a better life for gifted seniors

1. Targeted questions during intake
2. Education of staff
3. Adapt activities to their wishes and needs
4. New activities focused on their needs

Example:  
Cultural Club, for and by residents

Future: expand to other locations



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### Example innovative project (2)

- 'Study groups'
- The Hague
- Living at home with beginning dementia
- Higher educated (and/or gifted)
- Based on needs
- Group session, lunch, creative part
- Other towns?



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**Social and emotional needs of gifted seniors?** (Bouwman & Geertsma, 2015)

- Interviews:
  - Participation in society
  - Self-development, strong need to acquire knowledge
  - Social networking
- Questionnaire 100 members Mensa NL 60 +
  - 86% want to develop
  - Majority moderately lonely

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**Knowledge of professionals working with elderly** (Aryee, 2015)

- 5 interviews with professionals
- Results diverse
- Some interest in giftedness
- Poor knowledge on giftedness
- Recognize it sometimes in clients
- No need for specific knowledge or skills
- Want practical advice (referral)

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**Gifted and dementia**

No research yet

We want to study:

- cases: descriptions, ask attention
- needs gifted seniors and their caregivers?
  - + offer knowledge to professionals

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### SENG Gifted elders initiative

- Research data, meta analysis
- Research based needs
- New research
- Disseminate findings
- Grow awareness
- Collaboration!



• *Let us know if you are interested!*

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### Article in Mensa World Journal

May 2016 p 5-6

*'Gifted Elders: a forgotten group'*

*Nauta, Fiedler, Friedrichs*

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Your suggestions for a better life  
for gifted seniors?



- Your own (future) needs and wishes?
- What can you do for other gifted people?
  - What do you want others to do?

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Best wishes for a happy gifted seniorship!



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