

Positive+Parent™ Newsletter

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NO MAN IS AN ISLAND

I just heard some fascinating research about positive psychology and cities. We all know the stereotypes. We all think that New Yorkers are brusque, perhaps even obnoxious. We think of Los Angelenos as friendlier if not a little shallow. And we think of Atlantans as very warm and welcoming southerners. The first question we should ask is whether these stereotypes are true. The second question we should ask is, "If it is true, how does it affect us and our kids?"

We now have some answers to these questions. Two researchers, Nansoon Park and Chris Peterson, looked at the results from the Values In Action Survey of Strengths by city.

San Francisco, Los Angeles and Oakland were the cities with the greatest number of people who had the strengths of (1) appreciation of beauty, (2) creativity, (3) curiosity and (4) love of learning. Park and Peterson called these "Strengths of the Head" since they are all more intellectual strengths. This means that if you live in one of these cities, you are surrounding yourself with people who are more intellectual, creative and who love learning. There will probably be more opportunities for you to introduce your children to these strengths and for them to interact with people who have these strengths.

El Paso, Mesa, Miami and Virginia Beach rated highest for strengths of the heart like (1) fairness, (2) forgiveness (3) gratitude and (4) hope. There are more in this list but you get the idea that these people

are probably more interested in other people rather than art or learning. You might say these cities have a lot of "people" people.

What does this mean for you and your kids? I am not suggesting that you pick up and move to a city that has the qualities that you are looking for. But realizing that your city may be stronger in one area or another allows you to try to make up the "deficit" and make sure to expose your children (and yourself) to other things in your city.

When children are exposed to many different kinds of activities they are likely to become more curious about many different things and more likely to find their own natural talent. If a child has "an artist" inside of them and they are only exposed to sports, they may be very frustrated when they cannot find a career that seems to suit them.

Cities often have a variety of activities for children. While Silicon Valley cities are more likely to have computer activities for kids, I am sure you can also find art activities. And while Boston may have more history related activities, you can search out some martial arts.

You have to realize that where you live has an affect on you and on your children. You may be happy about the affect your city has or you may realize that there are things you want to fill in. Simply being aware of is the first step toward addressing areas that might be weak or missing.

