
Interview

An Interview with Paula Prober: Those Rainforest Minds

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1. Paula, first of all, can you tell your readers a bit about yourself and your education and experiences?

I have been a psychotherapist in private practice in Eugene, Oregon and an international consultant for gifted adults and parents of gifted children for about 35 years. (See full bio at the end of the article.) I have written two books on giftedness in adults and teens and I blog at rainforestmind.com. In my first career, I was a teacher, working with gifted children in pull-out programs in a middle school and elementary schools. I taught classes for teachers on how to work with these children in the regular classroom and for parents on raising gifted kids.

2. What prompted you to write "*Your Rainforest Mind*"?

When I was teaching, I needed a way to explain giftedness to my colleagues and came up with the analogy of the rainforest. If people are like ecosystems, some are like meadows, some deserts, and some rainforests, for example. All are beautiful and valuable. The rainforest is just the most complex. Like the rainforest, these gifted children and adults are complicated, creative, intense, overwhelming, highly sensitive, super smart, and misunderstood.

I had started a blog on the topic and a small press asked me to write a book for them on giftedness in adults. There was very little written about gifted adults available at the time and because the definition of the word gifted is so controversial, I wanted to give people an alternative way to understand and accept these highly intelligent and sensitive humans and to reach a broader audience with this information.

3. Is there one single trait that stands out in this rainforest? Or are there many intertwined?

Of course, each rainforest-minded human is complex and unique, and yet, I have found some traits that show up often. These include: advanced intelligence, high sensitivity, deep empathy, passion for learning (not necessarily schooling), intuition, high standards (perfectionism), social responsibility, and often a capacity for a deep spirituality usually in a connection with the natural world.

4. Some adults are perfectionistic, some underachievers, some overly sensitive- how do you work with such a divergent bunch?

In my counseling practice, I use various tools and techniques based in attachment and psychodynamic theory to determine what a particular client might need. My focus in counseling is on healing from early childhood abuse and trauma. When I consult with gifted adults around the world, the focus is on understanding the pressures, myths, and difficulties they have experienced growing up gifted. I help them gain clarity about who they truly are and find ways to experience self-acceptance, discover career directions, improve relationships, and design meaningful, fulfilling lives.

5. In your mind- are these individuals with these rainforest minds understood by their spouses and or peers?

Most of my clients talk about how lonely they are. It often starts early when they are misunderstood or even bullied in school. It can be very hard to find friends and partners who have similar depth, intellect, sensitivities, empathy, and interests.

6. Deep feelings and emotions- seem to be part of this "rainforest". Does society accept the depth of emotion of these folk?

They often have intense emotions. Both ends of the spectrum. They can feel the deepest despair and also the most expansive joy. They might respond quite emotionally to things others don't notice, such as the particular way the light hits the leaves at dusk, the profound beauty of a piece of music, or how cruel humans can be to one another. These complex emotions can be ridiculed by others, particularly in these sensitive men.

7. Curiosity and life long learners- are we helping adults with their curiosities and how do these rainforest minds cope from day to day?

Yes, they are quite curious, wanting to know everything about everything! And the learning never ends. This is another way they are different from their peers. If they can learn about giftedness and see that their traits are just part of having a rainforest mind versus a set of flaws that need to be fixed, this can help them come to greater self-awareness and self-acceptance. Then I recommend they nourish themselves by feeding their intellect, doing what they love, caring for their tender hearts, and looking for a few other rainforest-minded folks who will appreciate their curiosity, deep emotions, sensitivities, and passions.

8. Do you have a website with more information- especially about your book? Tell us about your book! And where to get it!

My website is rainforestmind.com. I am on Instagram at [paulaprober](https://www.instagram.com/paulaprober). My books are available to order at independent bookstores, libraries, and Amazon. My first book *Your Rainforest Mind: A Guide to the Well-Being of Gifted Adults and Youth* is a collection of case studies of gifted adults in therapy and covers sensitivities, perfectionism, loneliness, schooling, multipotentiality, creativity, spirituality, social responsibility, anxiety, depression, and more. My second book, *Journey Into Your Rainforest Mind: A Guide For Gifted Adults And Teens, Book Lovers, Overthinkers, Geeks, Sensitives, Brainiacs, Intuitives, Procrastinators, and Perfectionists*, is a collection of my most popular blog posts, 2014-2018. Both books contain lists of resources and strategies.

9. What have I neglected to ask?

Perhaps the final question would be: Why does it matter, Why do we care about our gifted folks, Won't they just be fine on their own since they are so smart?

It matters. We need to care. Many of them won't be fine on their own. Our rainforest-minded souls do not necessarily thrive just because they are intellectually advanced. They can struggle greatly with inadequate schooling, rejection and bullying, perfectionism, complex sensitivities, intense emotions, serious anxiety, depression, extraordinary loneliness, self-doubt, and more. Like the tropical rainforest, they have much to offer to all of us if we understand them, support them, nourish them, and let them flourish.

Full Bio

Paula Prober is a psychotherapist, consultant, blogger, and author in private practice in Eugene, Oregon, USA. Over the 35+ years she has worked with the gifted, Paula has been a teacher and presenter at universities, webinars, podcasts, and conferences. She consults internationally with gifted adults and parents of gifted children. She has written articles for psychotherapy.net, *Psychotherapy Networker*, *Advanced Development Journal*, *Rebelle Society*, *Introvert Dear*, *Highly Sensitive Refuge*, *Thrive Global*, and *Eugene Register-Guard*. Her first book, *Your Rainforest Mind: A Guide to the Well-Being of Gifted Adults and Youth*, is an in-depth look at giftedness including case studies, strategies for greater self-understanding and growth, and numerous resources. Her new book, *Journey Into Your Rainforest Mind: A Guide For Gifted Adults And Teens, Book Lovers, Overthinkers, Geeks, Sensitives, Brainiacs, Intuitives, Procrastinators, and Perfectionists* is a compilation of her most popular blog posts and includes specific strategies to guide readers back to authenticity, purpose, love, and to finally deciding what color to paint the living room. Visit her blog at rainforestmind.com. And on Instagram.