

Social and Emotional Needs of the Gifted

"Intelligence is not a privilege, it's a gift and it must be used for the betterment of mankind." Dr. Octavia (Spiderman Character)

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Different



- Bright kids are not better, yet they are different; and because they are, they face different issues.

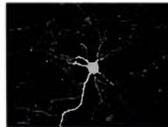
Emotional Intensity

- Giftedness has an emotional as well as intellectual component. Intellectual complexity goes hand in hand with emotional depth.
- Thinking is more complex; emotions have more depth.
- Emotional intensity is a different way of experiencing the world. It is also the **motivation** for achievement.



Brain Research

- Link between emotions and intellect has profound effect on gifted people.
- An intrinsic part of being gifted; provides the drive that gifted people have for personal growth and achievement.
- Emotions are tied to neurons in the brain via chemicals that attach to neurons.
- Gifted people may be more emotionally aware.



Expression of Emotions



- Extremes of emotion, positive & negative
- Bodily symptoms-headache, nausea, tense stomach, blushing.
- Inhibition-shyness; fears and anxieties
- Emotional ties and attachments to others, empathy, concern for others, sensitivity in relationships, attachment to animals, difficulty in adjusting to new environments.
- Critical self evaluation, feelings of inadequacy & inferiority

Six Categories of Gifted and Talented Students

- Type I: The Successful
- Type II: The Challenging
- Type III: The Underground
- Type IV: The Dropouts
- Type V: The Double-Labeled
- Type VI: The Autonomous Learner

Type I: The Successful

- 90% identified GATE students
- “Learned” the system
- Score high on achievement tests, but just going through the motions. Do just enough to get by.
- Few behavior problems, most believe they will “make it on their own”.
- Often fail to learn needed skills and attitudes for autonomy (dependent on adults for reinf.).
- Lose creativity and autonomy
- Fresh Prince: cousin - Carlton



Type II: The Challenging

- Unidentified GATE.
- Highly creative, obstinate, sarcastic, question authority of teacher.
- Interactions at school and home involve conflict
- FRUSTRATED because school has not validated their gifts and abilities.
- Struggling self esteem, negative self concepts
- “At risk” of dropping out, drug addiction, delinquent behavior.
- May/may not feel included in social group
- Fresh Prince (WILL SMITH)



Type III: The Underground

- Want to hide their giftedness
- Generally middle school girls whose belonging needs rise dramatically
- Deny their talent in order to belong with a non-gifted peer group.
- Feel insecure and anxious
- They benefit from being accepted as they are at the time.
- Alternatives should be explored to meet academic needs without abandoning all advanced classes.
- Movie: MEAN GIRLS – MAIN CHARACTER: Cady (Lyndsay Lohan)



Type IV: The Dropouts

- Usually high school students, but can be elementary student who has "dropped out" emotionally, mentally, physically (attendance).
 - ANGRY (w/adults and themselves)
 - Low self esteem, bitter, resentful
 - Often were identified as GATE late (H.S.) & feel rejected by a system that has not met their needs for many years.
 - Act depressed, withdrawn, defensive
 - Fail to receive support and affirmation for their talents (which lie outside the realm of regular school curriculum).
 - School seems irrelevant and hostile to them
 - Accomodations: 1. Require a close working relationship with an adult they can trust.
2. Family & individual counseling is beneficial.
- Examples: Cher, Sean Connery, Ray Charles
Robert Dinero



Type V: The Double-Labeled

- Gifted children who are also physically or emotionally handicapped (or have learning disabilities). (GATE/ADD)
- Not your typical GATE student. Sloppy handwriting, disruptive behaviors, don't complete work.
- Feel discouraged, frustrated, rejected, helpless, isolated.
- Deny having difficulty, claim to be "bored"
- Use humor to demean, are impatient & critical.
- Unhappy about performance, intellectualize to cope with feelings of inadequacy.
- Often unidentified GATE, ignored, schools focus on weaknesses rather than nurture strengths.
- Walt Disney, Beethoven, Albert Einstein



Type VI: The Autonomous Learner

- Rarely evident at young ages.
- Work effectively in school system, but use the system to create opportunities for themselves.
- Strong, positive self concepts because needs are being met.
- Independent, self-directed, successful
- Accept themselves, take risks
- Respected by adults and peers, often serve in leadership capacity
- Strong sense personal power, change makers.



Stages of Friendship

Stage 1: Play Partner-
someone to play with, borrow things from

Stage 2: People to Chat to-
someone to share interests, have conversations.

Stage 3: Help & Encouragement-
someone who will offer help (still one-sided view).

Stage 4: Intimacy/empathy-
recognition that comfort and support flows both ways, giving AND receiving are important, emotional sharing begins.

Stage 5: Sure Shelter- *“A faithful friend is a sure shelter; whoever finds one has found a rare treasure” Ecclesiastes 6:14.*
A deep and lasting relationship of trust, fidelity, unconditional acceptance.

Gifted- Choice of Friends

- Gifted children are further along hierarchy of friendship than age-peers of average ability (by 2 to 6 years!). Their conception of friendship is much higher than average children.
- They seek to meet needs of intellect AND intimacy in friendship.
- Gifted children seek the “sure shelter” friendships as young as 6 or 7 years.
- In elementary years, gifted children will have difficulty finding satisfying friendships. They need help from adults establishing these relationships.

Promoting positive social development

- Have need to interact w/mental peers, companions with similar interests, abilities.
- Need help to find these friends, risk being labeled strange by classmates (results in social alienation).
- Happier, well adjusted when relating to other gifted children.
- Also need interaction of peers of similar developmental stages. (team sports, extra-curricular clubs, church).
- With support of gifted peers, they can join in other groups without fear of rejection.

Social Development

- Gifted students enrolled in special programs experience enhanced self esteem.
- Provide social interactions w/true peers.
- Suggest summer programs to parents (especially at elementary level) to help establish solid base of self esteem in early childhood.
- Self knowledge increases ability to relate effectively with others.

Needs of Gifted in Friendships

When gifted children are asked what they most desire, the answer is often 'a friend'. (Silverman)

- Social isolation experienced by gifted children is most pronounced between ages 4 and 9 (elementary years).
- Throughout elementary school most gifted children will have difficulty making friends with others who have similar expectations of friendship.
- Placement with peers of intellectual and emotional maturity is critical!*
- In absence of this*, loneliness and social isolation is likely, resulting in lower academic performance.



Affective Domain

- When school focuses solely on cognitive domain, excluding the affective and physical domains, gifted child feels "out of sync" with peers.
- This unbalanced development leads to perfectionism, self-criticism, poor self-concept, depression, eating disorders, and antisocial behavior.
- When gifted students are permitted to work and play with intellectual peers, loneliness and social isolation disappears, resulting in academic and personal success.

AT RISK?

- Research suggests that 15 percent of incarcerated youth tested in top 3 % on standardized intelligence scales.
- Some estimate that as many as 25% are gifted.
- Recent shootings around the country committed by kids who have been described as very bright.



Recommendations

- In responding to the emotional intensity that gifted children display, they need to be told that intense feelings are **NORMAL** for gifted children.
- Teachers: must not tolerate other children ridiculing the gifted child for reacting strongly to an apparently trivial incident.
- It doesn't help to say, "You're too sensitive" or "It'll be okay".
- We need to accept their emotions and help them to feel understood and supported.



Perfectionism

- Studies of gifted students show that the levels of perfectionism in gifted students are the **SAME** as for the regular population.
- The only difference in perfectionism was demonstrated by students whose parents pressured them to succeed.

- www.gt-cybersource.org/ Profiles of the Gifted and Talented
- www.sengifted.org Teasing and Gifted Children
- www.sengifted.org Case for Affective Education
- www.sengifted.org Promoting Positive Social Development
