



The Emotional Well Being of Your GT Child

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About me

- ⊕ Mom of 4
- ⊕ One child completed Quail Valley Middle School GT academy
- ⊕ One child is a junior at Travis HS - GSA
- ⊕ Second child going to Travis HS- GSA Fall 2022
- ⊕ Third child identified as GT
- ⊕ Not sure about fourth child 2nd grader, very smart as well

What is Emotional Health?

The field of gifted child education has always been a contentious one, the single area of special education deemed expendable, not essential, in the eyes of many. Here are some standard examples you might have experienced:

- ⊕ The five-year old kindergartener who reads chapter books at home but is relegated to simple picture books at school
- ⊕ The third grader who is forced to be a tutor for a classmate who has difficulty learning because, “to whom much is given, much is expected back.”
- ⊕ The sixth grader who weaves stories filled with metaphor and nuance and is criticized by her teacher for adding “too many unnecessary details to a simple writing project.”
- ⊕ The 15-year-old who is told that his high emotions and in-depth understanding of the frailty of the human condition make him difficult to be around. “Why can’t you just chill out once in a while?” he hears from classmates and adults

What is Emotional Health?

Emotional health is about how we think and feel.

It is about our sense of wellbeing, our ability to COPE with life events and how we acknowledge our own emotions as well as those of others.

It doesn't mean being happy all the time.

Why Care?

- ⊕ Be your kids advocate
- ⊕ Hear Them
- ⊕ For your other kids (if any)
- ⊕ Intercede
- ⊕ Intercept

Traits of a GT Student



What to look for

⊕ Overexcitabilities

⊕ Perfectionism

⊕ Depression

⊕ Asynchrony

⊕ Multi-potentialities

⊕ Underachievement

⊕ Procrastination

⊕ Self Image

⊕ Gifted Boys and Girls

⊕ Teasing and Bullying

⊕ Cultural Issues

Overexcitabilities

- ⊕ Higher than average response to stimuli
- ⊕ Reactions that are over and above average in intensity, duration and frequency
- ⊕ Not all gifted students have overexcitabilities, but there may be more people with overexcitabilities in the gifted population than in the average population
- ⊕ Children do not grow out of these super sensitivities. A child with intense emotional feelings will experience the same depth of emotion as an adult.
- ⊕ Emotional overexcitability is most commonly seen in gifted students

Perfectionism

A disposition to regard anything short of perfection as unacceptable; especially the setting of unrealistically demanding goals accompanied by a disposition to regard failure to achieve them as unacceptable and a sign of personal worthlessness.

“In a positive form, perfectionism can provide the driving energy which leads to great achievement”

(Roedell, 1984, p. 128 as cited by Silverman, 2000, p. 58)

Behaviors of Perfectionism

- ⊕ Depression
- ⊕ Nagging feeling of "I should"
- ⊕ Shame and guilt
- ⊕ Desire for face-saving
- ⊕ Procrastination
- ⊕ Self-deprecation
- ⊕ Poor risk analysis

Behaviors of Perfectionism

⊕ Mood Roller Coaster

(happy, sad, happy)

⊕ It's All About Numbers

(quantity not quality)

⊕ Obsessing About the Future

(what's next?)

⊕ Pining Over the Past

("if only....")

Mood Roller Coaster: happy with success, sad with failure

⊕ It's All About Numbers: quantity of achievement over quality

⊕ Telescopic Thinking: highlight the mistakes and ignore the accomplishments

⊕ Goals Run Your Life: studying before sleeping, achievement before friends and health

⊕ Nothing But the Best: too much practice to get it right, too many "do-overs"

⊕ All-or-Nothing: not satisfied unless they "have it all"

Coping with Perfectionism

- ⊕ Learn how to mentally filter thoughts, focusing on successes instead of mistakes
- ⊕ Concentrate effort on the things that really need the extra attention
- ⊕ Reevaluate current standards by comparing to set criteria used by others (Set realistic goals)
- ⊕ Celebrate successes
- ⊕ Develop the capacity for constructive failure; present performance sets the tone for future improvement (Learn from mistakes.)
- ⊕ Develop self-concepts separate from products
- ⊕ Look closely at current level of self-acceptance and surround yourself with positive situations and positive people
- ⊕ Recognize that commitment to excellence is a lifelong struggle

Depression

Gifted students may experience existential depression or angst (depression over basic concerns about death, poverty, homelessness, war, diseases, meaninglessness, etc.).

Young gifted students may be especially susceptible to this depression because of their perceived inability to alleviate the injustices and problems of the world.

Depression

- ⊕ Notice how long the student has been depressed.
- ⊕ Accept the concerns.
- ⊕ Do not minimize the intensity of the student's feeling.
- ⊕ Support the student.

Depression

Evaluate the level of depression and degree of risk. Signs of serious or severe depression:

- ⊕ Sudden changes in sleeping or eating habits
- ⊕ Inability to concentrate
- ⊕ Talk of dying or preoccupation with death
- ⊕ Giving away valued possessions
- ⊕ Withdrawal from family or friends
- ⊕ Recent loss of social supports
- ⊕ Involvement with drugs or alcohol

Asynchrony

“Not synchronized”

Gifted students are asynchronous in that their physical development (chronological age), intellectual development (intellectual abilities or mental age), and social/emotional development (social behaviors) do not develop equally at the same time.

A seven-year-old gifted student in second grade may have an intellectual ability equivalent to a 10-year-old, and be able to read on a fifth grade level, but may behave like a six year old at times.

Just because a gifted student may have exceptional intellectual maturity does not mean that he always displays emotional maturity!

Multi-potentiality

In general, MULTI-POTENTIALITY refers to a student's ability to excel in more than one area.

CONS: The student has his/her choice of numerous, viable career paths; at times, unrelated. The student might excel equally in both science and dance, math and music, and/or history and theater. The student might experience great conflict when selecting a career path or in making choices.

Gifted Underachievement

There are at least three underlying themes in the definition of gifted underachievement:

⊕ Underachievement as a discrepancy between:

potential achievement Vs. actual achievement

⊕ Underachievement as a discrepancy between:

predicted achievement a Vs. actual achievement

⊕ Underachievement as a:

failure to develop or use potential

Perfectionism's Cousin: Procrastination

Procrastination is related somewhat to fear of failure but also to motivation/interest

One research study and review of research suggests high levels of procrastination are related to low intrinsic motivation/high extrinsic motivation
Increasing interest in activity or course material may decrease procrastination

- Senécal, Koestner, & Vallerand, 1995 Bess B. Worley II, Ph.D. Gloucester County Public Schools

Issues with Self-Esteem and Self-Image

Some gifted students may have a poor self-image or low self-esteem due to:

1. Understanding how little they do know compared to the world's body of knowledge – they know how much they don't know
2. Frustration that they cannot solve the world's inequities and problems (super sensitivity to injustice)
3. Feeling out of place socially, intellectually

“Things were easy before; now they are difficult, so I must not be as smart as they said.”

Gifted Boys Sometimes...

- ⊕ Are pressured to demonstrate athleticism with peers. They learn that athletic ability makes intelligence acceptable.
- ⊕ Act out when bored; bully others
- ⊕ Learn best through movement, action, and tactile activity
- ⊕ Hide creativity and sensitivity to fit in
- ⊕ Interrupt and demand more attention from others
- ⊕ Blame teacher or subject for bad grades

Gifted Girls

- ⊕ Gifted girls are faced with numerous, complex choices that affect the course of their lives. Issues seem to be particularly problematic in the middle school years.
- ⊕ Cultural stereotyping
- ⊕ Gender roles
- ⊕ Conflicting messages
- ⊕ Lack of role models

Teasing/Bullying

- ⊕ Adults must closely monitor areas or situations to prevent opportunities for teasing.
- ⊕ Help gifted students to know each other and their peers.
- ⊕ Be a confidant and take reports of teasing /bullying seriously.
- ⊕ Encourage gifted students to report acts of social aggression against them.
- ⊕ Take a stand – Support from teachers and parents is important.

Understanding Cultural Issues

- ⊕ Gifted students who are culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) may express some social and gifted behaviors differently than our cultural norms.
- ⊕ Often CLD students follow hidden rules unknown to classroom teachers. Hidden rules are unspoken cues and habits of a group (Slocumb & Payne, 2000).
- ⊕ While there are differences among individuals, there are often similarities within cultural groups. The following two slides provide examples.

From a GT student

- ⊕ Pay more attention as their guardian not only physical but emotions
- ⊕ They don't see themselves as gifted and can't always accept praise
- ⊕ GT is not a label they always want to be associated with
- ⊕ Allow them to be a child
- ⊕ If you push too hard it can go good or bad
- ⊕ Is GT a gift or curse?

References

1. Page 6: https://youtu.be/_yvN1wwYQ8Q
2. Page 4: <https://www.sengifted.org/post/delisle-sorry>
3. Page 5:
https://media.samaritans.org/documents/What_is_emotional_health.pdf
4. Page 6-27: <https://slideplayer.com/slide/6602658/>

Conclusion

Our kids are normal.

They just aren't typical...

Jim Delisle