

Social and Emotional Needs of the Gifted

Presented by

Priscilla Lurz, M.Ed.

prislurz4@gmail.com



Congratulations for being part of this Advisory Council. Parents of gifted children are often unable to talk about their experiences with other parents of children not identified as gifted. (“Your child gets good grades – why should you be worrying?”)



Gifted children and youth are generally as well adjusted as the general population, but there are some characteristics inherent to the gifted. The physical, cognitive, emotional and social development of the gifted move at different rates (uneven development).



Example: A six year old can cognitively reason as a 10 year old, but decide to behave, at times, as a four year old.

The frontal lobes of young gifted brains do not develop any faster than those of other people.

Therefore, do not expect the gifted to have more advanced decision making skills or be more socially and emotionally mature than their peers despite their higher intelligence.



Helpful for you to



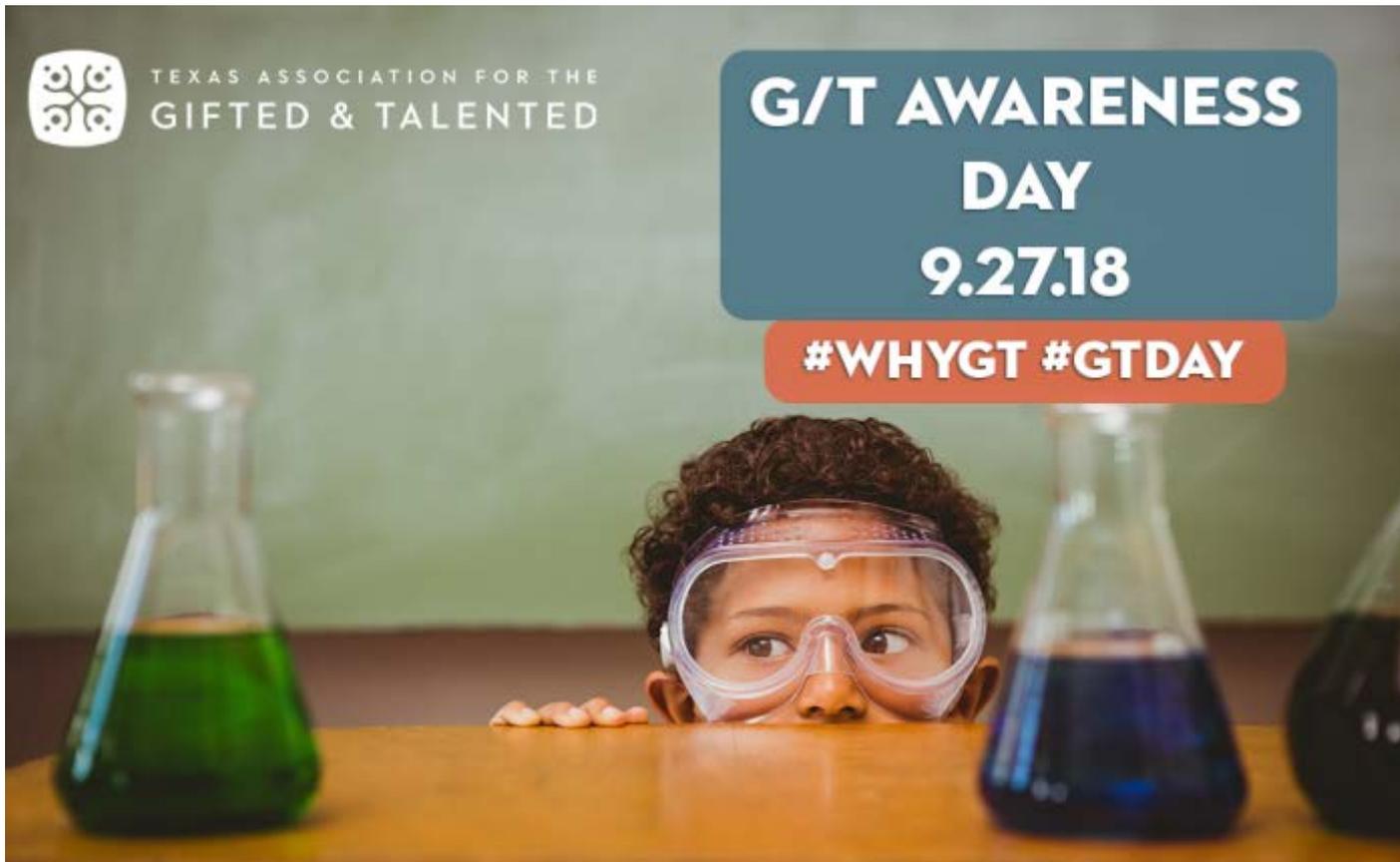
- **Have a basic understanding of giftedness.**

Some gifted kids may not share their concerns with others because they assume that if they are smart, they should be able to “figure it out” for themselves

- **Help your child understand that it is normal for everyone at any age to experience some anxieties**



- **Take their issues seriously and know when to seek further assistance**



Tuesday, September 25: Parents Day: Join a free Parent Webinar and find parent resources on TAGT's social media.

<https://www.txgifted.org/gtawarenessday>

Potential Social & Emotional Needs

- Perfectionism
- Underachievement
- Teasing & Bullying



All of these issues may cause stress



Perfectionism: A tendency to regard anything less than perfection as unacceptable;

<http://www.merriam--webster.com/medical/perfectionism>



Some Attributes of Healthy Perfectionists

In a positive form, perfectionism can provide the driving energy which leads to achievement.

- Self-acceptance of mistakes
- Positive coping strategies
- Personal effort is an important part of their achievement



Grit is “...perseverance and passion for long-term goals.”

Dr. Angela Duckworth

Professor of Psychology at the University of Pennsylvania



She studied why some individuals accomplish more than other individuals despite having the same talent, intelligence, and resources.

Four signs of Grit:

- An enduring interest
- Frustrations (set backs) are viewed as part of the process
- Look (even in small ways) to make things more meaningful
- Believe one can change and grow (growth mindset)

5 Ways to Develop Grit

- **Focus on your words:** Use language that encourages perseverance and praises effort
- **Surround Yourself with People Who Persevere**
- **Adopt Flexible Thinking Patterns:** Being less rigid in thoughts and actions allows resilience and grit to blossom
- **Set Tiny Goals That Align with Your Purpose:**
This will keep motivation high
- **Build Time into Your Day for Reflection:** Focus on the positive and decide next steps in planning tomorrow's activities

Dweck advises, *"If parents want to give their children a gift, the best thing they can do is to teach their children to love challenges, be intrigued by mistakes, enjoy effort, and keep on learning."*



- Dr. Dweck, a Professor of Psychology at Stanford University, presented a research-based program to show the impact of mind-sets. She showed how a person's mindset sets the stage for either performance goals or learning goals.
 - A person with a performance goal might be worried about looking smart all the time, and avoid challenging work (Fixed Mindset)
 - A person with a learning goal will pursue interesting and challenging tasks in order to learn more (Growth Mindset)

People with a Growth Mind-set

- See effort as the pathway to mastery
- Learn from criticism (appropriate feedback)
- Find lessons and inspiration from the success of others
- Reaches ever-higher levels of achievement

People with a Fixed Mind-set

- May have difficulty moving forward when faced with challenging work
- Can't handle criticism - any criticism of capabilities or accomplishments becomes a criticism of self
- Not a risk taker – fear of failing; may not even try
- Threatened by the success of others

A fixed mindset can result in developing a negative (dysfunctional) perfectionism



Some Attributes of Negative or Dysfunctional Perfectionists

- Anxiety about making errors
- Need for constant approval
- Doesn't reward or celebrate improvements



Some Thinking Patterns of Perfectionism



- Mood roller coaster (happy/sad)
- Obsessing about the future (what's next)
- Pinning over the past (if only; highlights mistakes)
- Goals run life (ignores friends, family and health)
- Nothing but the best (constant do-overs; all or nothing)
- Need to control every detail and people

Some strategies for managing perfectionism

- Express courage (Grand Courage and Everyday Courage)
- Reward experimenting (an attempt of trying and open to learning from trial & error)
- Expect progress not perfection
- Applaud persistence — help kids see struggles like puzzles to solve, rather than problems to react to
- Breakdown tasks into small attainable tasks (How do you eat an elephant?)
- Honor the invested time



Grand Courage and Everyday Courage You Decide...

- Trying a food you've never tried before.

Daily Courage

- Asking someone out on a date?

Daily Courage

- Military personnel and their families
defending the freedom of the United States.

Grand Courage

- Famous Failures Video

I never make the same mistake twice. I make it five or six times, just to be sure.

**MAKING
MISTAKES IS
BETTER THAN
FAKING
PERFECTIONS.**
KUSHANDWIZDOM

Gifted Underachievement

- A discrepancy between potential achievement and actual achievement.



- Failure to develop or use potential.

- A variety of reasons for underachievement:
 - Hide their giftedness to fit in with peers or social group
 - Lack of challenging material (“Why should I do this if I know it already?”)
 - Deliberately failing than admitting you don’t know something, because “*gifted students are supposed to know everything*”
 - Unhealthy Perfectionism - overly high expectations can be paralyzing (“There is no way I can get into Harvard, so I won’t even try”; “I would rather fail on purpose than try and then fail.”)
- **Not all gifted students get As.**
- **Gifted students are not gifted in everything.**

Some strategies to use with underachievers?



- Help students set realistic goals
- Teach and model how to prioritize tasks
- Empower kids to take charge by teaching them to say no to distractions

Teasing/Bullying ...and the Gifted

- Teasing is actually another form of **criticizing**. Although bullying is not the same as teasing, both could include direct criticisms
- The person who teases is usually putting others down. Bullying is on-going and sustained, and intended maliciously
- Gifted kids are often the targets of teasing and bullying

Some strategies for handling teasing/bullying

- Inform the school (teacher, counselor, principal)
- Help gifted kids to know their peers (safety and comfort in numbers)
- Take your kids report of teasing/bullying seriously
- Help kids understand that reporting bullying behavior is not “tattling” but is preventing potentially serious issues



Help Your Child Manage Intense Feelings and Stress

Gifted kids often have heightened intensity, but this intensity doesn't mean treating the kids as being fragile.

- Encourage a child to open up to a safe confidant
- Rules may need to be explained because the gifted will often see rules as “pointless”
“Rules without relationship leads to rebellion.”
- Normalize emotional intensity - it is important for gifted individuals to recognize that **they are intense by nature**—that feeling deeply is normal for them
- Align the child with likeminded peers and adults (It is never too early to find a mentor or establish a tribe of peers.)



- Help your child to develop strategies for recognizing stress reactions and coping with stress (for example, toxic relationships)
- Help your child understand his/her own behaviors and how behaviors impact others (cause & effect)
- Teach the child to rate their emotional feeling on a rating scale of 1-10

***The emotions of the gifted are real.
Our molehills really are their mountains.***



More effective strategies...

- Use vocabulary appropriate to the their intellectual reasoning capabilities
(“talking down” does not work)
- Use a positive direct approach
(analyzing, clarifying and paraphrasing can be effective)
- Be honest, realistic, and not overly optimistic – they can see through a “fake” response
- Use appropriate humor



The way we
talk to our
children
becomes their
inner voice.

PEGGY O'MARA

www.happydancers.com

Help your child to understand that...

- Emotions are not liabilities; they often spark joy and passion which fuels intellectual capabilities to learn and create great works
- Ideally, all children should be taught to view heightened emotions as an asset.



- Avoid Overscheduling



Some gifted high achievers want to take extra courses, be on every team, and be in every club. They are passionate about everything.

- **Remember that gifted students need time to rest and think. Try to model and encourage a balanced lifestyle.**



- Try not to put intense pressure on gifted students
("My brilliant daughter will be a brain surgeon.")
- Kids may feel that their parents value them only for their giftedness (good performance), and consequently they become terrified of failing or making mistakes (hidden fear of losing your love and approval)

"Love me for who I am, not who you want me to be."



Closing Thought

“To be nobody but yourself in a world which is doing its best, night and day, to make you everybody else - means to fight the hardest battle which any human being can fight...”

E. E. Cummings

Encourage gifted kids to maintain their true inner self.

Resources

Websites:

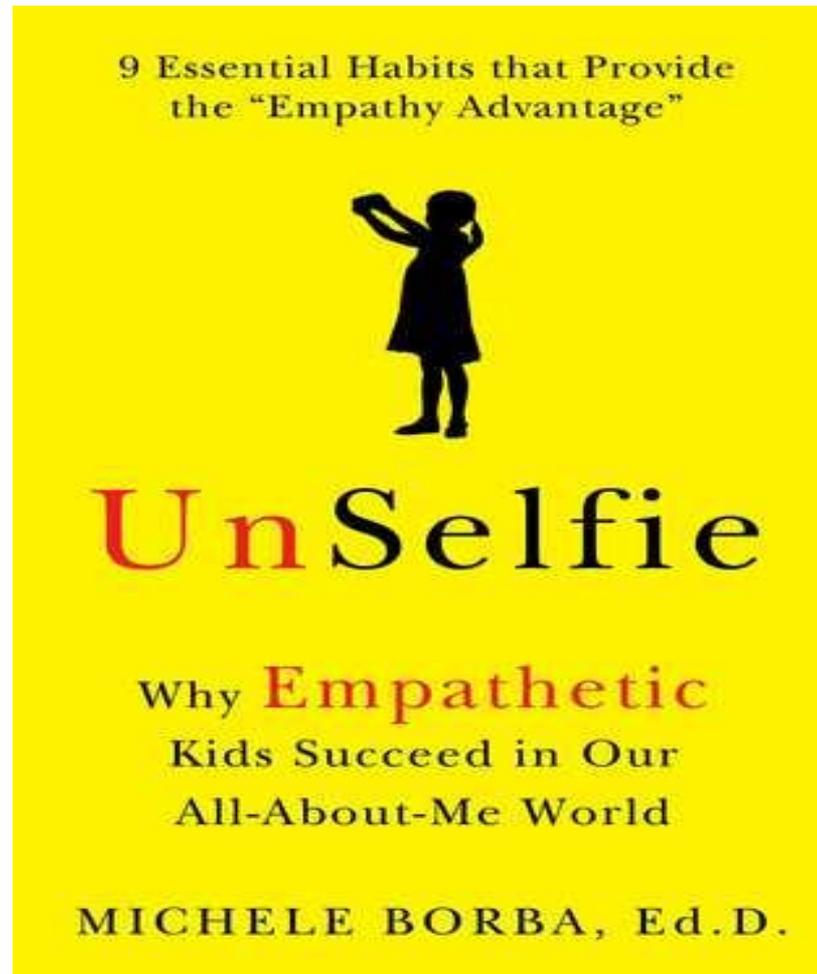
- Texas Association for the Gifted & Talented: <https://www.txgifted.org>
- National Association for Gifted Children: <http://www.nagc.org>
- The Center for Gifted Education, The College of William and Mary: <http://www.cfge.wm.edu>
- Duke Talent Identification Program (TIP): <https://tip.duke.edu>
- Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth: <http://www.cty.jhu.edu>
- SENG – Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted: <http://www.sengifted.org>
- Hoagies' Gifted Education Homepage: <http://www.hoagiesgifted.org>
- Council for Exceptional Children (includes gifted) www.cec.sped.org
- Neag Center for Gifted Education <http://www.gifted.uconn.edu/parents/parentrp.html>
- Essential Links for the Parents of Gifted Children <http://oedb.org/ilibrarian/50-essential-links-for-the-parents-of-gifted-children/>
- Psychologists specializing in the gifted: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists/san-antonio-gifted-and-talented-san-antonio-tx/314514> and/or www.hoagiesgifted.org/psychologists.htm

Books:

- (various books about the gifted - Prufrock Press) <http://www.prufrock.com/>
- "Brainstorm" - The Power and Purpose of the Teenage Brain by Dr. Daniel Siegel <http://www.drdansiegel.com/books/brainstorm/>
- "Unselfie: Why Empathetic Succeed in Our All-About-Me World" by Dr. Michele Borba

Think Beyond Yourself...Increase Your Circle of Concern

Spread the kindness virus!



References

- Boland, C. M. & Gross, M. U. (2007). Counseling highly gifted children and adolescents. In S. Mendaglio & J. S. Peterson (Eds.), *Models of counseling: Gifted children, adolescents, and adults*, 153-194. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.
- Clark, Pam (2014). *Counseling the Gifted Student*. Converse College.
- Cross and Cross. (2011) *Handbook for Counselors Serving Students with Gifts and Talents*. Prufrock Press.
- Devries, A. R. & Webb, J.T. (2007). *Gifted parent groups: The SENG model, 2nd edition*. Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press
- Mendaglio, S. (2008). Dabrowski's theory of positive disintegration: A personality theory for the 21st century. In S. Mendaglio (Ed.), *Dabrowski's theory of positive disintegration*, pp. 13-14. Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press.
- Moon, S. (2007). Counseling issues and research. In S. Mendaglio & J. S. Peterson (Eds.), *Models of counseling: Gifted children, adolescents, and adults*, pp. 7-27. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.
- Moon, S. M. (2002). Counseling needs and strategies. In M. Neihart, S. M. Reiss, N. M. Robinson, & S. M. Moon, (Eds.), *The social and emotional development of gifted children: What do we know?*, pp. 213-222. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press
- Neihart, M. (2002). Gifted children and depression. In M. Neihart, S. M. Reiss, N. M. Robinson, & S. M. Moon, (Eds.), *The social and emotional development of gifted children: What do we know?*, pp. 93-103. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press
- Robinson, N. (2002). Introduction. In M. Neihart, S. M. Reiss, N. M. Robinson, & S. M. Moon, (Eds.), *The social and emotional development of gifted children: What do we know?*, p. xi. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.
- Webb, J.T., Amend, E. R., Webb, N.E., Goerss, J., Beljan, P., & Olenchak, F. R. (2005). *Misdiagnosis and dual diagnosis of gifted children and adults*. Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press.
- http://www.schooltools.info/?gclid=EAlaIQobChMIivipisu51QIVmo2zCh1DMQRuEAAYASAAEgljS_D_BwE