The Social and Emotional Issues of Gifted Children and Adolescents:
A Brief Overview

By MG Stewart
As presented at MAGE DAYS, Newton MA, October 2016
# Table of Contents

- Asynchrony
- Identity - Peers and friends
- A lot is going on up there
  - Over-excitabilities
  - Creativity - Pros and cons
- Precision - a two edged sword
  - Perfectionism
  - Idealism
    - Legalism
    - Tolerance
- Balance and awareness
- Resources
- Discussion - Q. & R.
Asynchrony

- Being out of synch with one’s own development
  - Physical
  - Emotional
  - Intellectual
  - Chronological

- Result = Internal Dissonance
- Sense of belonging
- Multiple kinds & ages of peers and friends
  - Intellectual
  - Age-mates
  - Emotional
  - Similar interests
Overexcitabilities

http://sengifted.org/archives/articles/overexcitability-and-the-gifted

- Types
  - Psychomotor
  - Sensory
  - Intellectual
  - Imaginational
- **Psychomotor**
  - Allow time for physical or verbal activity, before, during, and after daily and school activities
    - Bright children love to “do” and need to “do.”
  - Build activity and movement into their lives.
    - Be sure the physical or verbal activities are acceptable and not distracting to those around them.

*Overexcitabilities*
Sensory

- Whenever possible,
  - Create an environment which limits offensive stimuli and provides comfort
  - Provide appropriate opportunities for being in the limelight by giving unexpected attention
  - Facilitate creative or dramatic productivity that has an audience.
  - Provide time to dwell in the delight of the sensual and to create a soothing environment
Intellectual

• Show how to find the answers to questions.
  o This respects and encourages a person’s passion to analyze, synthesize, and seek understanding.

• Provide or suggest ways for those interested in moral and ethical issues to act upon their concerns
  o such as collecting blankets for the homeless or writing to soldiers.

• If child seems too critical or negatively outspoken to others
  o help them to see how their intent may be perceived as cruel or disrespectful.
  o For example saying “that is a stupid idea” may not be well received, even if the idea is truly stupid.
Imaginational

- Memories and new ideas can become blended
- Help individuals with...
  - a stop sign in their mental videotape
  - write down or draw the factual account before they embellish it.
  - Encourage use their imagination to
    - function in the real world
    - promote learning and productivity
  - Example: Create their own organizational system

* Overexcitabilities
Emotional

- Accept all feelings, regardless of intensity.
  - Facilitates healthy growth
- Teach to anticipate physical and emotional responses and prepare
  - Emotionally intense people often don’t know when they are becoming so overwrought that they may lose control or may have physical responses to their emotions.
- Help them to identify the physical warning signs
  - such as headache, sweaty palms, or stomachache
  - knowing warning signs and acting on them early, can help individuals cope better and loose control less
GENERAL STRATEGIES

• Talk about overexcitabilities
• Focus on the positives
• Cherish and celebrate diversity
• Use and teach clear verbal and non-verbal communication
• Teach stress management from toddlerhood on
• Create a comforting environment
• Help to raise awareness of one’s self and its impact on others

• Remember the joy!

* Overexcitabilities
Praise striving more than smarts
Celebrate when they do *their* best,
  - not when they have done the best compared to others.
Read biographies together
  - that show that successful people made mistakes and experienced failures
  - ask how the child thinks those people felt when they failed
    - discouraged, sad, angry, confident, optimistic?
    - think about how they stayed motivated
    - facilitate for children finding their own solutions to disappointments
Laugh more
  - Including at themselves and their own mistakes
  - Model laughing at some of your own mistakes
  - Model expressing your frustration appropriately and moving forward

For more suggestions, see “What’s Wrong with Perfect?”

*Perfectionism*
- **Legalism - Absolutes of right and wrong**
  - All or nothing, Black or white
  - Not perfect = not acceptable

- **Practice - Activities that involve**
  - tolerance
  - compromise

- **Discuss**
  - How to get ideas across so they are acceptable
  - How to listen to others and value them
  - How to merge your ideas with others’ ideas

  ❖ Yes and... game
• Modeling balance
• Finding shades of gray
• It really isn’t the end of the world.
  • Share their concerns with equanimity
  • model your calm and compassion about what’s troubling them
  • Don’t expect them to put a damper on the feelings too soon
  • Don’t tell them that these things can’t happen to them unless they really can’t
  • Teach them about very low probabilities.
  o Math to the rescue!

*Balance*
- Read sections of...

- Check out...
  - sengifted.org
  - Share with the group

* Find out more
• It’s your turn
  • Insights
  • Plans
  • Conundrums
  • Concerns
  • Limits
  • Other random thoughts

*Questions & Responses