Adlerian Considerations for Parenting and Educating Gifted Children

A Summary and Recommendation Paper

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Abstract
This document is designed to educate parents and those working with parents on the different excitabilities, education considerations, and socialization so as to provide usable skills through the foundation of encouragement. Unique psychological adaptations of gifted and talented children will be looked at while recognizing their strengths and weaknesses. Oversensitivities within these children will be explored and examples of how they present themselves will be provided. There has been significant research done in the past few years on this topic, which is extremely helpful to educate parents, teachers, mental health professionals and others to better understand these children. These children often are not gifted in all areas and may become discouraged in areas that challenge them. They may also be overly sensitive to things such as noise, textures, and emotions. This paper will address the different types of behaviors and how from an Adlerian point of view one can parent or provide therapy effectively.
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Key Definitions:

**Autism Spectrum Disorder** - “characterized by persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction across multiple contexts, including deficits in social reciprocity, nonverbal communicative behaviors used for social interaction, and skills in developing, maintaining, and understanding relationships. In addition to the social communication deficits, the diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder requires the presence of restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities. Because symptoms change with development and may be masked by compensatory mechanisms, the diagnostic criteria may be met based on historical information, although the current presentation must cause significant impairment.

Within the diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder, individual clinical characteristics are noted through the use of specifiers (with or without accompanying intellectual impairment; with or without accompanying structural language impairment; associated with a known medical/genetic or environmental/acquired condition; associated with another neurodevelopmental, mental, or behavioral disorder), as well as specifiers that describe the autistic symptoms (age at first concern; with or without loss of established skills; severity). These specifiers provide clinicians with an opportunity to individualize the diagnosis and communicate a richer clinical description of the affected individuals. For example, many individuals previously diagnosed with Asperger’s disorder would now receive a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder without language or intellectual impairment” (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

**Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD)** – “a neurodevelopmental disorder defined by impairing levels of inattention, disorganization, and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity.
Inattention and disorganization entail inability to stay on task, seeming not to listen, and losing materials, at levels that are inconsistent with age or developmental level. Hyperactivity-impulsivity entails overactivity, fidgeting, inability to stay seated, intruding into other people’s activities, and inability to wait—symptoms that are excessive for age or developmental level. In childhood, ADHD frequently overlaps with disorders that are often considered to be “externalizing disorders,” such as oppositional defiant disorder and conduct disorder. ADHD often persists into adulthood, with resultant impairments of social, academic and occupational functioning” (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

**Bi-Polar I Disorder** - “the modern understanding of the classic manic-depressive disorder or affective psychosis described in the nineteenth century, differing from that classic description only to the extent that neither psychosis nor the lifetime experience of a major depressive episode is a requirement. However, the vast majority of individuals whose symptoms meet the criteria for a fully syndromal manic episode also experience major depressive episodes during the course of their lives” (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

**Bi-Polar II Disorder** – “the lifetime experience of at least one episode of major depression and at least one hypomanic episode, is no longer thought to be a “milder” condition than bipolar I disorder, largely because of the amount of time individuals with this condition spend in depression and because the instability of mood experienced by individuals with bipolar II disorder is typically accompanied by serious impairment in work and social functioning” (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

**Giftedness** – “is asynchronous development in which advanced cognitive abilities and heightened intensity combine to create inner experiences and awareness that are qualitatively different from the norm. This asynchrony increases with higher intellectual capacity. The
uniqueness of the gifted renders them particularly vulnerable and requires modifications in parenting, teaching and counseling in order for them to develop optimally” (Silverman, 2009, p. 147).

**Lifestyle** – Adler defined this as an individual’s unique way of movement in which he saw as a unifying principle organized by drives, strivings, tendencies, and aspirations into a “unified pattern” (Shulman & Mosak, 1988, p. 2). It is holistic and includes convictions or images of the self, others, life, and the world, convictions about what “should be,” the dominant goal/self-ideal, and methods (behaviors) of moving toward the goal/self-ideal (Shulman & Mosak, 1988, p. 12).

**Mistaken Goals** – Rudolf Dreikurs suggested that “human misbehavior is the result of feeling a lack of belonging to one's social group. When this happens the child acts from one of four "mistaken goals": undue attention, power, revenge or avoidance (inadequacy)” (Wikipedia, 2013).

**Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)** – “characterized by the presence of obsessions and/or compulsions. Obsessions are recurrent and persistent thoughts, urges, or images that are experienced as intrusive and unwanted, whereas compulsions are repetitive behaviors or mental acts that an individual feels driven to perform in response to an obsession or according to rules that must be applied rigidly” (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

**Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD)** – “a frequent and persistent pattern of angry/irritable mood, argumentative/defiant behavior, or vindictiveness. It is not unusual for individuals with oppositional defiant disorder to show the behavioral features of the disorder without problems of negative mood. However, individuals with the disorder who show the
angry/irritable mood symptoms typically show the behavioral features as well” (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

**Overexcitability (OE)** – “extreme intensities or sensitivities that affect the ways in which an individual experiences the world. The Polish psychologist Kazimierz Dabrowski (1902-1980) identified overexcitabilities as part of a larger theory of development” (Rinn, 2011).

**Private Logic** – an individual’s personal ideas and viewpoints that form unconscious behaviors (Dreikurs & Soltz, 1964).

**Role-Playing Game (RPG)** – a game where players (especially children and adolescents) can work on their self-concept and develop their personal identity and awareness of social rules and functions through the use of fantasy or role playing (Rosselet & Stauffer, 2013).

Parenting High Intensity Children

Do you have or know a child who is gifted? Do they experience the world around them with intensity? Perhaps they react explosively to their environment, are sensitive to noise, have a need to constantly be intellectually stimulated, physically driven like a motor or perhaps overly sensitive and dramatic. These are just a few descriptions of the ways a gifted and highly intense child may outwardly appear to others. Gifted children are not just intelligent, they experience the world around them in a “gifted” and sometimes intense way.

Gifted children are often mismatched to their chronological age. While they are intellectually advanced, they may have average or below average abilities to cope socially and low emotional regulation capabilities which can be exasperating to them (and those around them) day after day. They are more likely to have fears that far surpass that of their peers as they may worry about global issues, injustices, and things like death (Robinson, 2008).

A Polish psychiatrist, Kasimierz Dabrowski, developed a theory that has significantly affected our understanding of gifted individuals. His theory includes the concept of “overexcitabilities,” referring to a person’s heightened response to stimuli” (Webb, Gore, Amend & DeVries, 2007, p. 22). Dabrowski identified that certain individuals are instinctively drawn to certain types of stimulation. He identified that gifted children are “prone to experience these excitabilities” (Webb, Gore, Amend & DeVries, 2007, p. 22). “It has been said that an exceptionally gifted child seems to see the world not only as an adult might, but also as if he is looking through an electron microscope, as compared with normal vision. This child sees what others do not see, and what others cannot even imagine” (Webb, Gore, Amend & DeVries, 2007, p. 25). Gifted individuals often have high energy levels, vivid imaginations, and are emotionally sensitive. These can be seen by enthusiasm, extreme energy, strong sensitivities to stimuli.
(auditory, physical, emotional) and may get lost in deep thought or be hyperfocused on a task. These characteristics are often referred to as overexcitabilities and can be misdiagnosed with things such as ADHD and other disorders if giftedness isn’t taken into consideration (Rinn & Reynolds, 2012).

Linda Kreger Silverman who has studied Dabrowski’s work and completed additional research of gifted persons explains them as the following, “The marriage of cognitive complexity and emotional intensity, and the enhanced awareness and moral sensitivity born of that marriage, render gifted individuals vulnerable. When advanced cognition brings information into awareness for which the child or adult is emotionally unprepared, vulnerability is the natural result. But we must be careful not to equate emotional fragility with immaturity. [In “The Heroism of Sensitivity”] Dabrowski found morally and emotionally advanced adults gentle, delicate, nonaggressive, likely to withdraw rather than retaliate, “heroic” in their sensitivity. Most of world’s treasures are delicate and need to be handled with care, like fine china, crystal, paintings, roses, orchids, and children” (Silverman, 2009, p. 147). One may observe these behaviors through extreme empathy, moral and ethical concerns, emotional sensitivities, physical sensitivities (i.e. not wanting to wear certain clothes due to textures and feel), perfectionism, and deep feelings of inferiority or inadequacy.

Leta Hollingworth, a pioneer in psychology, spent years studying gifted children and “recognized their loneliness, their isolation, their imaginary worlds, their argumentativeness, their zeal for accuracy, their impatience with superficiality and foolishness, their desire to find like minds, their occasional resorting to “benign chicanery”, and the healing power of their sense of humor” (Silverman, 1990, p. 2). She noted that some flaws of gifted children were laziness which she connected to boredom, impatience which she connected with drudgery and
talkativeness which she felt was connected with their drive and excitement for sharing their ideas and questions. She said that gifted children received a daily portion of idleness and daydreaming because they were only using a small portion of their potential/ability. She was quoted as saying “children of 140 I.Q. waste half their time. Those above 170 I.Q. waste practically all of their time” and those at 180 I.Q. regarded “school with indifference, or with positive distaste, for they find nothing interesting to do there” (Silverman, 1990).

Hollingworth shared an example of a six year old boy with an I.Q. of 187 that was reported as being too immature for the first grade. He would “go off by himself, lie down on his back, and look up at the ceiling.” This child was functioning at a mental age of a 12 year old. When asked what he was doing when he was lying on the floor, he stated, “Oh, mostly mathematical calculation, or my imaginary land” (Silverman, 1990). This is an example where this young boy may be seen as inattentive, and depressed which could lead to a misdiagnosis of ADHD or depression.

Unfortunately, it is unrealistic to put these highly gifted children with students 3 to 4 years older than they are. This not only has physical size implications, but also deep social and emotional concerns. Hollingworth also had concern over grouping gifted children together because “they typically had so many interests and capabilities that they were likely to spread themselves too thin and be unable to finish all their projects or attain a level of perfection that suited them” (Silverman, 1990). While there are the educational challenges that a gifted school may meet, how are we addressing the social, emotional and physical needs of these students? One can consider the social effects of children that have only learned how to interact with other children like themselves. How might these individuals grow to function as adults in a work environment?
Many of these children are highly sensitive to their surroundings. As part of their education, it is important to also teach them skills that honor their uniqueness, but gives them skills to function with those around them that don’t share the same level of emotional and physical intensity. This will not only serve them through their school years, but also in their adult lives.

Another concern, is the new trend, primarily in the United States, of holding back children when their birthdays are close to the cut-off. If these children are gifted, the intellectual spread can become even larger giving room for “the over-age bully” (Silverman, 1990). These children are not only bored, but in some cases a full year older than their peers which may lead to emotional and/or physical misbehaviors.

Hollingsworth’s further research correlated higher IQs with more significant social adjustments. She recommended these children get “emotional education” in their early years. Silverman noted the following eleven emotional concerns from Hollingworth’s research:

- “finding enough hard and interesting work at school
- adjusting to classmates
- being able to play with other children
- not becoming hermits
- developing leadership abilities
- not becoming negativistic toward authority
- learning to “suffer fools gladly”
- avoiding the formation of habits of extreme chicanery
- conforming to rules and expectations
- understanding their origin and destiny from an early age
Identification of Exceptionality

Earlier the better is the motto. Through early detection, valuable interventions can be implemented which can provide greater opportunities for development. This early detection is not to label children, but instead to develop an education system that challenges them and helps them grow and mature while keeping in consideration their gifts and limitations. During the preschool and primary years, children develop their self-concept. It is during this time that they begin to understand either on their own, or by being told by those around them that they are different from the others. In preschool and the primary years, children develop self-concept. It is during this time when the “Self is most vulnerable and in need of support and guidance from adults (Silverman, 1998).” It is during these formative years that one develops their lifestyle and convictions of how they view the world and what should or should not be. It is through their observations of the world around them that they make these convictions. Who they watch, what they experience, how they are treated, how they see others treated all work together to form one’s lifestyle. As Adler states, “It is the individual shade of interpretation that matters in the end. And when reconstructing the unity of a personality in [one’s] relationships to the outer world, Individual Psychology fundamentally undertakes to delineate the individual form of creative activity – which is the [individual’s unique] lifestyle” (Adler, 1935. p. 8). It is during the first 36 months of age that individuals develop their lifestyle and social interest that “involves a continuous interweaving of separation-individuation and connectedness-belonging” (Kopp, 2003, p. 449).
Dabrowski breaks intensities into five different overexcitability (OE) categories, “intellectual, imaginational, emotional, sensual and psychomotor” (Dabrowski as cited in Webb, Gore, Amend & DeVries, 2007, p. 22). The following is a brief description of each category:

“Psychomotor – movement, restlessness, driveness, an augmented capacity for being active and energetic

Sensual – enhanced refinement and aliveness of sensual experience

Intellectual – thirst for knowledge, discovery, questioning, love of ideas and theoretical analysis, search for truth

Imaginational – vividness of imagery, richness of association, facility for dreams, fantasies, and inventions, endowing toys and other objects with personality (animism), preference for the unusual and unique

Emotional – great depth and intensity of emotional life expressed in a wide range of feelings, great happiness to profound sadness or despair, compassion, responsibility, self-examination” (Dabrowski as cited in Daniels & Piechowski, 2009, p. 9).

It is important to understand these heightened experiences as gifted children encounter the richness of the world around them in a significantly different way. For example, noises that seem normal and aren’t loud to the rest of a classroom, may be deafening to a gifted child. Another example is having high empathy for all living things. They may lose sleep worrying about something they see on the news, like the safety of a whale that was washed ashore. They may also not be aware of those around them when they are deep in thought and may appear avoidant, or antisocial. If not understood, these behaviors can be the source of frustration and criticism. It is important to understand that the more intellectual the child, the higher the possibility that they experience intensities through one of the five overexcitabilities. “It is
helpful to remember that each OE, in some way, likely provides the energy or fuel that contributes to the development of a gifted young person’s talent, along with the advantages and challenges that fundamentally shape his or her ultimate development” (Daniels & Piechowski, 2009, p. 36). The following will describe in greater detail each of these excitabilities and provide insight on possible parenting strategies to provide encouraging and safe environments for high intensity, gifted children to experience the world around them. It is important to understand that within each gifted child they may exhibit all of these or just some of these OEs. While each of these if properly understood can be looked at as a positive trait, they can also be perceived as a negative. It is important that these are not used as excuses for behavior, but rather explanations to bring understanding as to why one might behave the way they do.

**Intellectual Overexcitability**

These children have very busy and active minds and are driven to understand the world around them. Some signs for intellectually gifted children are “curiosity, asking probing questions, concentration, problem solving, theoretical thinking” (Webb, Gore, Amend & DeVries, 2007, p. 23). They may ask an abundance of questions, devour books, research topics, and share their love of learning. They may also find it difficult to remain silent when they have an idea they want to express. If there are multiple gifted children together, there may all speak at the same time or work to out speak the others in the group. These individuals may also become overly involved in issues of fairness, think independently and may become impatient with those around them when they don’t share the same passion for a topic.

Perfectionism is often a trait of gifted and talented children. On one hand, perfectionism can provide the drive for an individual to achieve, while on the other hand, it can be the foundation of crippling fear and avoidance. It may drive a child to stay focused until they have
achieved an activity or project to their satisfaction or it may drive them to withdraw completely from the activity because of frustration and fear of failing.

They may avoid routine activities because they find it boring and mundane. For example, they may avoid things such as multiplication tables or flash cards to choose something more stimulating. They may also be referred to as “walking arguments” (Silverman, 1990). They may have a need for exactness or precise facts and cannot resist setting someone straight if they perceive they are incorrect. The adults surrounding these individuals may interpret their behaviors as lazy, perfectionist and perhaps argumentative.

**Helpful techniques.** Since these children often struggle with perfectionism, it may be helpful to talk about how mistakes are necessary to learn. They may become paralyzed in their actions for fear of making a mistake or not knowing everything. Allowing a child to see us model a mistake is very beneficial. By modeling our imperfections, it helps these children to see others who are not perfect and give them the courage to be imperfect. After they have worked on a project, reflect on the process by asking questions such as, “What part(s) of this project were you pleased with?” “What part(s) were you not pleased with?” “What might you do differently next time?” (Daniels & Piechowski, 2009, p. 45)

Adults can also be helpful by providing encouragement when children are self-critical. These children’s intellectual intensities often intersect with their emotional development. As parents (and teachers) we need to nurture their “emotional development, self-concept, self-esteem, and self-discipline” (Daniels & Piechowski, 2009, p. 45).

Positive affirmations these children need to hear:

- “Your curiosity fuels your knowledge.”
- “You have wide and deep interests.”
- “You have the potential to learn new things and to make changes.”
- “You are passionate about your ideas and are open to learning new things.”

Helpful strategies (Daniels & Piechowski, 2009, p. 46-47):

- Discuss positive traits.
- Allow and honor them the environment to seek understanding and truth.
- Help them research and find answers to their questions.
- Teach communication skills and research methodology.
- Allow them to develop their own projects based on their own interests.
- Help them develop goals and achieve them.
- Provide opportunities for them to interact with intellectual peers.
- Encourage and incorporate multi-modal explorations and mind-body integration.

**Imaginational Overexcitability**

These children have a “rich imagination, fantasy play, imaginary friends, animistic thinking, daydreaming, dramatic perception, and use of metaphors” (Webb, Gore, Amend & DeVries, 2007, p. 23). Reality and fantasy may become confused by these children and they may often find themselves daydreaming when they are expected to be paying attention, i.e. classroom settings. These children may easily be misunderstood and thought to be inattentive or even worse misdiagnosed with a personality disorder.

**Helpful techniques.** These children may find themselves where they begin to believe that their imaginary world is actually real. As a parent, it will be helpful and important to honor their imagination while also helping them understand what is real from what is imaginary. Helping these children have positive relationships with the adults around them often times helps balance the real world with their imaginary world. Be careful not to chastise the child for their
imagination, but instead work with them to understand what is real and imaginary. These imaginary thoughts are often times a safe place to explore new thoughts and ideas or to process prior or upcoming experiences. It can be helpful to help the child understand their mind and behavior as an instrument that they can direct and regulate. This can help them evaluate if their thoughts are working for or against them. Writing down or encouraging your child to write their imaginations down, allows them a place to save their creative thoughts and ideas. Journaling collaboratively can replace bedtime stories and offer a way to safely keep their stories and ideas (Daniels & Piechowski, 2009).

Positive affirmations these children need to hear:

- “You have such a great or rich imagination.”
- “You view the world in a different way.”
- “You create and tell great stories.”

Helpful strategies:

- Discuss positive traits.
- Cherish their creative imaginations.
- Encourage them to share their imaginations through storytelling and pictures.
- Provide opportunities for them to design and invent.
- Provide times of relaxation to channel their creative minds and guided imagery.
- Gently help them understand what is real vs. imaginary.
- Provide outlets for creative activities such as writing, drawing, acting, dancing, designing, etc.
- Encourage individual and group activities.
- Help them use their imagination to solve problems and deal with challenges.
• Allow free open-ended play/activities.
• Journal/record their imaginations and ideas (Daniels & Piechowski, 2009, p. 50-51).

**Emotional Overexcitability**

This overexcitability is often recognized first by parents as their child may worry excessively, form strong attachments to people, places or things. Their feelings may be viewed as compassion, empathy, sensitivity and anger. These emotions are often released through temper tantrums or displays of rage. Often these reactions are extreme and difficult to understand. Teens may become sad, cynical, or angry when they discover their idealism and sensitivity are not shared by others. Their extreme sensitivity and reaction to others’ feelings, including the injustices in the world, can be painful and frightening to them (Webb, Gore, Amend & DeVries, 2007, p. 24). Those around them may think their behavior is unrealistic and extreme, and not be understanding or sympathetic towards their extreme emotions and behaviors.

**Helpful techniques.** These children tend to absorb and respond to the feelings of those around them. It is therefore important that they have a safe place in which they can express their deep feelings. It is important that they feel you are truly listening to them and hearing them. This means that you value and find what they are sharing to be of significance and importance. Help them feel valued and understood by providing them with courage, understanding and trust in order that they may eventually find the source of power and safety within themselves. Respond and affirm their feelings and help them find the words and positive expressions so they can identify and express themselves freely.

Positive affirmations these children need to hear:
• “You are sensitive to others’ feelings.”
“You care and feel for others deeply.”

“You are loyal to those you care about.”

“You are very aware of ________(insert feeling such as joy, sadness, anger) feeling and/or feelings.”

Helpful strategies:

- Discuss positive traits.
- Accept their intense feelings.
- Model and teach the child how to express their emotions and feelings with others in a positive, constructive manner.
- Teach them to be respectful of others’ feelings.
- Help them build their vocabulary library of feeling words. i.e. How many ways can we describe being sad?
- Educate and model good listening and responding skills.
- Anticipate physical and emotional experiences and practice/prepare responses and strategies.
- Teach and model relaxation techniques. (i.e. deep breathing, guided imagery, stretching, quite times.)
- Encourage journaling.
- Model “temperature taking.” How are you feeling, what are you experiencing? What does that mean?
- Provide opportunities for meaningful volunteer opportunities or service projects (Daniels & Piechowski, 2009, p. 54-55).
Sensual Overexcitability

These children react to the senses around them such as seeing, smelling, tasting, touching, hearing, all of which are heightened in intensity. For example, they may not just see a drawing, they experience the drawing and actually feel it emotionally. The same may be true for music and food. Eating may not be an experience to sustain their body, but one that provides deep pleasure through different textures and degrees of spice.

This same child may also experience their intensities in a negative frustrating manner such as the texture and feeling of clothing, the brightness of lights, the volume of voices, noise or music, the smells may all be experienced in an intense manner. These children and adults may find themselves choosing to not be in a certain environment because it is draining due to the intensity of the situation. These children often experience this as babies when it is hard to identify what is “wrong.” Looking back, you may recognize that they cried when riding in the car as an infant, cried more on bright sunny days, or perhaps became fussier when they were around crowds of people (Webb, Gore, Amend & DeVries, 2007).

Helpful techniques. As parents, we can help our children experience sensual overexcitabilities by providing them with options of things that help them cope with irritants and annoyances. We can educate and encourage them to better understand themselves and provide them with coping skills.

Positive affirmations these children need to hear:

- “You take such delight in beautiful sights, sounds, and feelings.”
- “I think you know what you like and what feels good to you.”
- “Sometimes, it’s good to try new things. Would you like to try __________?”

Helpful strategies:
• Discuss positive traits.

• Provide environments with minimal offensive stimuli and maximum comforting stimuli.

• Take time to enjoy the small things in life. i.e. smell the roses or watch a sunrise or sunset.

• Create together a comfortable and pleasing environment.

• Foster an environment (safety is necessary) that allows them control over their room and living space.

• Take them shopping and help them find comfortable clothing.

• Understand that their attachments to people, places and/or things are often deeper. This may take longer more work to break these attachments. i.e. blankies, favorite stuffed animal (Daniels & Piechowski, 2009, p. 41-43).

**Psychomotor Overexcitability**

These children have a heightened “capacity for being active and energetic” (Webb, Gore, Amend & DeVries, 2007, p. 25). This doesn’t necessarily mean they have an advanced physical ability, but instead refers to the intensity of their physical activity. They are physically expressing their inner feelings of emotional tension. They display a high amount of energy and often have a desire and need for movement. Their energy may be expressed in ways such as speaking rapidly, extreme enthusiasm, intense physical activity, acting impulsively, being competitive, misbehaving and acting out. These children are often told at school and at home to just sit down or to be quiet. With this amount of energy, these children are often misdiagnosed as ADHD. Others may find it exhausting to be around them because of their endless amounts of energy.
Some may find it helpful to have an intense exercise routine, use paper to doodle, have a squeeze ball or other tools to keep their hands keep busy so they can stay focused. These children need to have a plan and an understanding of how to handle and direct their energy. These children often prefer individual sports such as swimming, track, gymnastics, and martial arts. These individual sports allow these children to compete at their intense level without affecting those around them. They may also find that these intense activities allow them to stay focused on tasks and release their energies in a healthy way.

**Helpful techniques.** In order to help these children focus in controlled settings such as school, it may be helpful to designate a time when this child is allowed “air time” to speak and express themselves freely. On this same note, designate a sheet of paper with “Interesting Ideas” and “Questions” so the child can write down and capture what they are wanting to communicate so they won’t forget their thought before their designated “air time.”

Other tools are relaxation techniques. This may include relaxation techniques such as yoga, mindful meditation, relaxation music, recorded story books, and deep breathing exercises. Since we are all uniquely created, different techniques will work better for some individuals vs. others.

A strategy that may be helpful for the end of the day is to implement a bedtime routine which includes calming activities. One recommendation to help them with their endless thoughts and ideas is to provide them with a notebook and pencil to have next to their bed so they can capture their ideas and address them in the morning.

It is equally important to encourage and allow them opportunities when they can use their energy and express themselves freely. Physical activity, whether organized or through play, can be useful use as positive outlets.
Positive affirmations these children need to hear:

- “You have wonderful enthusiasm and energy.”
- “Your intensity can help you do many things.”
- “You put your whole body into your learning.”
- “Sometimes our bodies need to relax.”

Helpful strategies:

- Discuss positive traits.
- Avoid activities that require sitting for a long period of time.
- Plan activities with movement.
- Provide movement within different settings.
- Involve the child in physical tasks.
- Help child notice signs of exhaustion and need for quiet times.
- Encourage time-outs (not punishment, but a choice).
- Model soothing and calming activities.
- Teach relaxation techniques.
- Utilize physical or occupational therapy as needed (Daniels & Piechowski, 2009, p. 39-40).

**Educational/Acceleration Options**

“There are multiple roles for special schools for the gifted. One role is decidedly to accommodate gifted students, and a second underplayed but significant role is to provide a model for all schools to ignite potential in all students” (Kaplan, 2013, p. 204). We have decades of research demonstrating the need for and the benefit of gifted education. These include things such as acceleration, curriculum enhancement, and differentiated curriculum and instruction,
which all have been shown to increase the achievement of high-ability learners (Scheibel, 2012, p. 5). The following are eighteen different types of acceleration:

1. “Early Admission to Kindergarten: Students enter kindergarten or first grade prior to achieving the minimum age for school entry as set by district or state policy. The entry age specified varies greatly throughout the country and is generally stated in terms of birth date. For example, entry to kindergarten will be allowed for prospective students who will achieve the age of five years on or before September 30 of their entry year.

2. Early Admission to First Grade: This practice can result from either the skipping of kindergarten, or from accelerating a student from kindergarten in what would be the student’s first year of school.

3. Grade-Skipping: A student is considered to have grade skipped if he or she is given a grade-level placement ahead of chronological-age peers. Grade-skipping may be done at the beginning or during the school year.

4. Continuous Progress: The student is given content progressively as prior content is completed and mastered. The practice is accelerative when the student’s progress exceeds the performance of chronological peers in rate and level. Provision for providing sequenced materials may or may not be with the discretion of the teacher or within the control of the student.

5. Self-Paced Instruction: With this option the student proceeds through learning and instructional activities at a self-selected pace. Self-paced instruction is a sub-type of continuous progress acceleration. Self-paced instruction is distinguishable from the
more general continuous progress in that the student has control over all pacing decisions.

6. **Subject-Matter Acceleration/Partial Acceleration:** This practice allows students to be placed with classes with older peers for a part of the day (or with materials from higher grade placements) in one or more content areas. Subject-matter acceleration or partial acceleration may be accomplished by the student either physically moving to a higher-level class for instruction (e.g., a second-grade student going to a fifth-grade reading group), or using higher-level curricular or study materials. Subject-matter acceleration may also be accomplished outside of the general instructional schedule (e.g., summer school or after school) or by using higher-level instructional activities on a continuous progress basis without leaving the placement with chronological-age peers.

7. **Combined Classes:** While not, in and of itself, a practice designed for acceleration, in some instances (e.g., a fourth- and fifth-grade split room), this placement can allow younger students to interact academically and socially with older peers. It may or may not result in an advanced grade placement later.

8. **Curriculum Compacting:** The student’s instruction entails reduced amounts of introductory activities, drill, and practice. Instructional experiences may also be based on relatively fewer instructional objectives compared to the general curriculum. The time gained may be used for more advanced content instruction or to participate in enrichment activities. Instructional goals should be selected on the basis of careful analyses for their roles in the content and hierarchies of curricula. The parsing of activities and goals should be based on pre-instructional assessment.
9. Telescoping Curriculum: Student is provided instruction that entails less time than is normal (e.g., completing a one-year course in one semester, or three years of middle school in two). Telescoping differs from curriculum compacting in that time saved from telescoping always results in advanced grade placement. It is planned to fit a precise time schedule. Curriculum compacting, on the other hand, does not necessarily advance grade placement.

10. Mentoring: A student is paired with a mentor or expert tutor who provides advanced or more rapid pacing of instruction.

11. Extracurricular Programs: Students elect to enroll in coursework or after school or summer programs that confer advanced instruction and/or credit.

12. Correspondence Courses: The student enrolls in coursework delivered outside of normal school instruction. Instruction may be delivered traditionally by mail, but increasingly other delivery mechanisms such as Internet-based instruction and televised courses are used.

13. Early Graduation: The student graduates from high school or college in three-and-a-half years or less. Generally, this is accomplished by increasing the amount of coursework undertaken each year in high school or college, but it may also be accomplished through dual/concurrent enrollment (see below) or extracurricular and correspondence coursework.

14. Concurrent/Dual Enrollment: The student takes a course at one level and receives credit for a parallel course at a higher level (e.g., taking algebra at the middle school level and receiving credit at both the middle school and the high school level or
taking a high school chemistry course and receiving credit for a university course upon successful completion).

15. Advanced Placement (AP): The student takes a course (traditionally in high school) that will confer college credit upon successful completion of a standardized examination.

16. Credit by Examination: The student is awarded advanced standing credit (e.g., in high school or college) by successfully completing some form of mastery test or activity.

17. Acceleration in College: The student is awarded an advanced level of instruction at least one year ahead of normal. This may be achieved with the employment of other accelerative techniques such as dual enrollment and credit by examination or by determination of college teachers and administrators.

18. Early Entrance into Middle School, High School, or College: The student completes two or more majors in a total of four years and/or earns an advanced degree along with or in lieu of a bachelor’s degree” (Colangelo, Assouline, & Gross, 2004, p. 5-6).

Acceleration can be accomplished in multiple environments such as public, private, homeschool, and on-line school. While homeschooling has increased significantly in the last decade, little research has been published regarding gifted students in the home school setting. One study interviewed 13 parents of homeschooled children who were identified as being gifted. Four themes emerged from the research: (a) parents know best, (b) isolation, (c) challenges, and (d) family roles. These parents stated that they decided to homeschool only after numerous attempts at collaborating with public schools had failed. These parents also stated that while homeschool alleviated many of their issues from the public school setting, they had different challenges at home; one of these being socialization (Jolly, Matthews, & Nester 2013).
Even though there are many programs and different learning styles offered for grade school children. Many gifted children are still left unchallenged. They can easily complete the assignments given to them and do not have to study to get good grades which can equate being smart with effortlessness” (Olszewski-Kubilius & Limburg-Weber, 1999, p. 3). This can be dangerous as the main components of success for adults are persistence, determination, and hard work. If these students are never challenged academically, they will not learn the study habits and goals reached by intellectually challenging themselves. It is possible to challenge these students through advanced content, acceleration, increased intellectual rigor across multiple disciplines and in-depth study of topics of interest (Olszewski-Kubilius & Limburg-Weber, 1999).

Academically gifted students may feel they are different from their peers as they may not share the same interests and passion for learning. Specialized gifted programs can provide these children with a place of belonging where they can share and find a supportive environment. Some examples of environments outside of schools are summer programs, specialized high schools, early college entrance programs which can provide high levels of support for gifted children from both staff and peers (Olszewski-Kubilius & Limburg-Weber, 1999).

As the parent of a gifted child, you know them best. You know how your child responds to certain actions and words. Since you are the person who knows your child best, you are your child’s best advocate (Scheibel, 2012). Some things to considerations as you are deciding what’s best for your child’s educational needs are:

- Observe and listen as you know your child best.
Advocate clearly for each year’s needs. As teachers are not fully prepared to support levels of differentiation, your advocacy may make all the difference in methods and resources the teacher uses in the classroom.

Empower your child to believe, self-advocate, and share their needs and feelings.

Every child has the right to be challenged and learn something new.

Get involved in your school to build knowledge, trust, contacts and credibility.

Do your homework. Educate yourself on this topic.

Research school districts, policies, online options, teachers, and schools that best meet your child’s needs.

Be prepared to meet with teachers, administrators and policy makers with valid, well-researched data.

Communication about acceleration and support others in their efforts.

Think and problem solve when problems arise.

“Empower, but do not enable.” Create a safe environment for your child (Scheibel, 2012, p. 6).

Classroom Considerations

“What you really need to do is to create a small world in your classroom. In this world, everybody is taken into account, everybody has a voice, and everybody has a space” (Wu, 2013, p. 125). Carol Tomlinson

There is considerable evidence suggesting that how a teacher behaves in the classroom along with their instructional approach significantly impacts the degree in which a student learns (VanTassel-Baska, 2012). Research has shown that the effects of an ineffective teacher over a 3 year span has a depressed effect on a student’s achievement in math (up to 54%) regardless of
the ability of the learner (Sanders & Rivers, 1996). Teacher effectiveness has been shown to be the key determiner for student progression. This has been shown to be achieved through “higher order thinking, problem solving, and metacognitive approaches” (VanTassel-Baska, 2012, p. 44). The key to improved teaching is accomplished through classroom observation. This process observes teachers for their instructional content with curriculum resources, materials, instructional strategies and classroom management skills. Research shows that while teachers of gifted students are strong in many areas and often very capable, there are areas in which improvements can be made. During some classroom observation, teachers were noted using brainstorming techniques, but little metacognition within their gifted classrooms. Some lacked encouragement of their students to participate in activities outside of class. Critical thinking and problem solving were also found to be very underused strategies within the gifted classroom. “Gifted programs need to consider the sophistication of using higher level skills effectively and the need for teachers to develop these skills over time through appropriate methods” (VanTassel-Baska, 2012, p. 47).

Things to look for in a gifted school or program are whether or not they assess their students and how they assess them. Pre-assessments should be done a few weeks prior to the beginning of instruction. They should be individual and completed by the student in writing. The assessments should be directly related to the advanced work and explore the breadth and depth of understanding for each student.

The next thing to look for is differentiation. This is more than making accommodations for students with special needs. Differentiation for advanced learners requires teachers to be familiar with “above-grade-level standards, in-depth content beyond the grade-level text, advanced and extended resources, and alternative instructional strategies” (Rakow, 2012, p. 37).
Teachers receive little to no preparation for meeting the needs of these gifted students. As a result, they often ask learners to do something different, but this is not differentiated. If a student shows mastery in a subject, by providing them additional work by assigning them a more challenging project using the same material is a misuse of their time. They have already mastered this topic and need to be moved on by allowing them to dig deeper into a topic. For example, if they have mastered vocabulary words, instead of having them use these words in a story or poem, they could learn the etymology and Latin or Greek word structure along with more complex reading materials that challenge their thinking (Rakow, 2012).

It is important for teachers to remember that all students are unique and therefore those that are gifted, have unique gifts. These students need different approaches and materials in order to meet their needs. Teachers will find assessments and tracking of their students helpful in identifying each individual’s ability, prior achievement, motivation, and interest. By the time students reach the 6th grade, they need subject specialists. At this point it is advantageous to group these students in order to best utilize the teachers time. During middle school, the gifted student is often lost in a “black hole” (Rakow, 2012, p. 38). This is a time when peer pressure is high and being a “nerd” is unwanted. Beyond the social pressures, there are additional concerns, lack of diversity and financial pressures within school districts that affect not only the programs offered, but the additional training the teachers need in order to successfully work with gifted students (Rakow, 2012).

How is grouping different from differentiation? Grouping based upon ability produces segregation and labeling while differentiation serves the entire classroom and addresses the varied needs. Differentiation allows children to remain together socially with their peers of same age, while being challenged at different levels. Tomlinson says, “If you are teaching well, they
will do better than if you do not, and if they are working hard, they will do better than if they do not” (Wu, 2013, p. 127).

One method of differentiating is done through clustering. “Cluster grouping enables gifted students, as well as all the other students, to make meaningful progress” (Brulles & Winebrenner, 2012, p. 41). Clustering differentiates students into five different categories: Gifted, High Average, Average, Low Average and Far Below Average. The following is an example of how a successful clustering differentiation may look with a class of 90 children who have a wide range of abilities:

Classroom 1: Six Gifted Students; 12 Average Students; 12 Low Average

Classroom 2: 6 High Average Students; 12 Average Students; 6 Low Average; 6 Far Below Average

Classroom 3: 6 High Average Students; 12 Average Students; 6 Low Average; 6 Far Below Average (Brulles & Winebrenner, 2012, p. 43)

Clustering recognizes that not all gifted students are high achievers, but rather that they take in information in a manner that requires different instruction and curriculum. “Gifted students make intuitive leaps in their thinking, require fewer repetitions to master new concepts, accelerate through the curriculum at a faster rate, and think more critically and with greater depth and complexity than students of average ability” (Brulles & Winebrenner, 2012, p. 43).

By using a cluster grouping, it embraces all students, from gifted to challenged. It recognizes that gifted students need to be challenged daily. This requires teachers to be trained in gifted education and ongoing documentation of each student’s progress. Not only do the teachers benefit, but all students benefit when teachers are provided additional training on differentiated instruction. This allows each student to learn at their level and pace. Some
recommendations for managing a successful clustering group are to offer students a pre-test before teaching a new concept. This will provide the teacher with an understanding of each student’s knowledge of a particular topic. The teacher then may offer students a unit test before receiving the instruction. If they receive 90 percent or higher, they have demonstrated mastery of the content and the teacher can then provide them with more challenging work in the same subject area while proceeding to teach the other students at their level of need (Brulles & Winebrenner, 2012). This type of differentiation is known as curriculum or lesson compacting, where the teacher gives the student credit for what they already know and allows students to work quickly through grade-level materials (Brulles & Winebrenner, 2012).

Gifted students have shown that they take advantage of differentiated learning opportunities when others around them are working at advanced levels. They have been shown to take academic risks and challenge one another more, not only because of their competitive natures but also because they feel more understood, and are more comfortable and confident learning with peers with whom they can relate” (Brulles & Winebrenner, 2012, p. 44).

“Honoring students’ interests is also beneficial because it boosts students’ motivation to learn” (Wu, 2013, p. 128). This can be done by exploring certain topics each child is interested in, or perhaps connecting with them by teaching them about things they care about. Having flexibility to go deeper in some topics and introducing others helps these students stay engaged and make a significant difference in their receptiveness to learn.

As our world changes and more and more individuals are moving to different parts of the world, cultural awareness is another important consideration when looking at education and in particular our gifted children. It’s critical to create classrooms that respect different cultural approaches to learning in order to provide an environment for all to learn. For some, this may be
“first” within their family and they may not understand what giftedness means. Teachers need to be clear about what giftedness is and is not, provide an understanding of the gifted program and define the academic purpose of any differentiated curriculums. “The lack of information or ambiguous reasoning rendered by a counselor, teacher, or parent as to the meaning of giftedness or why a student is expected to become an active member in the gifted program has been cited as one reason why diverse gifted students are not comfortable with or committed to the purposes for or need to participate in the gifted program” (Kaplan, 2011, p. 64). Tomlinson states, “I’d like to see schools be “dream keepers” – places where adults say to students, “Let’s figure out what you can grow up to be” (Wu, 2013, p. 133). She also shared that she would like them to be communities that don’t categorize and separate, but concentrate on helping children become “architects of good lives” (Wu, 2013, p. 133).

It is important for students in a differentiated program to know that they are not doing more work, just different work from some of their classmates. They must also be made aware that their grade will not be lower than it would have been if they had completed the regular class work instead of the more challenging work. Cluster grouping allows rigorous school settings where exceptionally smart students can learn alongside lower achieving students while setting a stage for higher overall achievement from all (Brulles & Winebrenner, 2012).

**Gender Differences**

Leta found that gifted girls were less interested in traditional girls’ play and instead gravitated towards boy’s books and activities. They tend to gravitate towards masculinity. This is believed to make sense due to the “relationship between masculinity, independence, and achievement. The feminine role is too restrictive for many gifted girls” (Silverman, 1990). Cultural conditioning and stereotyping is also a consideration. Could it be that girls take on more
masculine traits because they are striving to be like boys who are perhaps more interested in math, science and experiments vs. traditional female characteristics/roles such as strong reader, care-taker, and nurturer? A study looking at girls in adolescence, showed that 92 high school valedictorians chose colleges that were less selective and careers that paid less than that of their male peers. Even though these girls had just as much potential as the boys to succeed in the sciences, they chose people oriented careers such as nursing, teaching or psychology (Kerr, Vuyk & Rea, 2012). It is important that gifted girls know all the options that are available to them and get the encouragement to strive for their goals and dreams.

When looking at boys, there is a common practice of holding boys back a year before starting kindergarten. Parents may do this to help their sons have a better chance at being a leader or becoming an athlete. If these are gifted boys, they may be labeled as a “problem child” because they are bored in the classroom and are looking for ways to entertain themselves. Some of these boys will be sent for learning services instead of given more challenging work. This may lead to discouragement and underachievement. Early identification of an underachiever is key to addressing and making the appropriate changes. It is also important to consider the possibility that the gifted boy is using underachievement as a way of proving his masculinity and independence and should not be overlooked (Kerr, Vuyk & Rea, 2012, p. 651). By the time gifted boys reach pre-adolescence, they may also be bullied because they are smart, appear different, are socially awkward, or appear weak. This is also a time that a gifted boy with high intelligence may feel shame for being smart and different from his peers and begin to hide his academic capabilities in order to fit in. It is important to realize that while bullying can happen to all children, bullying of gifted boys may be more intense and more dangerous during the adolescent years and must not be dismissed. Our society still has cultural norms that imply that
our boys will become the breadwinners and will choose careers within the engineering, physics, and technology fields instead of the arts, humanities and performing arts. In addition, if a gifted boy is not interested in sports, they may be unpopular and perhaps labeled as a geek, dork, nerd or sissy (Kerr, Vuyk & Rea, 2012).

It is imperative to encourage both girls and boys to participate in academics and sports they are interested in. We can provide them opportunities to explore environments that encourage development of their strengths and skills. Parents and educators can help these children by looking long-term to help them imagine and reach their highest attainments.

**Socialization**

It is important for all children to find a place where they feel significance and belonging. It is no different with gifted children. They have a desire and need to have peers who can share their similar interests. Because of their different physical, social, intellectual and emotional needs, they may find that they need to have several groups of peers. One group may meet their intellectual needs and offer an environment where they can discuss and share topics of mutual interest, while they may fit better emotionally within another group of peers. Finally, they may fit within a third or even fourth group for physical and/or social needs. Adults around them can help them to understand their needs and who around them can stimulate them within each of these areas. This is an area that develops through experience and greater understanding of oneself (Rotigel, 2003).

The socialization process is “aimed at developing the personal, social, and academic comfort necessary to function within, rather than at the periphery of a culture of giftedness. The intent of socialization into a culture of giftedness is to allow the student to retain their economic,
linguistic, and/or cultural diversity while helping them see the potential they share with other gifted students” (Kaplan, 2011, p. 65).

**Counseling Considerations**

The gifted are not unlike others, they have a deep desire to be understood, which far surpasses their achievements. When children are perceived to be intelligent, those around them may forget that they are still children who are learning, growing and experiencing in all aspects of their lives. The gifted may not ask for help, but it is important to recognize areas where teaching and mentoring are needed. While they experience the world in a different way, they are still children and have many of the same needs. Their inner experience as a gifted person is “rich, complex, turbulent” (Silverman, 2009, p. 148).

Misunderstanding, often resulting in misdiagnosis is a huge concern when working with the gifted. While some of these children are “twice-exceptional” and are not only gifted, they also may have a disability. For example, they have been diagnosed with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD) due to their intense level of energy, intense imagination and intense focus or hyperfocus at times, Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD), Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) and Bi-polar or other mood disorders. Gifted children may also be misdiagnosed within the Autism Spectrum Disorder because these two conditions may mask one another leaving it difficult to properly diagnose (Webb, Amend, Webb, Goerss, Beljan & Olenchak, 2004). It is important to find a professional who is experienced and trained with the variety of uncommon manifestations within these diagnoses so they know what to look for and can decipher the areas of diagnostic overshadowing (Webb, Amend, Webb, Goerss, Beljan & Olenchak, 2004).
Not only do the gifted run a greater risk of misdiagnosis, but they may also have major weaknesses that can go undetected because of a “norm” lens that is used by diagnosticians within their test interpretations. As they interpret these tests, they often ask, “How does this child’s performance compare to the norm?” (Silverman, 1998, p. 11) So what is normal? Just because a behavior may be normal in one area of the world, is it normal in others? What is normal for children in different cultures? These are some of the questions that may be left unaddressed when looking at the norms. It is therefore necessary to view these children through an additional giftedness lens, looking for their strengths, and acknowledging them. Their strengths provide a window to their abilities. When a gifted child’s strengths and weaknesses are averaged, they cancel each other and neither their gifts nor their disabilities are identified. For example, if a child is first diagnosed with a learning disability, their giftedness may be overlooked. The opposite may also be true. Their learning disability may go unnoticed until their work becomes hard enough that they can no longer overcompensate for their disability.

Use of role-playing games (RPG) in counseling/play therapy can help further treatment by allowing the gifted child to work on things such as emotional regulation and social skills in a safe playful environment. This is also a time when the therapist can observe behaviors, further understand strengths and weaknesses. They can then provide encouragement through acknowledgement of the child’s strengths and a safe environment to work on the weaknesses (Rosselet & Stauffer, 2013).

The procedure for using role-playing games is to have a game master who arranges the imaginary environment and directs the play through rules, guidelines and sometimes overall goals. The players get to participate freely by acting and reacting to the environment that has been created around them. Participants (players) get to create and play the role of their character
deciding how they will act, displaying their skills, powers, strengths and weaknesses. “The perceived realism and logic that the game master and players use allows them to make sense of their imaginary story through a common representation” (Rosselet & Stauffer, 2013, p. 177). Some track the different characters, rules, story line, and different scenarios in order to achieve individual and group goals (Rosselet & Stauffer, 2013).

RPGs use metaphors to induce change. While a child is using play, they are actually addressing issues related to their current life situation. They can experience the negative consequences, but not embarrassment or ridicule from peers as they are in a safe environment. This time can also provide them with an opportunity to be what they would like to be, but are afraid to be. By having the courage to explore these roles through play, it often encourages children to try these new roles in their life.

During RPGs, mistaken beliefs and private logic will be revealed by the players and will bring awareness to the underlying foundations of their behavior(s). As a therapist, it is critical to help the players understand how their behaviors are playing out in their lives. In addition, provide them encouragement to make corrective actions in order to address these issues or problems they are having.

Additional Considerations

“Children with extreme developmental delays have insufficient cognitive complexity to pretend to be something they are not. Children with profound developmental advancement have so much cognitive complexity that they see the interconnection of all experience, and misrepresentations of the truth--even "white lies" to protect someone's feelings--radically disrupt the sense of order they have worked so hard to create. Their need for logical consistency and authenticity act as powerful forces that usually outweigh whatever would motivate the Self to
purposely engage in distortion. This is not to say that gifted children are always truthful. But many gifted people, particularly the profoundly gifted, have a passionate attachment to the truth, they abhor inconsistency in themselves and others, and they find it hard to justify to their Selves any misrepresentation of the truth as they understand it. Because of this, gifted children who pretend to be interested in Barbies when they actually hate them, or who spin imaginative tales to see others' reactions, or who rationalize their behavior to avoid being wrong, often felt ashamed at their lack of authenticity. If they have intentionally lied, they often experience guilt at their dishonesty because they recognize that they have jeopardized a trust relationship. They also have difficulty incorporating their deception into their developing sense of Self. While others may decide not to lie because they know it is wrong, or because they are afraid of getting caught, a gifted child might say, "I am not a person who lies. I would hate myself if I were dishonest" (Silverman, 1998, p. 5).

One also has to be very aware of diagnoses and misdiagnoses within this population. For example, their behavior may look like that of a person with ADHD due to their intense level of energy, however, if they are gifted, what this is telling them is they are unacceptable.

Some traits that are “normal” for gifted children are emotional highs and lows. Unfortunately, they may be mistaken for manic depression and other diagnoses if there is unawareness of their giftedness. They can also become depressed as they realize and understand their inability to make significant changes in the world at large.

Perfectionism within gifted is actually a “component of the drive for self-actualization” (Silverman, 1998, p. 5). It is important to understand the difference between perfectionism of those with a neurosis than of those who have a high level of excellence.
Highly gifted children with IQs of 150 or more often times have difficulty building relationships with peers. This may be caused because of social rejection or their possible need to organize the play in a complicated pattern followed by a goal or purpose for the play. Studies have shown that social isolation occurs at both spectrums of the IQ continuum. It occurs more frequently at only 30 points below norm, vs. about 50 to 60 points above the norm. These same studies show that adjustment is more of a challenge for the highly gifted. While there is support available for those that fall below, there still remains minimal support for those that surpass the norm IQs (Silverman, 1998). When looking at those with below normal IQs, isolation begins to take effect when others see and acknowledge their inadequacies. The same is true of those with much higher than normal IQs. Isolation has been shown to decrease with age, as gifted adults naturally seek and find like-minded friends (Silverman, 1990).

Gifted children often find difficulty forming friendships due to difficulty finding like-minded children. The higher their giftedness, often times, the less often they are able to find friends who share their level of giftedness. Children in the 130 to 145 range tend to find more friends like themselves. It is when they get up in the 170 range that it becomes more difficult.

Gifted children often seek older friendships, have play interests of children their mental age, have a sophisticated knowledge of games, spend a lot of time reading, have many hobbies, collections and interests. “The gifted enjoy more complicated and more highly competitive games…and outdoor sports hold a high place with the gifted, being almost as popular among the gifted as reading is” (Silverman, 1990, p. 6). Children in the 125 to 155 range are “enough more intelligent than the average to win the confidence of large numbers of their fellows, which brings about leadership…but those of 170 IQ and beyond are too intelligent to be understood by the general run of persons with whom they make contact” (Silverman, 1990, p. 7).
The years between four and nine can be the most difficult. The good news is that as the child ages, the degree of differences decreases because school curriculums can be more difficult, the child matures and finally they are more aware of their own needs and how to fulfill them.

**Conclusion**

Giftedness is not a choice, but something we are born with and develop as we grow. It can go unnoticed or be missed because there are behaviors that may look like other diagnoses such as ADHD, OCD, ODD or LD. As parents, educators, mental health professionals, we need to look closely at the whole individual and make sure to rule out things such as giftedness prior to giving a diagnosis.

Dabrowski identified overexcitabilities (OEs) in the gifted. He broke these intensities into five different OE categories, intellectual, imaginative, emotional, sensual and psychomotor. There are strengths and weaknesses within each of these intensities and it is helpful to understand how these intensities present themselves so as to bring awareness and prevent potential misdiagnoses.

In schools, differentiation is key to providing the breadth and depth of knowledge to meet gifted students academic needs. Teachers also need to receive specific training for educating gifted students. Lastly, it is helpful to work with students not only on academics, but also on their social skills in order to prepare them for careers and lives working with others who may or may not be gifted.

Gifted male and female students present similarly in many ways, they also have unique considerations. Male gifted students may be non-athletic and labeled as a geek because they would rather spend their time reading. Female gifted students may be more masculine in traits and looked upon as not feminine. However, if these students can find an encouraging
environment in which to explore things that interest them, they may feel more secure in their femininity/masculinity and embrace that piece while still meeting their educational demands.

As parents of these children, you know your child best and are the best person to advocate for what your child needs. Educate yourself on this topic and speak up for the unique needs of your child. While some teachers are educated on this topic, many are not and even if they are, they don’t know your child like you do. In order to help them work with your child in the most beneficial way, it is helpful to share the unique qualities and gifts of your child so they can understand your child and provide them with the educational direction that will be most effective. Lastly, it is also imperative to take care of and invest in oneself in order to have the stamina and energy to nurture and care for these gifted children. Whether it be an exercise program, supportive friends, or child care, it is key that one finds ways to take care of yourself in order to keep physically and emotionally healthy.
References


