

Social-Emotional Needs

Of the Gifted Child
- CFISD Psychological Services -

Start with the Contacts

CFISD Psych Services

Wes Baker, Ph.D.	Michelle Pastorek, Ph.D.	Poonam Desai, M.Ed.
Richard.Baker @CFISD.net	Michelle.Pastorek @CFISD.net	Poonam.Desai @CFISD.net
281-807-8180	281-807-8180	281-807-8180

Tonight's Mission

- To discuss current thinking and research regarding common myths.
- To present general and age-specific social-emotional considerations and implications.
- To look at giftedness in a cultural context.
- To share information about prevention of and intervention in mental health concerns.
- To address your specific questions.

Common Myths Re: GT Kids

(Cross, 2011)

Myth 1: Gifted students should be with students their own age.

- Concern is that groups of multiage children will “struggle with exploitation, intimidation, inappropriate modeling, and sexuality.”
- Research shows: Gifted children benefit from opportunities to be with intellectual peers, no matter the age difference.

Myth 2: Gifted students should be in same-age/heterogeneous classes.

- Concern is that allowing gifted students to cluster will lead to social disadvantages (which leads to emotional distress).
- Research shows:
 - Social interaction with heterogeneous groups is important, *but...*
 - Life offers multiple options for social exposure.

Myth 3: Gifted students should be perfectly well-rounded.

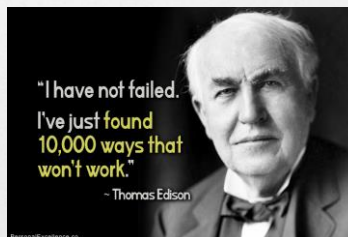
- Often, adults push gifted students into multiple activities, to promote well-rounded growth.
- Research shows:
 - This “perfect well-roundedness” often comes at the expense of time spent in an area of interest.
 - Research shows that successful gifted adults often spent many hours alone as children, exploring areas of interest.

Myth 4: Being gifted is something you are just born with (or)

Being gifted means you never have to study hard to do well, *or*

Things come easily when you are gifted.

- Research shows: Encourage students to think of giftedness as something that is nurtured and developed through hard work (and sometimes failure).



Myth 5: Experts in giftedness are experts in social/emotional needs.

- The field of gifted studies is very small.
- Experts in giftedness, in general, often asked to speak on social emotional development of gifted children.
- Seek input from experts in **social/emotional development of** gifted children.

Myth 6: Adults know what gifted students experience.

- “I was a child once, therefore I understand what a child experiences.”
- The world today is *very* different from the world 20 years ago (and 20 years before that, and 20...).
- **Think:** Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Reddit, Snapchat, Kik, WhatsApp, 4chan, Battle.net, Whisper, YikYak, Vine, ChatRoulette, Omegle, Tinder, Poof, Ask.fm, Voxer, Poke, Instagram, ShotsofMe, ...

Myth 7: Being too smart in school is a problem, especially for girls.



- Adults often fear their gifted children sticking out in anti-intellectual environments.
- Research shows: This leads to underachievement.

Myth 8: All kids are gifted, or no kids are gifted.

- People sometimes interpret “gifted” as a value judgment and reject seeming attempts to weigh the value of one child against another.
- In the literature, “Giftedness” is a description of a specific (quantifiable and measurable) quality, not an attempt to judge the value of a child.

Considerations for Parenting the Gifted Child

- All Ages -

General Considerations

- A gifted child is a *child*, first.
- Gifted children need opportunities to interact with other gifted children.
- Gifted children need opportunities to interact with the mainstream.
- “Smart” is not a single construct.
- *Asynchronous development* becomes a way of life.

Asynchronous Development



Instill in your child...

- An understanding of the relationship between social/emotional needs and academic needs.
- Social skills to use in interactions with their peers.
- An understanding of his/her nature and how to react to events and circumstances in his/her life.
- Coping skills and effective ways to manage stress.
- Appreciation of non-academic activities and hobbies, as well as down-time and relaxation.

Instill in yourself...

- Appropriate coping behaviors, to better model for your child.
- A knowledge of your child's personality and his/her social goals.
- The habit of communicating with teachers and school staff to better develop goals for the child.
- Empathy for the social expectations of the school/classroom through the eyes of your child.

Age-Group Differences

Elementary vs. Middle vs. High

Considerations - Elementary School -

- Children begin to develop their sense of identity, including awareness of strengths and weaknesses.
- Parents remain the ultimate authority.
- Asynchronous development very evident:
 - 10-year-old with a college vocabulary may still have the social-emotional maturity of a 10-year-old.



Implications - Elementary School (1) -

- Remain, and help others to remain, cognizant of your child's chronological age.
- Find opportunities to relate to other gifted children.
- Pay attention to how you praise your children:
 - Praise should address specific behaviors/accomplishments.
 - "You did very well on this spelling test."
 - "You really seem to be understanding this new math!"
 - General and/or global praise may have a paradoxical effect.
 - "You're so smart!"
- Encourage an *incremental* definition of "gifted."

Implications - Elementary School (2) -

- Allow children to fail:
 - Experiencing failure is a part of life.
 - Failures present growth/learning opportunities.
- Be open about your own challenges:
 - Model for your children how to appropriately handle frustration and failure.
- Be supportive of your child's *personal* weaknesses.
- Encourage and support involvement in special interests.

Considerations - Middle School -

Teenager Post # 18507
**A moment of silence
 to all the kids who
 can't wait to become
 a teenager because
 they think it's fun.**

[//teenagerposts.tumblr.com](http://teenagerposts.tumblr.com)

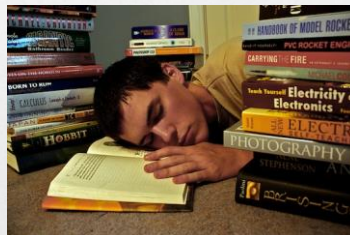
- Academic courses become more specific and electives become available.
- Influence of peers overtaking influence of parents.
- Access to world through technology increases.
- Children begin developing adult neurological structures.
- Puberty.

Implications - Middle School -

- Find/encourage opportunities to relate to the mainstream.
- Allow children age-appropriate expressions of independence.
- Assign children age-appropriate responsibilities.
- Openly use technological safeguards, monitoring.
- Talk with your child about drugs/alcohol & sex.
- Get to know child's peer group and, if possible, their parents.
- Remain cognizant and supportive of physiological and emotional changes.

Considerations - High School -

- Grades now have long-term implications.
- College admissions process starts early.
 - Ex: PSAT/NMSQT-prep in 10th grade
- Increased need for independence.
- New civic/social responsibilities:
 - Driving
 - Job
- Vocational goals more apparent and salient.



Implications - High School -

- Find/encourage opportunities to relate to the mainstream.
- Allow teens age-appropriate expressions of independence.
- Encourage extra-curricular activities and, if possible, part-time employment. Be mindful, however, that your teen doesn't over-extend his or herself.
- Openly use technological safeguards, monitoring.
- Continue to talk with your teen about drugs/alcohol & sex.
- Get to know teen's peer group and, if possible, their parents.
- Remain cognizant and supportive of physiological and emotional changes.
- Help your child to explore post-secondary goals and career options.

Issues of Culture & Gender

Social-Emotional Considerations

Cultural minority

- Racial/Cultural identity often develops along a path:
 1. Pre-encounter
 2. Encounter
 3. Immersion
 4. Internalization
 5. Internalization-commitment
- Conflicting messages between dominant and minority cultural groups may occur.

Gifted Girls

- Gifted girls tend to feel compelled to hide their intelligence, often using social skills to imitate and match those around them.
- Gifted girls are frequently perceived as less popular, often leading them to choose social acceptance over opportunities to excel in their coursework.
- Emotionally, gifted girls may be more susceptible to depression, psychosomatic symptoms, and lower self-esteem.

Notes on Mental Health

Misdiagnosis, Perfectionism, and
Serious Mental Illness

Misdiagnosis Potential

Over-Diagnosis Potential

ADHD	Depression
Autism/Asperger's	Bi-polar
Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder	

Under-Diagnosis Potential

Giftedness	Learning Disability
Depression	Anxiety

Perfectionism



“Perfectionism is a dream killer, because it’s just fear disguised as trying to do your best.” – Mastin Kipp

Perfectionism

Signs of Unhealthy Perfectionism	Thought Patterns	Associated Mental Health Concerns
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting unrealistic goals • Avoidance of situations • Tantrums/Melt-downs • Repetition of things (non-functional) • Overly critical of themselves or others • Somatic complaints • Underachieving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constant fear of failure • Uncontrollable worry • All or nothing thinking • Catastrophizing negative events • Ignoring the positive • Focusing on unmet goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anxiety • Depression • Eating disorders • NSSI • Substance abuse • Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder • Panic Attacks • Autism Spectrum Disorder

Perfectionism

How You Can Help	Healthy Thoughts	If You Need More Support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empathize with your child. Then, explore his/her beliefs. • Avoid the word “perfect.” • Model goal-setting. • Praise behaviors instead of outcome. • Allow child to experience small failures. • Book studies. • List what he/she does well. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everybody faces challenges, what’s important is how you handle them. • Nobody’s perfect. What’s important is that I do my best. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider seeking the help of a counselor, therapist, psychologist. • Cognitive Behavioral Therapy has evidence supporting its effectiveness.

Serious Mental Illness - Risk Signs -

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- Difficulties with anger and depression.
 - Lack of prosocial activities.
 - Dissatisfaction with place, situation, school, peers, family, or self.
 - Sudden changes in romantic/social relationships.
 - Notable over-reaction to minor day-to-day events.
 - Difficulty separating fact from fiction (especially overidentification with aggressive characters or antiheroes).
- ❖ **ERR ON THE SIDE OF CAUTION.**

Non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI)

- NSSI vs. Self Expression.
- Purposes of NSSI.
- Precursors to NSSI:
 - Hyperstress vs.
 - Dissociation
- Watch for signs of emotional distress & NSSI.
- Seek counseling/therapy support in these situations.

Prevention & Intervention

- Practice positive, proactive parenting.
- Utilize mentors, in- and out-of-school, and positive role models.
- Encourage involvement in areas of interest.
- Effective help may be found through individual, group, and/or family counseling.

Resources & References

- *On the Social and Emotional Lives of Gifted Children*, Cross, T. (2011), Prufrock Press Inc.
- www.sengifted.org (Supporting the Emotional Needs of the Gifted)
- www.nagc.org (National Association for Gifted Children)

Questions?

And answers?

