



Developing Social & Emotional Health

Gifted and Talented Parent Symposium

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At Bedichek Middle School

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What are the Social-Emotional Needs of Gifted Children?

- To a large degree, the needs of gifted children are the same as those of other children. The same developmental stages occur, though often at a younger age (Webb & Kleine, 1993).





Possible Problems That May Be Associated With Characteristic Strengths of Gifted Children

STRENGTHS:

- Acquires/retains information quickly
- Inquisitive; searches for significance
- Intrinsic motivation
- Enjoys problem-solving; able to conceptualize, abstract, synthesize.
- Seeks cause-effect relations.
- Emphasizes truth, equity, and fair play.

POSSIBLE PROBLEMS:

- Impatient with others; dislikes basic routine
- Asks embarrassing questions; excessive in interests.
- Strong-willed; resists direction.
- Resists routine practice; questions teaching procedures
- Dislikes unclear/illogical areas
- Worries about humanitarian concerns.

Possible Problems That May Be Associated With Characteristic Strengths of Gifted Children continued...

STRENGTHS:

- Seeks to organize things and people.
- Large facile vocabulary; advanced, broad information
- High expectations of self and others.
- Creative/inventive; likes new ways of doing things.
- Intense concentration; long attention span and persistence in areas of interest.

POSSIBLE PROBLEMS:

- Constructs complicated rules; often seen as bossy.
- May use words to manipulate; bored with school and age-peers.
- Intolerant, perfectionistic; may become depressed.
- May be seen as disruptive and out of step.
- Neglects duties or people during periods of focus; resists interruption; stubbornness.



Possible Problems That May Be Associated With Characteristic Strengths of Gifted Children continued...

STRENGTHS:

- Sensitivity, empathy; desire to be accepted by others.
- High energy, alertness.
- Eagerness
- Independent; prefers individualized work; reliant on self.

- Diverse interests and abilities; versatility.

POSSIBLE PROBLEMS:

- Sensitivity to criticism or peer rejection.
- Frustration with inactivity.
- May be seen as hyperactive.
- May reject parent or peer input; nonconformity.

- May appear disorganized or scattered; frustrated over lack of time.

Adapted from Clark (1992) & Seago (1974).



Combinations of these characteristics can lead to behavior patterns:

Uneven Development

- Motor skills, especially fine-motor, often lag behind cognitive conceptual abilities, particularly in preschool gifted children (Webb & Kleine, 1993). These children may see in their “minds eye” what they want to do, construct, or draw; however, motor skills do not allow them to achieve the goal. Intense frustration and emotional outbursts may result.



Combinations of these characteristics can lead to behavior patterns, continued:

Peer Relations

- As preschoolers and in primary grades, gifted children (particularly highly gifted) attempt to organize people and things. Their search for consistency emphasizes “rules”, which they attempt to apply to others. They invent complex games and try to organize their playmates, often prompting resentment in their peers.



Combinations of these characteristics
can lead to behavior patterns,
continued:

Excessive Self-Criticism

- The ability to see possibilities and alternatives may imply that youngsters see idealistic images of what they might be, and simultaneously berate themselves because they see how they are falling short of an ideal (Adderholt-Elliott, 1989; Powell & Haden, 1984; Whitmore, 1980).



Combinations of these characteristics
can lead to behavior patterns,
continued:

Perfectionism

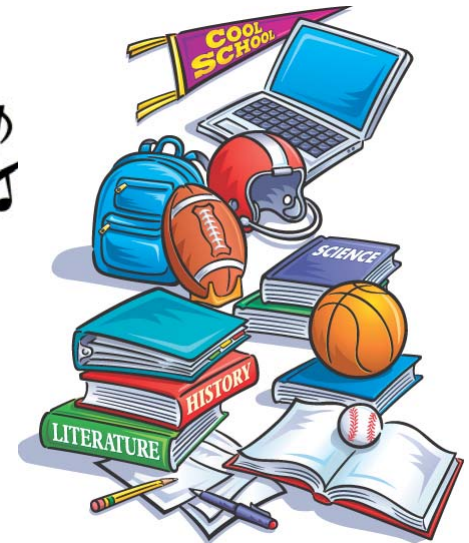
- The ability to see how one might ideally perform, combined with emotional intensity, leads many gifted children to unrealistically high expectations of themselves. In high ability children, perhaps 15-20% may be hindered significantly by perfectionism at some point in their academic careers, and even later in life.



Combinations of these characteristics
can lead to behavior patterns,
continued:

Multipotentiality

- Gifted children often have several advanced capabilities and may be involved in diverse activities to an almost frantic degree. Though seldom a problem for the child, this may create problems for the family, as well as quandaries when decisions must be about career selection (Kerr, 1985; 1991).



Combinations of these characteristics
can lead to behavior patterns,
continued:

Avoidance of Risk-Taking

- In the same way the gifted youngsters see the possibilities, they also see potential problems in undertaking those activities. Avoidance of potential problems can mean avoidance of risk-taking, and may result in underachievement (Whitmore, 1980).



Combinations of these characteristics
can lead to behavior patterns,
continued:

Gifted Children with Disabilities

- Physical disabilities can prompt social and emotional difficulties. Intellect may be high, but motor difficulties such as cerebral palsy may prevent expression of potential. Visual or hearing impairment or a learning disability may cause frustration. Gifted children with disabilities tend to evaluate themselves more on what they are unable to do than on their substantial abilities (Whitmore & Maker, 1985).



How Can I Encourage My Gifted Child?

- Help your child discover personal interests.
- Encourage the support of extended family and friends.
- Speak and listen to your child with consideration and respect.

(Linda Kreger Silverman)





Emotional Intelligence

Original Definition

- “The ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and action.”

Original Components

- Appraising emotions in self and others
- Regulating emotions in self and others
- Using emotions adaptively (in thought, reasoning, problem solving, creativity, and to motivate behavior)

*** Cognitive and socioemotional developmental processes**

*** Constitution and temperament**

*** Parent's preferred child rearing styles**

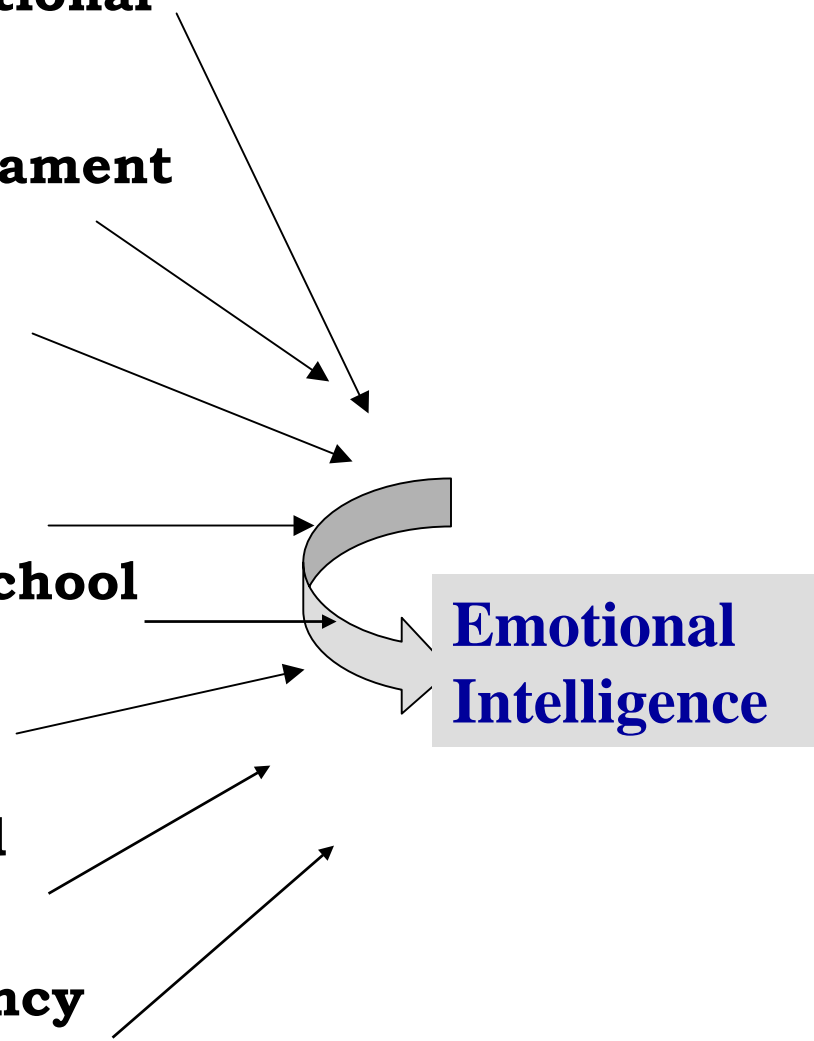
*** Social models (peers, teachers, etc.)**

*** Affective education in school**

*** School and community environment**

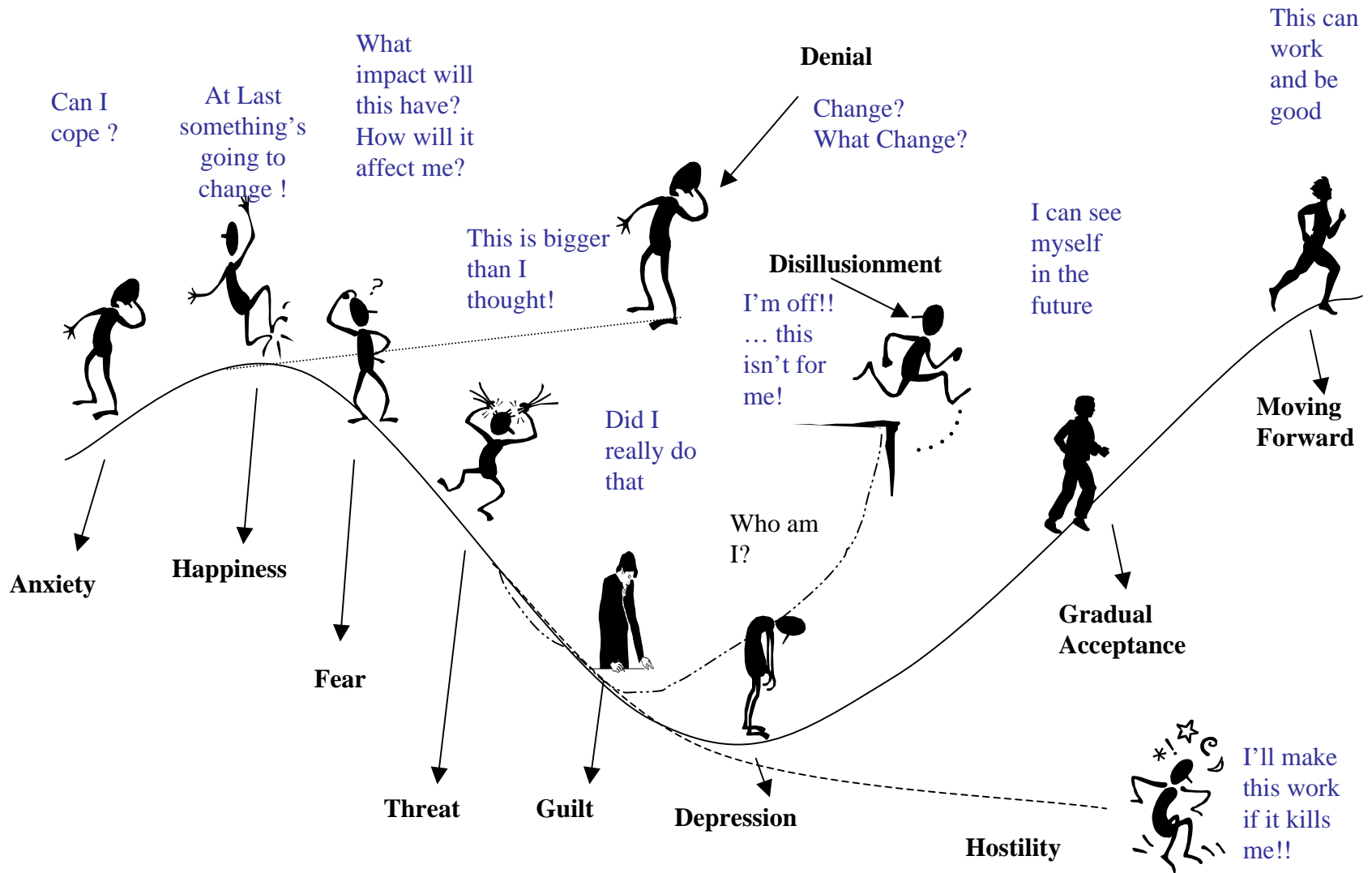
*** Sociocultural norms and values**

*** Intervention and resiliency**



Emotional Intelligence

The Process of Transition



The Walking Argument



- How many times have you heard, **"That's not fair!"??**
- One of the most disconcerting qualities of the gifted is their tendency to argue with everyone about everything. This is particularly true of the highly gifted, who have an inherent need for precision in thought and language.
- Linda Kreger Silverman, Ph.D., Gifted Development Center

The Walking Argument



- Your child is arguing with you again. You pause for a moment, consult your child owner's manual you always keep nearby on the coffee table, and quickly solve the... What! You awake from this dream and realize there is no owner's manual! You never received one! As a parent, are you both thankful and frustrated with the high abilities of your child? Have you often wondered how others deal with intensity, perfection, and verbal, verbal, verbal children? If this sounds familiar, you're not alone. Parenting is a tough job.
- How you react to your child's problems is important. How you respond to and interact in general with your child is your parenting style.

The Walking Argument



If you are living with or trying to teach an Argument, here are some tips:

- **Try not to feel threatened by the child's need to argue.** Some minds need to argue as a form of exercise.
- **Be clear about what is negotiable and what is not.** If you have firm standards on certain issues, (e.g., name calling is not allowed, everybody helps, etc.), the child will learn to respect those boundaries.

The Walking Argument



- **Appeal to the child's growing sense of fairness.** Ask, "Is this 'fair' for just you or is it fair for everyone, including me?".
- **Help the child understand other's feelings.** The need to be right can be tempered by helping the child understand other people's feelings and reactions to their arguments.



The Walking Argument



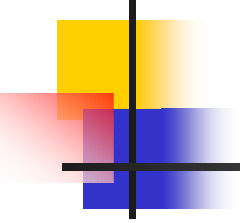
- **Discuss mercy versus justice.** Talk about values of mercy and justice. Then look for applications of both in various situations in real life, books, and the media. When is mercy more appropriate than justice?
- **Be a role model of appreciation for other views.** Children learn what they see. Do you have an acute need to be right that you are inadvertently teaching through your actions?

The Walking Argument



- **Use humor.** When all else fails, “That’s why I’m the mommy,” may you have to be said with love and good spirits.
- **Get counseling.** If the child or other family members are terribly threatened unless they are right all the time, this is a sign of low self-esteem and may need professional assistance.

Linda Kreger Silverman, Ph.D., Gifted Development Center



Are you too critical of your child? Put-Down vs. Positives

Instead of this...

- "What happened here?"
- "Why can't you do it right?"
- "Why don't you ever..."
- "Go look it up."
- "That was a dumb thing to do."
- "Act your age."

Try saying this..

- "How do you feel about your report card?"
- "You do a great job of..."
- "I like it when you..."
- "Let's find out together."
- "So you made a mistake. What did you learn from it?"
- "I understand how you feel."



Are you too critical of your child?

Put-Down vs. Positives cont...

Instead of this...

- "Are you still working on that?"
- "I told you so."
- "You should have known better."
- "Just get it down."

Try saying this..

- "Keep trying. Don't give up."
- "Everyone makes mistakes."
- "What can you learn from this?"
- "I can see that you're struggling."

“The less a person understands his own feelings, the more he will fall prey to them.

The less a person understands the feelings, the responses, and behavior of others, the more likely he will interact inappropriately with them and therefore fail to secure his proper place within the larger community “

- Howard Gardner

