

Advanced Academic Services
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ADVANCED ACADEMIC SERVICES
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GT Express

A NEWSLETTER FOR PARENTS

The social and emotional needs of gifted children are equally as important as their intellectual development and academic growth. This issue focuses on providing support in a range of areas that gifted children may struggle. Our goal is to provide you with some insight in nurturing your child.

Multipotentiality—A Mixed Blessing by Jim Granada

Gifted children, because of the range of their unique talents, may experience the challenges of multipotentiality as they grow up. According to Rysiew, Shore and Leeb (1999), multipotentiality describes individuals with multiple interests and high abilities, allowing them to excel in numerous areas. Frederickson (1979) defined a multipotential person as “any individual who, when provided with appropriate environments, can select and develop any number of competencies to a high level” (p. 268).

Gifted children with traits of multipotentiality begin to face prioritization challenges very early on, having interests and talents in many areas and often not willing to prioritize among these areas. As they grow older, they may face tough choices in school (courses and extra-curricular activities), in college (career paths and majors), and in their careers (difficulties in selecting an occupation).

Barabara Kerr (1990) addresses challenges of gifted children at various grade levels. Elementary level children may demonstrate difficulty in choosing topics or projects when provided options or may jump from one hobby to another with passing interest. They may also have difficulty in finishing up and following through on tasks.

Middle level gifted kids may participate in multiple social and recreational activities with no clear preferences. They may overschedule and have difficulty meeting deadlines due to lack of time.

Overscheduling may continue in high school resulting in overly packed class schedules and acceptance of leadership roles in a variety of groups in school, religions activities, and community organizations. These overly-ambitious children may show occasional signs of stress and exhaustion.

Once in college, multiple majors and changes of majors may occur. Intense participation in extracurricular activities is likely to continue, and they may encounter the opportunity cost of giving up some interests in favor of others.

Parents can help children with multipotentiality by providing them with focusing activities and opportunities to develop skills in prioritization. Real world exposure to careers with emphasis on the meaning and value of work can help, along with opportunities for volunteer work.

Schools can help by providing support in goal setting and time management, asking students not “What do you want to do?” but instead “What do you want to do first?” The important thing to remember is to start support early along this challenging journey.

Fostering Moral Development

While moral development is desirable for *all* individuals, the gifted grapple with moral issues at an earlier age than their peers and more often and with more intensity. We need to recognize the moral concerns of children and provide appropriate guidance and feedback. Whether we are addressing feelings, thinking, or behavior, we are our children's passport for growth and development. It is up to us to assist children in arriving at their destination intact and secure with a strong ethical code.

1. Have children examine values, ethical principles, and philosophical systems.
2. Give them opportunities to discuss ethical issues and come to their own decisions.
3. Offer them the opportunity to construct their own moral dilemmas.
4. Provide opportunities for them to internalize caring values by encouraging children to recognize "service opportunities" in the school, home, and community.
5. Believe in their ideals. Don't try to talk them out of their "unrealistic" expectations.
6. Help them learn how to set priorities so that they discover which are their most important goals.
7. Support their courage to stand up for their convictions, despite the blows to self-esteem they may sustain from others.
8. Give them books to read and films to watch to familiarize themselves with moral leaders so that they have appropriate role models. Explore with them humanitarian values and the lives of individuals dedicated to service.
9. Assist them in designing projects related to social and moral issues.
10. Help them critically examine the historical development of philosophies and the effects of these values on the development of societies.
11. Introduce them to the contributions of the inconspicuous and unsung who show admirable qualities and lead worthwhile lives.
12. Examine with them more issues shown on television, seen in the newspapers, or found in the community.
13. Focus on different viewpoints in everyday interactions; have children share their feelings about interactions, events, or activities.
14. Have children establish their own code of rules for behavior.
15. Have children participate in decision-making.
16. Involve them in activities in which children learn to interact cooperatively with each other, respect each other's rights, and gain a sense of social responsibility.
17. Model caring behaviors.
18. Help children become activists by engaging them in the study and solution of real-life problems.
19. Encourage children to read newspapers so they can begin to see how they and their communities are not isolated from the outside world; provide opportunities for them to share their perceptions and questions with others on a regular basis.
20. Encourage children to think about the moral and ethical dimensions of the subjects they study and to raise questions of conscience regarding content.
21. Give children opportunities to think about their role in the world. What impact could they make? What impact do they make? What impact does the world have on their lives?

Excerpted and adapted from Silverman, Linda Kreger. (1993). *Counseling the Gifted and Talented*. Denver, CO: Love. 315-316.

**Leadership consists not in degrees of technique but in traits of character;
it requires moral rather than athletic or intellectual effort.
- Lewis H. Lapham**



MARK YOUR CALENDAR!
Supporting Gifted Children at Home
**Spring GT Parent Symposium
and AAGT Games Day for Children**
Saturday, April 29, 2006
9:00 a.m. —12:30 p.m.
Pease Elementary School
1106 Rio Grande



Exploring Social and Emotional Needs through Film by Rhonda Boyer



Hollywood has done as much good as it has harm with its portrayal of gifted individuals. Yet film can be a powerful springboard for discussions focused on the myths and realities of giftedness as well as a way to explore social and emotional needs and problem solving in a non-threatening manner.

There are a number of entry points for studying film. Although these entry points progress in complexity, all of them may not be necessary or appropriate depending on the age and developmental level of the child.

Identification

At the most basic level is children's identification of the similarities between the character and themselves.

Emotional Response

At this level children experience an emotional response and feel what the character is feeling.

Insight

Children have an opportunity to reflect on their identification with the character and the situations they find them in and gain a deeper understanding and insight.

Transfer

Children transfer their understanding and insight about the character and the character's experience to problems and issues in their own lives.

These entry points assume that the film viewing is guided before, during, and after by a supportive adult. The opportunity for delving into the film, its content, and the child's connection becomes fragmented if the child just passively views the film.

The criteria used for the following list is that the film casts a gifted character. This list is a point of reference only and the films are not

being endorsed. These films should be previewed before showing to a child. Those films not appropriate for children to view based on age, rating, or content are included because they may be of interest to those supporting gifted children.

Finding Forrester (2001) PG-13

Because of scoring exceptionally high on a standardized exam and being an exceptionally good basketball player Jamal is sent to a prestigious prep school. He befriends a reclusive writer who encourages him to pursue his true dream - writing.

Little Man Tate (1992) PG

Dede is a single parent raising Fred. When it is discovered that Fred is a genius, she is determined to ensure that Fred has all the opportunities that he needs, and that he is not taken advantage of by people who forget that his extremely powerful intellect is harbored in the body and emotions of a child.

Matilda (2005) PG

Matilda is an extremely intelligent girl who is very anxious to go to school and read books. After a while, her parents send her to a school with the worst principal in the world, a very sweet teacher, and good friends. She discovers she has telekinetic powers and practices using them to change the school setting.

Mean Girls (2004) PG-13

Cady Heron thinks she knows about survival of the fittest. But the law of the jungle takes on a whole new meaning when the home schooled 15-year-old enters public high school for the first time and encounters psychological warfare and unwritten social rules that teenage girls face today.

October Sky (1999) PG

After the launch of Sputnik Homer is inspired to learn how to build rockets. Unfortunately, most of the town and especially Homer's father think that it is a waste of time.

Pay It Forward (2000) PG-13

The assignment: think of something to change the world and put it into action. Trevor conjures the notion of paying a favor not back, but forward--repaying good deeds not with payback, but with new good deeds done to three new people.

Real Genius (1985) PG

Mitch is one of the youngest students ever accepted to a university known for its programs for geniuses. He's partnered up with his roommate on a project to develop a high-powered laser. Together they employ their intellects in the pursuit of bigger blasts, practical jokes, and a deeper understanding of what real genius is.

Searching for Bobby Fischer (1993) PG

Josh is a typical American boy interested in baseball when one day he challenges his father at chess and wins. Josh's parents hire a renowned chess coach, Bruce, who teaches Josh the usefulness of measured planning. Along the way Josh becomes tired of Bruce's system and chess in general and purposely throws a match, leaving the prospects of winning a national championship in serious jeopardy.

Selma, Lord Selma (1999) Not Rated

In 1965 Alabama, an 11-year-old girl is touched by a speech by Martin Luther King, Jr. and becomes a devout follower. But her resolution is tested when she joins others in the famed march from Selma to Montgomery.



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Plot overviews for each film have been excerpted from the Internet Movie Database available online at: [www.imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com)



# How Do Global Issues Impact Gifted Children? by Debi Torres



Gifted kids have a tendency to worry about world problems, or global issues. They worry about world hunger and struggle with their feelings when they see panhandlers begging for money on street corners. They don't understand why poachers are killing

countless endangered animals each day or why the local governments aren't stopping them from killing these animals. They struggle because they feel it is their responsibility to solve the global issues that will adversely affect the quality of life for future generations.

Why do our gifted kids worry so much? Many studies have shown that highly gifted youth have a heightened emotional sensitivity that affects the way they view the world around them. You might imagine it as though they have a set of emotional antennae that picks up emotional vibes from every direction at any given moment; basically they feel everything all the time. This may explain why their emotions can range from hysterical laughter to unstoppable tears in the matter of minutes.

It is widely accepted that gifted children who possess an adult-like intelligence should be praised and rewarded for their academic achievements, but how many children receive accolades for having adult-like emotions? On the contrary, these children are often misunderstood and adults around them worry there is something wrong with them.

Do you have a highly-sensitive child in your family? Think about the following. Do they:

- cry, get angry, and/or get excited easily?
- quickly notice and/or respond to the emotions of people around them?
- notice problems that other people around them don't often notice?
- ask numerous questions about life, death, pain, suffering, and/or violence?
- worry about world problems, other people, or the environment? (Galbraith, 2000)

It's important to understand how these characteristics can affect these children in other aspects of their life. Many sensitive children take things personally and can have trouble handling criticism that isn't presented to them in a positive way. Other people's strong emotions can upset them more deeply than most people expect. For example, they may lose sleep worrying when parents or friends argue in front of them. They may become withdrawn or depressed when they worry about things they are ready to handle intellectually but they are emotionally unprepared to handle. Small gifted

children may understand intellectually what ozone depletion will do to the future of the environment but are they emotionally ready to tackle a problem of this size? They may also be very picky about what they eat and/or wear. The child who becomes a vegetarian after watching a documentary on the life and death of hens raised at a chicken farm or the child who refuses to wear genuine leather or fur are examples of these possible behaviors.

Don't worry, being highly-sensitive is not all negative. There are good things that come from being a sensitive child. These children can place a high value on the importance of helping other people and the environment. Since they feel a great amount of pain when they are hurt, they are often more careful with other people's feelings. Because they understand the difference between what is right and wrong they can use this knowledge to stand up for what they believe is right.

How can you help your sensitive child?

- Always acknowledge and respect their feelings by talking about them in an open and honest manner. When appropriate, share your own thoughts and feelings on the same subject to help them see an alternate approach and attitude.
- Allow your children to express their feelings comfortably with the family. Don't stop them (even boys) from crying. Crying is an appropriate way for children to release their feelings.
- Find ways to help your child express their deep feelings about pain or suffering in a positive way by doing a family service project. You might volunteer at a food bank, animal shelter, or a children's orphanage. (Galbraith, 2000)

As the parents and educators of sensitive gifted children, let's teach the world to embrace these children and accept their unique perspective of the world. After all, highly-sensitive people are the ones who actually see what the world has to offer without a clouded view of the future. With proper guidance and nurturing, they will continue to make the world a more beautiful place for generations to come.

## Reference


Galbraith, J. (2000). *You know your child is gifted when . . . : A Beginner's Guide to Life on the Bright Side*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit.




# Tips for Parents: Peer Relations by K. Pitman

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Davidson Institute Family Consultant Kacey Pitman conducted a seminar for parents on the subject of peer relations and the profoundly gifted child. The following is a synthesis of information provided to parents from this facilitated discussion group.




**Alone Time.** A study was conducted on students who took the ACT. Students who scored in the top 5% were compared to the other test takers, and it was found that the students who scored in the top 5% needed more time to themselves than students who scored lower on the test. Highly intelligent students need some time and space where they can relax with their own thoughts. Too much stimulation can cause problems with the child. To help facilitate this time, watch your child's patterns to see when he/she needs some space and give it to him/her. It is also important to let your child know that it is okay to need this time, and they can ask for it.




People have friends for different purposes. People have many differences when it comes to interests, intellect, etc. We may be attracted to different people for different reasons, and that is okay. We can have friends who we like to play games with, friends we like to discuss books with, and possibly friends who we go to the movies with. These are all examples of different friends we can have. It is good to have friends for different reasons and to enjoy the uniqueness of each friendship.




Help facilitate connections for your child with others of similar interests. Facilitate ways for your child to meet friends of different backgrounds and interests. For example, summer camps, sports teams, after school or home school clubs, magic cards, etc.




Set up opportunities for friendships to be made. Parents have to help set up opportunities for the child when he/she struggles in this area: setting up play dates, having siblings, friends and family over, signing them up for sports, etc.




**Modeling.** Parents should model good behavior with their own peers. Always remember that your children are watching and to be a good role model for them. When it is appropriate, discuss certain relationships and the dynamics of the relationships with your children. Sharing with your children can help them to see how you handle certain situations and people, and this can help them be successful in this area.




**Social skills groups.** Whether your child seems to have good social skills or not, he/she might benefit from being part of a social skills group. Groups are designed for students to work together in learning how to interact with one another, reading social cues, conflict resolution, etc. These are all skills that any person who encounters others on a daily basis could benefit from. Psychologists usually run these groups and to find one, you can look at your local chapter of the psychological association.



**Peers of differing sex and age.** Friendships can be formed with many different kinds of people. As stated above, different friendships can have different purposes. It is okay for children to have friends who might be of another gender or different in age. Let your children know if you had similar experiences growing up, and that it doesn't matter who your friends are as long as they treat you with respect.



**Effective tools for success.** If your child seems to be struggling with social cues or the handling of certain social situations, role-playing can be very successful. Pick some situations, either real or made up, that you know your child will encounter. Have your child play both sides of the coin, so he or she can feel what it would be like to be on both sides. Through role-playing you can discuss what is successful in dealing with different kinds of people.



**Maintaining connections.** Some friendships may happen across a large distance. To help maintain these connections children can use e-mail, write letters, talk on the phone, use web cams and interactive talking online, play games online, or set up visiting vacations close to each other. It is hard to maintain a long distance friendship, so it will take work but using some of the ideas above can really help.

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## About Us . . .

The Department of Advanced Academic Services in Austin ISD provides support and services for numerous programs and events, including the following:

- Gifted and Talented Program
- Advanced Placement
- Pre-Advanced Placement
- International Baccalaureate Diploma Program
- International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program
- Academic Magnets
- Project SOS: Supporting Optimal Scholarship
- Future Problem Solving

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