Meeting the Social/Emotional Needs of Gifted Kids

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“To teach the core, you must first reach the core.”

Lisa Lee
## Smart vs. Gifted:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Smart</strong></th>
<th><strong>Gifted</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Questioning Style</strong></td>
<td>Asks questions that have answers</td>
<td>Asks questions about abstract ideas, concepts and theories</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Learning Speed and</strong></td>
<td>Learn step by step</td>
<td>Jumps from 2 to 10</td>
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<td><strong>Application of Concepts</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Emotional Outlook</strong></td>
<td>Get past an upsetting incident fairly easily</td>
<td>Experiences heightened, sometimes all-consuming emotions</td>
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<td><strong>Level of Interest</strong></td>
<td>Asks questions and are curious about many things</td>
<td>Shows intense curiosity about nearly everything and immerse themselves in areas of interest</td>
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<td><strong>Language Ability</strong></td>
<td>Learn new vocab easily and choose words typical for their age</td>
<td>Extensive and advanced vocab and understand nuances, wordplay and puns</td>
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Asynchronous Development:
Increases with intelligence level
Asynchronous Development:

Erick Erickson’s Stages of Development:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages</th>
<th>Crisis</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Year</td>
<td>Trust vs. Mistrust</td>
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<tr>
<td>2nd Year</td>
<td>Autonomy vs. Doubt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd – 5th Year</td>
<td>Initiative vs. Guilt</td>
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<tr>
<td>6th Year – Puberty</td>
<td>Industry vs. Inequality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adolescence</td>
<td>Identity vs. Confusion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adulthood</td>
<td>Intimacy vs. Isolation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Middle Age</td>
<td>Generativity vs. Self Absorption</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aging Years</td>
<td>Integrity vs. Despair</td>
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</tbody>
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Strategies for Parents:

- Chronological age
- Emotional support
- Tribe
- Coping skills
- Strengths and Weaknesses
- GT Support Groups (JAGC, SENG)
- Counseling support
Overexcitabilities

Gifted students tend to be extremely sensitive in a variety of areas; more so than typically developing students. This means that in five different areas, gifted students tend to react more strongly than normal for longer than normal to a stimulus that may be very small. It involves not just psychological factors but central nervous system sensitivity.

“Intense responses to stimuli.” Dr. Dabrowski’s
Overexcitabilities

- Psychomotor
- Sensual
- Imaginational
- Intellectual
- Emotional

Gifted students have all five overexcitabilities, but the intensity of the overexcitabilities will be different in each student.
Psychomotor Strategies

Fidgets, exercise balls, lots of brain breaks, allowed to stand/pace in the back of the room, bouncy bands, standing work space, one-legged stool, lots of patience.
Sensual Strategies:

Noise-canceling headphones/earbuds, lighting alternatives, multiple possible work spaces, texturized fidgets, salt rock lamp

Hit or Miss:

White noise machine

Scented air-fresheners
Imaginational Strategies:

Constructive doodling, Project Based Learning, creative ways to demonstrate their knowledge (marble run), journaling, using their imagination to their advantage (the same kids who have night-terrors can imagine a device that wards off the “monster”)

Intellectual Strategies:

Show them how to find answers to questions, teach them to discuss new ideas, service learning projects (allows them to act on what they learn), socratic seminars, teach them to see shades of grey, teach them how to communicate their dissatisfaction.
Emotional Strategies:

Acceptance (no matter how absurd it is to you, it is real to them), listen - they often just need to be heard, body triggers, belly breathing, grounding, visualization, naming their emotion, taking self-designated breaks, bibliotherapy.
How to Help:

You can get a better understanding of your gifted child if you recognize their intensities which can help you to become a more effective and supportive parent. For example, if your child is emotionally intense, you know that they will have a tough time “just ignoring” the teasing or bullying. They may need extra help in managing their reactions to hurtful behavior from others.
What is perfectionism?

Setting impossibly high standards
Spending excessive time on assignments
Fear of embarrassment or humiliation
Hyper focusing on past mistakes
Feeling anxious, angry or upset about mistakes
Catastrophic reactions or meltdowns
Procrastination of big and small tasks
Refusing to take risks for fear of failure
Mindset:

Growth Mindset:
- I can develop my abilities
- Challenges help me grow
- Feedback is constructive
- Effort is necessary

Fixed Mindset:
- Either I can do it or I can't
- I stick to what I know
- I don't like receiving feedback
- If I'm frustrated, I give up
Negative Thought Loop:
Strategies for Perfectionism:

1. Educate your child about what perfectionism is.
2. Teach positive self-talk.
3. Share other perspectives with your child.
4. Praise your child’s efforts.
Strategies for Procrastination:

1. Chunk larger assignments.
2. Backward planning
3. Use a calendar and set time goals
4. Identify priorities
5. Have balance in their lives
Other ideas:

- Encourage saying “I don’t know” and/or “yet”
- Self advocacy
- Share your own mistakes with humor
- Help your child set reasonable goals
- Encourage your child to help others, such as volunteering.
Helpful books on Perfectionism:

**Perfectionism: What’s Bad about Being Too Good?** By Miriam Adderholdt-Elliott, Miriam Elliot, & Jan Goldberg

**When Perfect Isn’t Good Enough: Strategies for Coping with Perfectionism** by Martin M. Antony & Richard P. Swinson

**What to Do When Good Enough Isn’t Good Enough: The Real Deal on Perfectionism** by Thomas S., Ph.D. Greenspoon
You can’t meet their academic needs until you have met their affective needs.
Questions???