

OVEREXCITABILITY - DYNAMISMS - DEVELOPMENTAL POTENTIAL

Autonomous and accelerated development (development involving the third factor) is always associated with multiple forms of overexcitability.

Overexcitability is defined by Dabrowski as: "the consistent tendency to overreact." (In stimulus-response terms, this is stimulus - over-response)

These multiple forms of overexcitability can be detected in children as young as 2 - 3 years.

As an individual develops, the undifferentiated energy of the overexcitabilities is refined into the dynamisms. Dynamisms are not simply the 'forces' which carry out the process of positive disintegration, they are the disintegration. If they are absent, so is disintegration. If they are weak, so is disintegration, and if they are strong, so is disintegration. More about dynamisms later.

There are five forms of overexcitability:

- 1) psychomotor - physical activity, including talking
- 2) sensual - sensory pleasure, including sitting instead of standing, lying down instead of sitting.
- 3) imaginational - dreams, imagery
- 4) intellectual - mentally probing, with reverence for logic
- 5) emotional - the capacity to 'love and worry'.

These various forms of overexcitability may be compared to channels for information processing. By birth, each individual has preferential modes. If an individual is limited to one mode (channel) (overexcitability) his developmental potential will be limited. Ideally, there will be several preferred modes.

Thus, if an individual has all five channels open wide, the abundance and diversity of incoming information could lead to dissonance, conflict, and tensions. Dissonance, conflict and tension are typical of the developmental processes of positive disintegration.

Thus, overexcitability is developmentally significant, while ordinary excitability is not.

How Overexcitability Manifests:

- 1) Psychomotor - seems to be a function of organic excess of energy. It manifests in rapid talk, violent games, intense athletic activity. (If there is emotional tension-accompanying it, it manifests in gesticulation when talking)
- 2) Sensual - this is a heightened experience of sensory pleasure, and manifests in the need for comfort, fashion, variety of sexual experiences, numerous but superficial relationships with others. (If accompanied by excessive emotional tension, it shows through overreacting, excessive sexual stimulation).

- 3) Imaginational - manifests through a rich association of images and impressions, inventiveness, use of metaphor.  
 (If accompanied by emotional tension, manifests in or is transferred to dreams, nightmares, mixing of truth and fiction, fears of the unknown.)
- 4) Intellectual - manifested in persistence in asking probing questions, thirst for knowledge, analysis, theoretical thinking, reverence for logic. (Emotional tension cannot be blended into intellectual tension - no matter how much they are stirred together, they will not mix. Instead, they work together.)
- 5) Emotional - emotional overexcitability is a function of experiencing emotional relationships. This relationship manifests as strong attachment to persons, living things, or places.
- A display of emotion alone is not developmentally or emotionally significant.
- Example: A child is refused candy.
- a) He shows a display of temper. (display of emotion)  
 b) He feels he is not loved. (relationship)
- emotional overexcitability manifests in inhibition (timidity and shyness), excitation (enthusiasm) and strong affective memory, as well as concern with death, fears, anxieties, depression, exclusive relationships, difficulty in adjusting to new environments.

Developmental potential is strongest if all, or almost all forms of overexcitability are present.

If a high level is to develop, intellectual, imagination and emotional must be present. They are necessary for autonomous development.

The highest level is possible only if emotional overexcitability is the strongest, or one of the strongest.

Great strength of psychomotor and sensual limits development to the lowest levels only.

Developmental dynamics are intra-psychic factors which carry out the process of restructuring emotional and cognitive organization. Each level of development is characterized by a different set of dynamics.

Level I - no intra-psychic forces

Level II - second factor  
 ambivalences and ambivalencies

Level III - hierarchization      dissatisfaction with oneself      inferiority toward self  
 disquietude with oneself      astonishment with oneself  
 feelings of shame and guilt      positive maladjustment

Level IV - subject-object in oneself      third factor      inner psychic transformation  
 self-awareness      self-control      autopsychotherapy      education of oneself

Level IV and V: responsibility      authenticity      autonomy

Level V      personality ideal.

Levels

Dynamisms

Level V Personality ideal

(extremely rare) Individuals at this level, self-directed, honest and sincere, empathic, give the appearance of great power and great peace.

Level IV and V Responsibility, authenticity, autonomy

authenticism - honest & sincere  
autonomous - self-directed, free of biological and social influences.

Level IV Subject-object in oneself, third factor, inner psychic transformation, self-awareness, self-control, autopsychotherapy, education of oneself.

Hierarchy of values now established. Persons at this level are capable of great empathy, self-awareness, self-control, of self-education and autopsychotherapy.

Third factor

Level III Hierarchization of values, dissatisfaction with oneself, inferiority toward oneself, disquietude with oneself, astonishment with oneself, feelings of shame and guilt, positive maladjustment.

Individuals now measure themselves against what they are capable of, and not against others, take stands for their convictions, and use excess energy (over-ex) creatively.

Level II Second factor  
Ambivalences and  
ambitendencies.

Primitive structure has broken and individual now experiences ambivalence as all things and people seem equally important, or unimportant. Moody. Experiences many conflicting wills and desires.

Level I No intra-psychic forces.

Intelligence is in the service of self-preservation, and the self is the centre of the universe. Egocentric, lack morals, abuse themselves toward 'superiors' and ill-treat 'inferiors'.

Overexcitabilities

Emotional overexcitability is a function of experiencing emotional relationships, and manifests as strong attachment to persons, living things, or places; in inhibition as timidity and shyness, in excitation as enthusiasm; and in strong affective memory, concern with death, fears, anxieties, depression, exclusive relationships, difficulty in adjusting to new environments.

Intellectual overexcitability manifests in persistence in asking probing questions, thirst for knowledge, analysis, theoretical thinking, reverence for logic.

Imaginational overexcitability manifests through a rich association of images and impressions, inventiveness, use of metaphor. If it accompanied by emotional tension, it manifests in or is transferred to dreams, nightmares, the mixing of truth and fiction, fears of the unknown.

Sensual overexcitability reflects a heightened experience of sensory pleasure, and manifests in the need for comfort, fashion, variety of sexual experiences, numerous but superficial relationships with others. If accompanied by excessive emotional tension, it manifests in overeating, excessive stimulation sexually.)

Psychomotor overexcitability seems to be a function of organic excess of energy. It manifests in rapid talk, violent games, intense athletic activity. If there is emotional tension accompanying psychomotor tension, it manifests in i.e. gesticulation when talking.

Developmental potential is strongest if all, or almost all forms of overexcitability are present.

If a high level of development is to develop, intellectual, imaginational, and emotional overexcitability must be present. They are necessary for autonomous development.

Excessively strong psychomotor and sensual over-ex. limit growth to the lowest levels only.