Emotional Development and Emotional Giftedness

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Different Senses of Emotional Development

This chapter addresses the characteristics of emotional development of gifted children and also gifted adults. Emotional development does not stop in adulthood; on the contrary, it can be all the more intense. It might be helpful, therefore, for the parents and the teachers of the gifted to find case examples and theoretical models with which to compare their own experiences.

What constitutes the domain of emotional development is far from dearly defined. How do emotions develop? How does the understanding of emotions come about? What is the role of socializing emotions? How does early emotional experience influence later life? These are some of the questions that address different aspects of emotional development. The list that follows identifies representative approaches to emotional development. However, what is most applicable to our understanding of emotional growth of gifted and talented children and adults will take us beyond this list. Approaches include emotional development as:

1. The development of emotions: This approach is the most basic. Its task is to follow the emergence of different emotions in the child's expressive repertoire as well as the emergence of the ability to recognize emotions in others (Hesse & Cicchetti, 1982).

2. A step-by-step parallel to Piaget's stages of cognitive development: Piaget (1967) and other authors (Harter, 1977; Hesse & Cicchetti, 1982) have made attempts to show how children's understanding of emotions in one self and in others, as well as their ability to deal with complex and mixed emotions, follows the stages of cognitive development.

3. A function of socialization: Here emotional development is conceived in terms of skills and tasks of self-management, self-trust, interpersonal competence, and the development of self-concept. This is the standard approach in textbooks on child development.

4. Psychoanalytic development: In the classic psychoanalytic approach, emotions are the function of the sexual and the aggressive drives. They are governed by the pleasure principle: the desire to reduce or eliminate unpleasant affect (Schafer & Sandor, 1978).

5. A series of psychosexual challenges: These are deciding milestones when facing life's developmental demands, for example, whether to trust or to mistrust, whether to be industrious or feel inferior and avoid challenging tasks, whether to portray of intimacy or lapse into isolation. This is Erikson's theory of how each individual's sense of self develops in making a succession of critical personal and social tasks (Erikson, 1963). The self develops in terms of a sense of mastery and competence, intimate relations with others, and personal identity. All are emotionally significant and key areas.

6. Extension of attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969, 1973): The initial bond between the baby and its caregiver is the foundation of emotional life that subsequently grows out of the original attachment pattern (Sroufe, 1979). Attachment as a framework for emotional development lays emphasis on the reciprocal interactions between the child and its caregivers. This is where one's sense of self-importance and worth is formed and maintained. The theory explains particularly well the long-term effects of loss of attachment figures, the devastating effects of
7. Self-actualization: Maslow's (1970) theory of self-actualization is a speculative scheme of a hierarchy of human needs. The lower needs are for physical survival, safety, love and belonging, and self-esteem, and the higher needs are for self-actualization. Maslow thought originally that satisfaction of lower needs prepares the realization of higher needs. Self-actualization would then appear within each of us, regardless of anyone fulfilling in terms of self-esteem and all the other lower needs. Maslow realized later that there is nothing automatic about self-actualization.

If there is one feature that knowers of gift-edness agree on, it is the tremendous range of individual differences in children and adults of exceptional ability. Not all children or even adults are on the same developmental level, and norms are valid here. The approaches listed present generalized models of emotional development. They apply to the gifted as they do to all children. Of course, room for adapting general models, such as Piaget's or Erikson's, to the gifted. In this manner Clark (1983) adapted Maslow's hierarchy of needs to the specific self-actualization needs of gifted children. However, the general models and their adaptations do not directly address the outstanding features that are characteristic of the emotional development of the gifted. There is one model that does address characteristics of the gifted: Dabrowiak's concept of emotional intensity and sensitivity. Dabrowiak's concept of developmental potential addresses a core of personal characteristics that distinguish the gifted in a most pronounced way. His idea of levels of development provides a broad framework for understanding the making of emotional giftedness and self-actualization.

Before introducing the theory let us first address the emotional intensity and sensitivity of the gifted and Dabrowiak's concept of developmental potential. We shall then consider emotional giftedness as a phenomenon for which Dabrowiak's theory provides a proper place. Self-actualization is another phenomenon that sits well in the framework of Dabrowiak's theory. The question of the relationship between emotional giftedness and self-actualization is speculative at any level of intensity unknown to the rest. Rather than view this as neurotic imbalance or the brink of insanity, he saw it as a positive potential for further growth.

Dabrowiak's concept of developmental potential includes talents, special abilities, and intelligences. He identifies five primary components: psychomotor, sensual, intellectual, imaginative, and emotional (Table 21.1). Conceived broadly as five dimensions of psychological life, the model has many possible expressions: psychomotor—an augmented capacity for being active and energetic—expressed as movement, restlessness, drive; sensual—an enhanced differentiation and aliveness of sensual experience; intellectual—vividness for knowledge and the search for truth—expressed as discovery, questioning, and love of ideas; and theoretical analysis; imaginative—the power of thought creation—expressed through vividness of imagery, richness of association; and fantasy; and for the unusual, a facility for dreams, fantasies, and inventions; and emotional—the heart—recognized in the great depth and intensity of emotional life experienced by the gifted child. Dabrowiak's concept has generated research on personal growth, self-actualization, and gift-edness.

The Concept of Developmental Potential

Emotional sensitivity and emotional intensity are often cited as distinguishing most gifted children, and the highly gifted especially (Barke, quoted in Clark, 1983, p. 104; Silverman, 1983; Webb, Meckstroth, & Tolan, 1982; Whitmore, 1980). These characteristics account for their vulnerabilities in childhood. Dabrowiak (Roedell, 1984) and get them into trouble at school (Richert, Alvin, & McDonell, 1982). Seeing themselves so different from others, they begin to doubt themselves. They ask themselves, What is wrong with me? (Tolan, 1987) and look in the catalog of mental disorders for the appropriate label to apply to themselves. Dabrowiak (1967, 1972) studied the mental health of intellectually and artistically gifted youths. He took the intensity of their emotions, their sensitivity and proneness to riding a roller coaster of emotional extremes, as part and parcel of their psychophysical makeup. Creative individuals are reactive, live at a level of intensity unknown to the rest. Rather than view this as neurotic imbalance or the brink of insanity, he saw it as a positive potential for further growth.

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Giftness in the Affective Domain

Emotional Sensitivity

The intensity of emotional reactions, especially in children, may sometimes be difficult to understand, especially when they strike seemingly out of the blue and the child is strongly upset by an act, feeling of happiness—or grief, as the case may be—adjustment. It helps for once to feel legitimate in one's "abnormal" reactions and what one cannot help experiencing and wanting to express.

When I was a teenager and read about manic-depressive disorder, I assumed that finally I knew what was wrong with me. Of course, I was told that all teenagers are manic-depressive, more or less, expect for me. I was the odd one out. I knew I was constant with something more than that—and it has followed me ever since—both the pain and the joy. It is sometimes difficult for a therapist to read minds and truly understand the subtle and often complex mix of emotions that make me able to write them. "Easy for her to say," I thought. She didn't have to live being in this. Imagining my state is often referred to as "channels of information flow" and "modes of experiencing" (Tolan, personal communication).

The stronger these overexcitabilities are, the less welcome they are among peers and teachers (unless they, too, are gifted). Children characterized by strong overexcitabilities are often made to feel different, not fitting in, and are, therefore, embarrassed, and guilty for being different. Criticized and teased for what they cannot help, they begin to believe something is wrong with them. Sometimes they learn to disguise it, sometimes they seek refuge in fantastic worlds of their own creation, and sometimes they try to "normalize" it and suffer the consequences of those who deny their own potential (Maslow, 1971).
## Table 21.1
Forms and Expressions of Psychic Overreactibility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psychomotor</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surplus of energy: Rapid speech; marked enthusiasm; fast games and sports; pressure for action; delinquent behavior</td>
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<tr>
<td>Psychomotor expression of emotional tension: Compulsive talking and chattering; impulsive actions; delinquent behavior; workaholism; nervous habits (nails, nail biting)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sensual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensory pleasures: Seeing, smelling, tasting, touching, hearing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensual expression of emotional tension: Overeating, masturbation, sexual intercourse, buying sprees</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intellectual</td>
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<td>Probings questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Problem solving</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning: Curiosity; concentration; capacity for sustained intellectual effort; extensive reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical: Thinking about thinking; introspection; preoccupation with certain problems; moral thinking and development of a hierarchy of values; conceptual and intuitive integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imaginational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free play of the imagination: Illusions; animistic and magical thinking; image and metaphor; inventions and fantasy; poetic and dramatic perception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spontaneous imagery as an expression of emotional tension: Animistic imagery; mixing of truth and fiction; dreams; visual recall; visualization of events; fears of the unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somatic expressions: Tense stomach, sinking heart, flushing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensity of feeling: Positive feelings; negative feelings; extremes of feeling; complex feelings; identification with others' feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inhibition (timidity, shyness)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Affective memory</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concern with death</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fear and anxiety</td>
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<td>Feelings of guilt</td>
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<tr>
<td>Depressive and suicidal moods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship feelings: Need for protection; attachment to animals; significant others; perceptions of relationships; emotional ties and attachments; difficulty of adjustment to new environments; loneliness; concern for others (empathy); conflict with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings toward self: Self-evaluation and self-judgment, feelings of inadequacy and inferiority</td>
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her psychoanalytic clients the process of emotional self-denial. She found that the emotional sensitivity of intelligence of gifted children makes them very attuned to the feelings and desires of their parents. As they naturally want to please them and be of help to them, they may change the use of their potential and instead become what their parents want them to be. In the extreme case the roles end up being reversed. The child becomes the emotional caretaker and the parents cause the parent's needs to be mothered or fathered. The younger the child, the heavier the burden and the more serious the consequences developmental. Gifted children caught in this process lock away their own feelings and desires. In adulthood they begin to feel a curious emotional void, a loss of sense of self that was never their own but an acquired one to suit someone else. (A case of a gifted boy who won much recognition in school for his academic and athletic achievements but at the age of 30 found himself adrift is described by Piekoszewski, 1987.)

Miller's book has been an eye-opener to a great many gifted adults who have found it in their own life story. Reading it has led some to seek therapy, and with good results. It has to be made clear that coming upon these insights helps when the symptoms below does not move them. Emotional problems of this nature, developed in the course of a long relationship that distorted the emotional security of close attachment and trust in one's parents, cannot be successfully corrected by oneself alone. It is necessary to cultivate the significant moments that precipitated the emotional blocking and come to understand one's feelings and one's self. A task of this magnitude and intensity can be carried out only in the security of the therapeutic alliance with a psychotherapist who has the requisite knowledge and experience in this particular process.

The Case for Emotional Giftedness

Annemarie Roepper (1982, p. 24) raised the question of emotional giftedness as an innate capacity:

Can a person be emotionally gifted? I believe there are people who have such a gift. They have the capacity to develop a high level of self-understanding, self-knowledge, which allows them to develop a clear understanding of their own feelings and the feelings of others. They also have the capacity to integrate their emotions, intellect, and creativity against enormous odds. They are people who deal realistically with their intense emotions throughout their developmental phases. I have observed children who are particularly sensitive toward their own and other people's feelings and who dare to act upon this awareness.

Some gifted children show enormous empathy with others, surpassing at times the compassion of adults who are more limited by society's expectations. As a result, adults may not understand a child's reaction to the rules of the road. For example, in a recent tournament, John, the obvious winner, began to make careless mistakes and lost the game. When asked what was wrong, he said, "I noticed my opponent had tears in his eyes. I could not concentrate and lost my desire to win. John's empathy was greater than his ambition. Many adults, especially those who supported John, were disappointed. Yet, one could argue that his reaction was a more mature one than theirs for his self-esteem did not depend on winning the competition (emphasis in the original).

Such examples of empathy, unselfishness, and consideration for others are readily found among gifted children if one looks for them. Seymour (1987) describes two brothers of whom the older brother was expected to be second to fourth grade. Everyone was impressed by this boy's exceptional intelligence and verbal facility. His brother, a year younger and also highly gifted, was by contrast considered "average." The older boy's imagination and sensitivity to others was less spectacular than his intelligence. He had a violent temper and often hit his younger brother, though younger was the larger of the two. The younger brother did not strike back but would rather walk away; despite his anger and obvious pain he controlled himself, and he was only 7 years old.

On a school trip to the zoo this very young boy, unlike his classmates, showed a concentrated interest in every animal; he was very much interested in feeding the goat. A couple leaving the zoo asked him if he would like to have a bag of corn they were carrying. Seymour says that the boy replied, "I want to take the corn and feed the goat." Instead, he came up to his classmates and offered everyone corn, and when the bag was almost empty he went to see the goat. Such an example of empathy to others and a consistent trait in this boy. From responses to her parent questionnaire, Silverman (1983) collected numerous observations of emotional intelligence in highly gifted children as young as 2% and 3.

Considerateness, compassion, and understanding of others are characteristics of what Gardner (1983) calls personal intelligence. Actually Gardner made a strong case for two personal intelligences: intra- and interpersonal. Among the eight criteria for securing a definition of personal intelligence, one is the evidence of exceptional talent and achievement. In the case of personal intelligence, the evidence is the outstanding degree of self-knowledge, moral leadership, and inspiration to others. The core capacity of interpersonal intelligence is "the ability to notice and to make distinctions among other individuals and, in particular, among their moods, temperaments, motivations, and interactions." (p. 239). The core capacity of interpersonal intelligence is "the ability to notice and to make distinctions among other individuals and, in particular, among their moods, temperaments, motivations, and interactions." (p. 239). The core capacity of interpersonal intelligence is "the ability to notice and to make distinctions among other individuals and, in particular, among their moods, temperaments, motivations, and interactions." (p. 239). The core capacity of interpersonal intelligence is "the ability to notice and to make distinctions among other individuals and, in particular, among their moods, temperaments, motivations, and interactions." (p. 239).

In the case of Gandhi, the power of his Daniel, the strong influence of his mother, personal distress for dishonesty and untruthfulness, and the spiritual leaders to whom Gandhi looked himself for their wisdom and purity of intentions. His goal was to live a life of truth so that he could find God. Practicing nonviolence, conviction, and consistency was his method. He chose to be a lawyer, but he found it difficult at first to practice law, partly because of his paralyzing anxiety, and partly because he had to pursue litigation and push to win a case. Later it became clear to him that what he must strive for was to bring the parties in conflict to a harmonious agreement, which will make for the better side could see its advantage (Gandhi, 1948/1983, p. 117):

I felt that my duty was to befriend both parties and bring them together. I strove every nerve to bring a compromise. But both were happy over the result, and both rose in public estimation. My joy was boundless. I had learnt the true emotional development and emotional giftedness
practice of law. I had learned to find out the better side of human nature and to enter men’s hearts. I realized that true function of a lawyer was to unite parties riven auster.

Gandhi as a child and as a man was a being of intense emotions and sensuality, great sensitiveness, self-consciousness, and restless intellectual and spiritual inquiry. His emotional giftedness lay in his ardent concern to have no blemish on his character (punishment for an infraction caused him the greatest pain by the very fact that he deserved it), his ability to befriend people, his joy in serving others (he tells how he developed a passion for nursing the sick; he spoke of it as a vocation and of his dedication to abolish any kind of discrimination based on color, caste, religion, nationality, social position, or wealth. However, than his belief in the power of prayer, his devotion to truth as his guiding principle, and his sensitive conscience, we do not gain much insight into his inner growth. True, he struggled to overcome his crippling shyness and at times would spend a sleepless night in an effort to come to the right decision, but his inner voice developed early, and as he wrote, he had taught himself to follow the inner voice: “I delighted in submitting to it. To act against it would have been difficult and painful to me” (p. 118). Still one gets the impression, and probably one is not far from the truth, that his “experiments with Truth” were the result of an early mold of character given to steadfast practice of chosen principles. Doubt, hesitancy, inner conflict, and the urges that appeal to our neurotic psychological tradition, are not in good supply in Gandhi’s case. Nevertheless, he makes an eminent case for emotional giftedness.

By contrast, Eleanor Roosevelt’s life brings us closer to discovering some of the methods she applied to her inner growth. Through her we get a close look at the inner workings of emotional giftedness. As a child and as a woman she was a being of intense emotions, great sensitiveness, introspective and thirst for learning. Her development, however, was not embedded in the rich soil of closely knit family affections as Gandhi’s was. As a child she felt that her father loved her, but she lost him early. Out of a serious, sensitive child

Self-knowledge, she emphasized, also means knowing one’s strengths, especially one’s inner strength needed in times of difficulty. She stressed the necessity of taking responsibility for the shape we give our lives and we shape ourselves. The process never ends until we die. And the choices we make are ultimately our own responsibility” (Roosevelt, 1960, p. 22).

Dabrowski’s Theory

Positive Disintegration

Working toward self-knowledge is a way of forging an inner transformation. This is the core of Dabrowski’s theory of positive disintegration (Dabrowski, 1964, 1967; Dabrowski & Pecowchow, 1977). By this paradoxical name he wanted to emphasize the dismantling and tearing down that occurs in one’s inner being. What is experienced as lower is gradually removed and replaced by what is experienced as higher. This split between higher and lower in oneself takes many forms but is distinctly and spontaneously experienced by emotionally gifted people.

Earlier we discussed Dabrowski’s concept of developmental potential. It addresses the outstanding feature of the emotionally gifted, their great sensitivity and self-awareness, that intensified experiencing in one or more of the five dimensions: psychomotor, sensorial, intellectual, imaginative, and emotional. The emotionally giftedness as growing out of emotional overexertibility combined with a will to change oneself and to help others, including those who find roadblocks in the realization of their potential. The examples of Mohandas Gandhi and Eleanor Roosevelt underscore the link between a strong emotional sensitivity and finding one’s mission in life in service to others. Not everyone finds it as readily as Mohandas and Eleanor did.

Dabrowski’s theory is very much about this quest. It comes from a deep longing for something emotionally more satisfying: an ideal of love, an ideal of brotherhood, an ideal of beauty, an ideal of justice, an ideal of honesty, an ideal of earning, an ideal of responsibility, an ideal of humility, an ideal of truth, or all such ideals. To be faithful to the call of an ideal demands self-sacrifice.

Gifted children feel this call early, but they find themselves in a difficult world where schools do not value learning, where the ignorant hold power over sages, where the insensitive denounce feeling as a trouble factor, where victims are blamed, where authority gains its power from the blindness of the governed, where those who care always seem alone, and where reality means only the tangible, visible, measurable, and for sale. Clark (1983, p. 126) makes the point that an intense sense of justice and unswerving idealism may early on press gifted children and that it is hard for them to understand why the adults are not doing anything to correct what is so blatantly wrong in the world. The gifted have trouble adjusting to a world where everything appears to stand on its head. In his youth Dabrowski struggled with these antinomies and not finding a solution to the antinomies of his day, he eventually forged a new one.

Levels I and II

Dabrowski outlined a hierarchy, or typology if you will, of emotional development (see Table 2). Levels I and II are self-serving motivations, manipulativeness, self-protectiveness, exploitation, and wheeling and dealing, where others are similar to oneself or, if they are not materialistic, greedy, ambitious, power hungry, or striving for status, regarded as weak and naive. Level II is represented by submission to mainstream values and conventions. In this case the self derives its definition from fulfilling the expectations that others hold for one. Elkind’s (1984) term the “pathological self” applies here. In this type of growth a person perceives an underlying sameness in people revealed in expressions like “Do your own thing” or “Everyone is entitled to his opinion.” No one’s values are perceived to be better than anyone else’s (again a criterion of sameness but in value currency). Absolute values are rejected: “There is no absolute truth; everything is relative.” What one subscribes to is the continuous flux of change
without much direction. In more sensitive indi-
viduals there may be a further sense of inner
fragmentation ("I feel split into a thousand
pieces"). Personal growth in Level II is typi-
cally the struggle toward the emancipation of
an individual sense of self, a struggle that can
be quite heroic. To give up believing what one
has always been told and accepted as truth is
a radical and potent process of recon-
struction. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and
Tarule (1986) in their study of women's de-
velopment identify a number of distinct steps in
such a process.

Level III: The Fight for One's Principles

Dabrowksi developed his theory as a protest
against a world upside down. If Freud explored
the interpersonal conflict between blind desires
of the individual and prohibitions of society,
Dabrowksi explored the conflict in which the
individual stands in judgment of himself or
herself. The prelude to this process is surprise
and astonishment with the world and with one-
self. It is an awakening. When the idealism of
youth gives way to compromise and assimila-
tion to being like other people, as in Level II,
something essential is lost. In Resurrection
Tolstoy (1961) tells the story of Dimitri
Nekhludov, a young prince who underwent
this unappealing change when he left home
and, as customary, joined the Imperial
Guard.

Then he was an honest unselfish youth with a
heart open to every good suggestion; now he was
a depraved, accomplished egoist, who cared for
nothing but his own pleasure. . . . Then he
regarded his spirituality as the real he was healthy,
vigorous, animal self. . . . And all this terrible change came about only because he
had ceased to believe in himself as the real
confidence in others. . . . If a man believes him-
self he often has to give judgment against his
lower self, which seeks easy joy, but when he
puts his trust in others, there is nothing to decide;
everything has already been decided against
the spiritual self, and in favor of the animal self.
Moreover when he trusted in his own judgment
he was always blamed, whereas now, trusting
others, he received nothing but the approval of
those about him. . . . He had at first made a fight
for his principles; it was a hard struggle, because
everything that seemed right to him seemed
wrong to other people; and vice versa, all that he
regarded as evil was applauded by his world. The
struggle ended in his surrender, he gave up his
own ideals and adopted those of other people.
(pp. 51–52)

Nekhludov ceased to be true to himself.
Tolstoy illustrates here the vulnerability of
about the war in Vietnam. The words of the
prayer that every cadet memorized and recited
struck him as "life itself": "Give us sympathy
for those who sorrow and suffer, suffer not our
hatred of hypocrisy and pretense ever to dimin-
ish, guard us against hypocrisy and pretense
in the sacred things of life." He found himself
in "the divisive situation of being in army uni-
form and objecting to the war my army was
waging."

After graduation he was recommended for
graduate study in the Kennedy School of Gov-
ernment at Harvard, where one of his profes-
sors was Henry Kissinger. The war in Vietnam
struck Lieutenant Font as immoral and unjust,
but no one around him saw it this way. His class-
mates were mostly government officials and
some enlisted men, all of whom disapproved of
him. Yet four months before getting his master's degree,
he filed for the status of conscientious objector
(Christian). He sacrificed his lifelong dream of a mil-
tary career and gave up earning his graduate
degree. He felt that he had to file for CO status as
soon as he realized that this was what he had
to do because "I would have been insincere to
wait. I would not even think of waiting."

This was emotionally so compelling to him
because it was congruent with everything he
had strongly believed all at once. Prior to graduate school he did not have
the time to do the intensive self-searching that
this required.

Dabrowksi called this process positive mal-
adjustment, because such persons are in direct
conflict with the values around them, which
they are expected to adopt—this is malad-
justment—but they come into congruence with
their own deeply felt values, which is its posi-
tive aspect. Being true to oneself is a positive
step in personal growth. Filing for CO status
was Lieutenant Font's "I am myself," a de-
liberative action taken on the path toward self-
actualization" (Brennan, 1987).

Lieutenant Font's conflict was between his
values and the actions of the government he
served. However, one can be in conflict with
oneself over one's own behaviors and proc-
Rities. This is true in Cicero's case. Cicero
expressed so well: "Video meliora proboque,
deteriora sequor" ("I see what is better and
prove it, yet I follow what is worse"). The dy-

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Table 21.2
Levels of Emotional Development

V Life inspired by a powerful ideal, such as equal rights, world peace, universal love and compassion,
sovereignty of all nations
A magnetic field in the soul—Dag Hammarskjöld

IV Self-actualization; ideals and actions agree: "What ought to be, will be"); strong sense of responsibility
Behind tranquility lies conquered unhappiness—Eleanor Roosevelt

III Sense of the ideal but not reaching it; moral concern: higher versus lower in oneself
Video meliora proboque deteriora sequor—Marcus Tullius Cicero

II Lack of inner direction; inner fragmentation—many selves; submission to the values of the group;
relativism of values and beliefs
A reed in the wind

I Dominant concern with self-protection and survival; self-serv ing egocentrism; instrumental view of others
Dog-eat-dog mentality

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nances of inner conflict are expressed in dissatisfaction with oneself, even to the point of self-loatching for failing one’s ideals, falling short of one’s potential, perceiving oneself lacking in beauty, grace, and, so forth. Dabrowski called all such feelings engaged in judging oneself “multilevel,” because a person feels a split between higher and lower ideals. The pull of the higher ideal is the higher element. This is not the customary striving after a self-ideal, which can be anything one desires in terms of attributes and achieve. Rather, the ideal is the becoming a better human being in the sense of Gandhi’s truth, Eleanor Roosevelt’s conception, or Lieutenant Fon’s ideal of being to try to oneself.

Here then is the crucial difference between Levels II and III. While much attention may be given in Level II to self-improvement, inner growth is not conceived in multilevel terms of higher versus lower, the ideal versus the actual. The position of some dialectical developments that the focus is exclusively on Level II type of experience. In their view, the struggle between competing motivations, if not lead to assimilation and integration at a higher level, rather than the period cycles back and forth, responding first to one need and then another (Wrightman, 1988, p. 137). A purely individual sense of self can grow after chronic wavering, hesitation, ambivalence, and recycling of the same issues.

Awakening from that ethos in multilevel inner growth. Moral questions and issues of personal responsibility become important and are intensely felt. But not infrequently the isolation in which this leaves a younger or adult makes him or her prey to destructive and meaningless dialogue is possible only with those who have traveled a similar path. This is why it is often difficult to find a counselor or psychotherapist who understands multilevel inner growth (Level III). Being surrounded by people who accepted the standards of Victorian thought might be so painful that it could lead to the psychological death of Lieutenant Fon in his searching process: “I was wawering. Am I a conscientious objector? Am I not? What is my duty to my country? What does it mean that I am a military officer? Am I other things first before I am a military officer, such as a U.S. citizen, such as a human being?”

Such questions arising of oneself can take one aware of the singular individuality of every human being, because the answers must come from within the person. They have to be felt, they cannot be provided by someone else, because if they were we would be back in another mainstream version of ready-made values and conventions. There is a strong and logical connection between the process of personal growth and the realization that others truly are individual, because there is nothing more individual than the development of a singularity. The set of genes is unique. When it is not we have clones, and clones, being exact copies, have no individuality.

One fundamental process of inner growth is standing back and examining one’s inner self. The more one does this, the more one tries to lift the “protective veil,” the more one becomes aware of the disparity between the call of the ideal and the way one is. The ideal is what makes one begin to feel more and more deeply what one ought to be. This process of self-examination is the one called by Dabrowski “subject-object in oneself,” a term he borrowed from Kierkegaard. It results in a more emotional understanding of other people and an even stronger realization that they, too, have their own and very individual life and development to follow.

Level IV: Self-Actualization

This stance of judging and correcting oneself, but of empathizing with individual understanding toward others, is, for the most part, absent in Level II. This is why the growth process in Level II is a struggle to attain one’s individual sense of self, while in Level IV, it is a struggle to live up to one’s inner ideal. In Level IV it is no longer a struggle, because one lives more closely to one’s ideal and draws strength from it. Therein lies the connection with Level V, in which the inner ideal becomes a radiant and powerful field of spiritual force.

Eleanor Roosevelt’s ideal was “Christ: ‘If we’ and Democracy and it is based on the possibility of a Christ-like way of life, then everybody must force himself to think through his own basic philosophy, his own willingness to live up to it and to help carry it out in everyday life’ (Roosevelt, 1940, p. 76). It was worth pausing to examine this remarkable statement. She says, in effect, that there is no shortcut to true democracy but that all must examine their lives and strive to implement every day and with all the ideal of cooperation, good will, and brotherhood that Christ set for us. Such a program has the hallmark of a great crusade, a crusade of self-actualization. Few knew how closely to ideal she actually lived. "She was a woman with a deep sense of spiritual mission... . . . When her ideas that re-encited itself repeatedly in her thoughts and feelings. Amid the worldliness, the pomp, and the power of Washington she managed to hold vivid and intimate communion with Christ with a child’s innocence and simplicity” (Laah, 1971, p. 391). Inner transformation in this kind of inner growth is carried out by means of definitive methods. One can identify several of these in the way she coped with inner conflict and the emotional pain that often brings. One such method was quiet contemplation, another was hard work, and yet another was self-discipline (concentration, the practice of inner calm, and good organization of daily activities). She wrote that most difficult things to accept are those limitations in ourselves that make us unable to meet the need of some one we love, be it spouse, child, or friend. She then went on to pursue further emotional growth and maturity depend on this choice: that either we learn to meet that need or we allow someone else to meet it, "without bitterness or envy" (Roosevelt, 1960, p. 67). If I cannot marry the person I love, I can still let him or her marry someone else, and keep on loving and keeping that deep bond alive and growing by not making it a problem that people eat breakfast together every day, or that they must have a physical hold on each other.

To survive the unbearable heartbreak of her husband’s unfaithfulness—an event in which her private happy world collapsed, and in which she was alone—all she discovered the power of quiet contemplation. She started making trips to a cemetery that contained a statue, a tall bronze figure with a striking ex- pression on her face, created by Saint-Gaudens. To Eleanor Roosevelt that face expressed a peace beyond pain and beyond joy.” She later told a friend that she went there to say and look at that woman. And I always came away somehow feeling better. And stronger. I’ve always gone there a place of solace” (Hickok, 1962, pp. 91 – 92). This contemplative practice was her own psychotherapy, which later enabled her to say, "Behind tranquility, the surface of life there is a storm of a quiet... . With the pain of loss she coped by burying herself in work. She did this when her brother died and again when she consulted a void in her heart. "As time went on, the fact that I kept myself occupied made my loneliness less acute... . My philosophy has been that if you have work to do you don’t have the time to think about yourself” (Roosevelt, 1958, p. 7).

Her emotional gifts and victories were supported by mature self-discipline. She trained herself to maintain inner calm and to work with concentration amidst noise and combat. As remarkable as this seems, too, it was just common sense, and to say ‘I don’t have enough time’ was in her judgment a poor excuse for defensive plotting and lack of organization.

We have all the time there is. The problem is: How shall we make the best use of it? There are three ways in which I have been able to solve that problem: First, by achieving an inner calm so that I can work undistracted by what goes on around me; second, by concentrating on the thing in hand; third, by arranging a routine pattern for my days... remaining flexible enough to allow for the unexpected. There is a fourth point which, perhaps, is the most important of all: a routine pattern for my time. I try to maintain a general pattern of good health so that I have the best use of my energies whenever I need them.

I learned that the ability to attain this inner calm, regardless of outside turmoil, is a kind of inner strength. It saves an immense amount of wear and tear on the nervous system. (Roosevelt, 1960, pp. 25 – 26, 27)

Eleanor Roosevelt’s life is an example of self-actualization (Pawaski & Yska, 1982; see Table 21.3) and no doubt of even more
Table 213:

Table of Self-Actualization

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<tr>
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than that. Maslow's composite picture of self-actualizing individuals fits exactly Dabrowski's construct of persons in Level IV, a conception of the kind of people who have developed a meaningful sense of universal values and whose extraordinary sense of responsibility leads them to take up tasks for the sake of others (Pichowsky, 1978). Dabrowski (1970) pointed out that these people are strongly focused on problems outside themselves. They focus on problems rather than on the protection of themselves or their own ego. They perceive tasks to fulfill because they respond to the need and urgency of the times.

With Level IV comes the genuine realization that human beings one encounters has within him or her a store of unrealized potential. Coming upon the face of a beautiful child amidst people shapen by heavy labor. Said Dabrowski (1967, p. 100). This kind of vision might as well charac-
terize Level V, a vision of every human being in its unrealized potential of immortal spirit. This level of development brings with it the incomprehensible freedom found in total selflessness, in love and in unconditional, expecting nothing in return, love that draws upon the divine spark even in the darkest soul.

Dabrowski's theory is complex. Each level, and especially levels III, IV, and V, is character-
terized by a number of developmental dy-
namisms. A few of these have been mentioned: in Level III, astonishment with oneself, posi-
tive maladjustment, dissatisfaction with one-
self, subject-object in oneself; in Level IV, self-
therapy (illustrated by Eleanor Roosevelt's quiet contemplation), inner psychic transfor-
selves that a mere skeletal outline will not bring forth for us the understanding that only closer study and application can give.

One conceptual bridge of the theory needs to be clarified. Dabrowski was well aware of the theoretical development in the other persons in either promoting or inhibiting a person's growth, but he did not elaborate on it. His basic idea was that developmental potential (the overexce-
tabilites, the facilitative intelligence) comes in different magnitudes and strengths. In a totally depriving environment even the strongest developmental potential will not suc-
cceed, and in a non-developmental environment (e.g., Geller, 1982; Smith, 1973; for a review of the issues see Waterman, 1984). Surely part of this doubt comes from the fact that no studies of self-actualizing people have been made in the years following Maslow's untimely death. The only two exceptional cases were of histori-
cal figures, but they were recent, and so no more than a drop in the academic bucket (Pichowsky, 1978; Pichowsky & Tyszka, 1982).

Brennan's study is of great significance. He found self-actualizing people who are not fa-
mous and who are living now, in our times. He showed that looking for self-actualizing people among the gifted is a survey of finding them.

He studied their developmental histories and found that all they have been emotionally wounded in different ways and that this makes a significant demand for self in order to live a life true to themselves. Did he find them to be emo-
tionally gifted? Of the three cases, one excels in this. This is a woman, a person with an unusual degree of inborn intuition and sensitivity to others. It enables her to find common ground and establish rapport with anyone. She has been praised for her facility to work with psychiatric patients. However, it has its thorns: "I am in pain because they are in pain... I feel that pain so much that I'll do anything to make them feel better" (Brennan, 1997, p. 208).

From this all too brief review we can con-
clude that giftedness in general—in the sense of intellectual potential, breadth of interests, and emotional intensity—is a necessary con-
dition for self-actualization. However, self-
actualization is not synonymous with emo-
tional giftedness. Perhaps this ought to be clarified a little. A person may be emotionally gifted, in the sense of caring, understanding, nurturing, forming strong attachments, em-
powering others, being nonjudgmental and ac-
cepting of others, yet blind to his or her own gifts, critical, even self-protective. For such a person the task is simple: to look within and to get to know the world of self.

Self-Actualization and Emotional Giftedness

The correspondence between the two con-
structs, Maslow's self-actualization and Dabrowski's Level IV, enabled Brennan (1967) to conduct a search for the seemingly rare highly developed individual. Using nomi-
nations and the instrument for assessing levels of development, he cast a net that caught sev-
eral self-actualizing fish. Individuals assessed to be developmentally representative of Level IV were found to meet the criteria of self-
actualization. They also showed evidence of giftedness in their childhood.

It is not hard to see that while the world of academic psychology accepts the notion of self-
actualization as Maslow's legacy, at the same time its definition of the existence of self-
actualizing people or, worse yet, confuses self-
actualization with self-absorbed individualism (e.g., Geller, 1982; Smith, 1973; for a review of this issue see Waterman, 1984). Surely part of this doubt comes from the fact that no studies of self-actualizing people have been made in the years following Maslow's untimely death. The only two exceptional cases were of historical figures, but they were recent, and so no more than a drop in the academic bucket (Pichowsky, 1978; Pichowsky & Tyszka, 1982). Brennan's study is of great significance. He found self-actualizing people who are not famous and who are living now, in our times. He showed that looking for self-actualizing people among the gifted is a survey of finding them.
Emotional Growth is difficult to observe from the outside. For this reason, clinical investigations and subjects who are willing to disclose the private aspects of their emotional lives are the only means of gaining some insight. Grant's (1988) recent study of the diverse types of moral development is an excellent example of the richness of insight into the emotional lives of individuals that opens up to a skilled investigator. Comparing written responses to the items of the self-disclosure questionnaire with responses obtained in an interview revealed that the protected privacy of writing led to more emotional self-disclosures than did the interview. This was found with gifted youngsters aged 13 years (Piekoszewska, unpublished). An exploratory investigation of emotional growth has been carried out with gifted adolescents (Piekoszewska, 1989). Here only the principal findings are presented.

Emotional Growth of Gifted Children and Adolescents

In a 2-year follow-up study conducted in collaboration with Nicholas Colangelo, self-reports of gifted adolescents were obtained from gifted youngsters. At the beginning of the project they were 12 to 17 years old (Piekoszewska, Colangelo, Grant, & Walker, 1983). The purpose of the study was to find individual patterns of emotional development. The subjects were recruited from gifted programs in several high schools. The youngsters were given an open-ended questionnaire to tell what evolved in them strong positive feelings, what stimulated their minds, what was their conception of self, and the like. The items were designed to tap the five dimensions of developmental potential described at the beginning of this chapter. The results are given in the following tables.

This study revealed two contrasting types of emotional growth in gifted adolescents. In one type the orientation was pragmatic with definite and not too distant goals and not much inner exploration. This type of growth was called rational-altruristic because it closely fit with the type of character development described by Peck and Havighurst (1960). The other type was characterized by an awareness of inner life quite unlike that of the typically self-conscious adolescent. This type was called introspective-emotional. It is in this type that we perceive the potential for emotional growth as described by Dabrowa's theory. Several characteristics emerged. They are listed in Table 21.4.

Unlike many adolescents who live for the moment, are very peer-conscious, or are worried about their future, we have found a number of gifted children an early awareness of their personal growth and its numerous possibilities, an eager anticipation and making ready for what is to come. One girl expressed it similarly at age 12: "I dream of being an actress and at age 14, "I dream about how my life will be when I grow up. I dream lots and lots of ways I could be." In response to the question about what attracted his attention in books, a boy of 17 expressed an intense inner push for emotional growth: "I want to be moved, changed somehow. I seek change, metamorphosis. I want to grow (not just in relation to books, either)."

Awareness of feelings and emotions gains importance. In reply to the question about what went on in their heads, several of the gifted-reporters described themselves in distinctly emotional terms:

(1) A person who needs attention and a person that needs to be accepted. He can't be turned away because he gets hurt easily. (male, age 16)

I am a very misunderstood person. . . . People think that my life is easy because I am talented, but I have a lot of problems of my own just because of these talents. I often even get cut down for something good that I do. This is very hard to cope with. I am a very sensitive and emotional person. I get angered or offended very easily. I can also get happy very easily. I think like this part of me. All these emotions somehow make me feel good about myself. . . . I am not a very confident person, though people think I am. (male, age 16)

I am a person who has feelings. . . . I have feelings for love. . . . NOTE: I HAVE FEELINGS. (female, age 12)

The note of insistence on feelings shows at once their frustration when their feelings were ignored by others and how important they were to these gifted children's self-definition. Empathy and understanding of others can be quite conscious, as for the girl just quoted (at age 14): "I can see myself in other people, I can see things I've done in what other people do. I really understand people's thoughts and actions because I think of times I was in their place." Expressions of understanding and caring for others were frequent in the responses of these young adults.

Although adolescence is developmentally a time when interest in one's own and others' feelings comes to focus, self-consciousness and insight of these gifted youngsters was rather exceptional. The emotional maturity and sensitivity that some youngsters achieve in late adolescence appears in the gifted—those engaged in emotional growth—in early adolescence. They show the signs of emotional giftedness.

Periods of intense emotional growth can bring on such sudden inner shifts as to produce moments of disembowelment and estrangement. One feels at odds with the surroundings, as if suddenly arriving at what was familiar before. Such feelings of unreality are not necessarily a cause for concern. What calls for concern is the fact that great emotional intensity and sensitivity combined with high intelligence make a youngster acutely aware of the precariousness of human existence and the precarious condition of our world. Because of this, and because others understand it so little, gifted children can be extremely vulnerable and at risk (Leroux, 1986; Roedell, 1984).

Feelings of unreality are the inevitable product of great emotional intensity and feeling "different," while experiencing self-abuse. Sometimes I think I am going insane and I wish I had someone intelligent to talk to" (female, age 16). In the next excerpt the feeling of unreality is combined with emotional experimentation, thinking of the parents as strangers, which can be interpreted as a step toward individual autonomy. "When I was a kid I used to wonder if I'm really here. Or, I'll look at mom and dad and ask myself, who are these people, and I try to picture them as total strangers" (female, age 15).

Inner dialogue and self-judgment are an essential part of moral growth. Although in his cognitive theory of moral development Kohlberg (1963) minimized the importance of emotions, the penetrating genius of William James (1892) saw a definite and necessary link between the strength of one's ideas and character. If beliefs and actions are to be congruent, a person must feel the issues with passion. For James, moral questions were real only to those who felt so strongly that they felt called to them to an active response. Therefore, one had to begin with oneself. Self-judgment, then, is an evaluation of one's own self, the arduous way toward self-knowledge and self-criticism. Being self-critical is common among the gifted. To some it spells the danger of developing a negative self-image. One must, however, try to distinguish in each case if the strongly negative feelings, which can appear very negative, is a spur toward growth or an obstacle in the person's growth.

Here are some examples of how these youngsters monitored themselves. Their sensitive self-conceptions were fitted with a spur to self-correction—the opposite of self-consiously and that was very critical of everyone and yet be lacking in self-judgment (Elkind, 1984). The following inner dialogue was a response to the situation, "Do you ever think about your own thinking? Describe."
When I take a stand on something, I later wonder why I did that. I think about how I came to that conclusion. I think about if I was right, according to the norms of society. I think about my friends and other people I know and wonder if I really feel the way I let on. It can be confusing to me by thinking things I really feel. (male, age 17)

The issues of right and wrong figure prominently here; this is in itself not unusual, but the process of sorting the issues out was already strongly autonomous. The writer examined the origins of his convictions and asked himself whether they were genuine or perhaps just self-deceptions. For contrast, here is a response to the question, "In what manner do you observe and analyze others?" from another 17-year old male.

One might be inclined to wonder whether the future development of this boy would lead him to continue to muffle his conscience and become an even more skillful puppeteer pulling the strings of others to his own advantage. In his case this did not seem likely because in answer to the question about what most attracted his attention in a book, he wrote that the characters were important and that he wanted "to be able to understand them and relate to them—to sympathize with them. I want to be moved, changed somehow." A person to whom such feelings are important is not likely to ignore them in others or the impact on others of his actions. Colangelo and Brower (1989), for example, reported that their gifted subjects worried about the reactions and feelings of their siblings who were not included in the gifted program. Searching, inquiring, and problem finding are those special abilities (Getzels & Csikszentmihalyi, 1975) enabling one to discover things that need discovering, questions that need to be asked, and problems that have yet to be conceived. Questioning, self-scrutiny, and the search for truth go together. Gifted youngsters often ask basic, philosophical and existential questions. Somehow they develop a sense not only of objective truth but of inner truth as well.

Lots of times I wish I wouldn't think so much. It makes me very confused about a lot of stuff in the world. And I always wish I could think up answers instead of just questions. . . . My parents and all my adult friends don't understand, I wish I could talk to somebody who would have the same questions I do, and the answers to them. Maybe instead of somebody intelligent, I need somebody insane. (female, age 16)

In Delisle's (1984) extensive collection of responses from younger children, one can find similar responses about arguing with teachers or persistently asking questions. But moral concerns and evaluations, and issues of personal responsibility, are more typical of adolescents.

I think about my morals and what I really think is right and wrong. I often find that how I feel is in contradiction with what I think. This makes me wonder if there is something wrong with me. I concentrate on why and how I became this way and then always be this way. (male, age 17)

I live day to day like everyone else but I am continually frustrated with the shallowness of how we live and relate to another. Sometimes I hate myself because I am lazy and I feel unable to change. (female, age 16)

We see in these concepts keen questioning and self-scrutiny. We can recognize the Dabrowian discomfort of astonishment (first excerpt), dissatisfaction with oneself (second excerpt), and positive maladjustment (both excerpts). These youngsters are gifted not only in terms of their talents and abilities but in terms of character growth—they sincerely want to become better persons. Their self-knowledge is impressive for this age. It shows emotional giftedness in the making. It fits Gardner's (1983) concept of intrapersonal intelligence. Awareness of one's real self appears early in those engaged in intense emotional growth. Gifted youngsters quickly realize that their self-knowledge, the way they know and understand themselves, differs from the way others see and know them. They thus realize that their real self is hidden from others, and they can even be aware of keeping it that way.

I'm somebody no one else knows. Some people see one part of me for certain parts, it's like I'm acting. The real me is the one inside me. My real feelings, that I understand but can't explain. (female, age 14)

The development of self-awareness and self-understanding of these gifted youngsters traces the general direction described for adolescents by Broughton (1980), Selman (1980), and others. What is distinctive in the gifted is an acceleration of development and a greater intensity of existential questioning. And, importantly, they value their emotional side. It is not just awareness of having moods, feelings, and emotions but the realization that these are a distinct and essential part of one's self and for this the emotions are to be cherished.

Conclusions

The outstanding feature of the emotional development of the gifted is their emotional sensitivity and intensity. Sometimes it is hidden; sometimes it is prominent. In an exploratory study of emotional growth of gifted adolescents, we found that only a small number followed a type of growth oriented more toward outward achievement and recognition than toward introspection and emotional awareness. The introspective type of emotional growth was rather free of the self-consciousness and egocentricity characteristic of early adolescence. Instead it displayed an awareness of one's real self, an understanding of feelings and emotions, an empathic approach to others, and much focus on inner growth through searching, questioning, carrying on an inner dialogue, and exercising self-corrective judgment. We associate these characteristics with emotional giftedness because it is in self-scrutiny and self-knowledge that the gifted person becomes wanting; this leads us to develop a more accepting and compassionate understanding of others. Out of emotional sensitivity grows the desire to be of help to others, and the ideal of service is its fulfillment. These features of emotional development of the gifted are built into Dabrowiak's theory, which was based on his own clinical experience with gifted and talented youngsters and adults. The type of growth in which moral issues concern for others, and probing existential questions arise with a degree of intensity that troubles an adult's, or a youngster's mind because it is so different from the usual interests and preoccupations of one's peer group is described in detail by Dabrowaki and placed in a large framework of levels of development. This framework makes sense to gifted people as well as to others. The comfort comes from realizing that the inner turmoil, the overwhelming feeling of being pushed to the wall, and the despair are part of the difficult process of changing and growing; it also comes from realizing that experiencing intensely the issues of right and wrong; or the emotional questions of rights, possessiveness, and freedom that are met in intimate relationships; or the struggles to free oneself from the negative messages and influences of one's past is inevitable in the striving for wholeness, balance, and inner harmony that is nourished by deeply felt ideals. Such struggles pave the way for self-actualization. By a peculiar coincidence, the constructs of intellectual and emotional adequacy fit into Dabrowiak's theory so well that one could say that Maslow described what self-actualizing people are like and how they act, while Dabrowiak described the abstract inner dynamics of their psychology.

Research quoted in the body of the chapter and clinical examples show that emotional giftedness and self-actualization can be recognized and distinguished, for they are not one and the same. The present state of understanding is that all self-actualizing people so far
studied in detail are gifted. On the other hand, not all emotionally gifted people are self-actualizing, because the kind of empathy and willingness to help and to serve that some people readily extend toward others they deny themselves. Lack of self-acceptance often combined with some self-defeating behaviors is an obstacle toward self-actualization. Yet this is not an obstacle toward compassion and caring. After all, giving others what one needs for one- self is more constructive solution, and a more enabling one than New York: Basic.


**Family Counseling**

LINDA KREGER SILVERMAN
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**H**aving a gifted child is a mixed blessing, and many parents feel battered in the bargain. From birth on, these children present an unusual set of challenges. They tend to be very active, happy, talking, sleeping less than their parents, responding intensely to their environment, often colicky. They exhaust their primary caretakers with their constant need for stimulation. Two gifted children in a family may be highly competitive (Ballering & Koch, 1984). More than two and the parents are outnumbered. But this is only the beginning.

Gifted children show advanced development in intellectual skills but may be average or even slow in the development of motor skills (Page, 1983; Rogers, 1980; Sebring, 1983). The unevenness of their development leads to frustration—for themselves and for their parents. It is not easy having an 8-year-old mind in a 5-year-old body. Decisions that are quite simple for other families—such as, Where should we send our child to school?—are often agonizingly difficult for parents of advanced children. Grade placement is another problem. Should the child be accelerated, kept at grade level, or held back? Peer relations can be a source of strain. Gifted children often enjoy playing with children older than themselves, mothering children younger than themselves, and relating to adults. They often have difficulty, however, playing with average children their own age.

Perhaps the greatest source of stress in the lives of parents of gifted children is the degree to which they are discounted. There are great emotional risks in going to the principal and saying, “I believe my child is gifted and has special needs.” Too often parents hear the patronizing reply: “Yes, Mrs. Smith, all our parents think their children are gifted.” No group has a more difficult time being taken seriously than parents of gifted children. They need counselors who are knowledgeable about the gifted who can give them guidance in dealing with the educational system and with their complex home lives.

The Uniqueness of Rearing a Gifted Child

It is no easier to be a parent of a gifted child than it is to be a gifted child (Nathan, 1979). Dirks's (1979) research indicated that it may be even harder to be a parent. In counseling parents of the gifted for the past 25 years, I have found that a dozen unique concerns provoke them to seek psychological services:

- Observing that their child is “different”
- Desiring assessment of the child's abilities
- Feeling inadequately prepared to raise an exceptional child
- Determining appropriate school placement
- Needing assistance with school personnel
- Determining appropriate home stimulation and development of special talents
- Desiring information about available resources (such as enrichment programs)
- Coping with underachievement and lack of motivation
- Dealing with the child's intensity, perfectionism, heightened sensitivity, introversion, or depression
- Helping the child develop better peer relations
- Experiencing increased tension in the family as a result of the special needs of their gifted children
- Understanding their own giftedness

They also engage in counseling for reasons similar to those of other parents: poor family
Handbook of Gifted Education

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and
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