

EMOTIONAL INTENSITIES OF GIFTED

Darja Farič Klemenčič
OŠ ŠALOVCI

Darja.faric-klemencic@guest.arnes.si

WHAT MAKES THE GIFTED “INTENSITIVE”

- Feelings,
- strong emotion,
- deeply felt relationships,
- desires, and strivings make up the fabric of emotional life.

Gifted children not only think differently from their peers, they also feel differently.

WHAT IS HEIGHTENED (OVER)EXCITABILITY?

- Overexcitabilities is something with which a child is born.
- Overexcitability means not just more than average or normal but distinctly more alive and alert. Reacting to experience is quick and strong.

In the past, and even still today

- those whose emotional richness, creative vision and spiritual striving bring them to experiences of unusual nature, are easily labeled as abnormal, immature, neurotic, or even delusional and psychotic.
- the stronger these excitabilities are, the less peers and teachers welcome them.

-
- Children exhibiting strong excitabilities are often made to feel embarrassed and guilty for being »different«.
 - Criticized and teased for what they cannot help, they begin to believe there is something wrong with them.
 - These reaction are the consequences of being forced to deny their true self (Piechowski, 2006, p. 23).

Giftedness and emotional intensity

- Emotional intensity in the gifted is not a matter of feeling more than other people, but a different way of experiencing the world: vivid, absorbing, penetrating, encompassing, complex, commanding - a way of being quiveringly alive.
- Just as gifted children's thinking is more complex and has more depth than other children, so too their emotions are more complex and more intense (Sword, 2005).

FORMS AND EXPRESSIONS OF HEIGHTENED EMOTIONAL EXCITABILITY

Feelings and emotions intensified:

- Positive feelings: joy, exuberance, feeling high, ecstasy
- Negative feelings: extremes of emotion, complex emotions and feelings,
- identificatin with other's feelings, awareness of a whole range of feelings.

Strong somatic expressions:

- Tense stomach, sinking heart, blushing, flushing, pounding heart, sweaty palms.

Strong affective expressions

- Inhibition (timidity, shyness); enthusiasm; ecstasy; euphoria; pride; strong affective memory; shame; feelings of unreality; fears and anxieties; feelings of guilt; concern with death; depressive and suicidal moods

Capacity for strong attachments, deep relationships:

- *Strong emotional ties and attachments to persons, living things, places; attachments to animals.*
- *difficulty adjusting to a new environments; compassion*
- *responsiveness; sensitivity in relationships; loneliness*

Well differentiated feelings towards self:

- Inner dialogue and self-judgment.

How can we support and nurture our emotionally intense gifted children?

- Accept childrens' emotions.
- Take time to listen to childrens' ideas, opinions and feelings.
- Exercise appropriate discipline as this helps develop a sense of security that leads to the development of self-discipline and a feeling of emotional competency.
- Discuss feelings openly; the negative as well as the positive.

-
- Appreciate their sensitivities, intensities and passions. Don't try to minimise their emotions because you feel uncomfortable with their pain.
 - Remember that they are children first and gifted second.
 - Reassure them when they are afraid and help them to find ways of expressing their intense emotions though stories, poems, art work, music, journal entries or physical activities.

-
- Realise that they become frustrated when their physical capabilities does not match their intellectual ability and help them to deal with this. Reward the process of effort and not only the outcome.
 - Honour emotions in boys as well as girls.
 - Realise that sensitivity does not mean weakness.

-
- Find like minded peers for them to prevent social isolation. Help them to find role models.
 - Provide professional counselling where appropriate; it is important both to support healthy emotional development and to prevent social and emotional problems.
-

-
- As teachers we can help our emotionally intense gifted children to accept their rich inner world of experience and value it as a strength. This often means we have to accept and value our own emotional experience and feelings so that we can be a positive role model for our children.
 - If emotional intensity is seen by parents or teachers and presented positively to children as a strength, children can be helped to understand and value this gift.