

Living with Intensity

Understanding the Sensitivity, Excitability, and Emotional Development of Gifted Children, Adolescents, and Adults

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(Excerpt from Chapter 1)

Emotional Intensity of Gifted Children

The emotional intensity and high level of energy of a gifted child cannot be ignored because they disturb the routine and the order of things set before the arrival of the little Energizer. Gifted children take in information from the world around them; they react and respond more quickly and intensely than other children. They are stimulated both by what's going on around them and by what moves them from within.

Because they can be so greatly stimulated, and because they perceive and process things differently, gifted children are often misunderstood. Their excitement is viewed as excessive, their high energy as hyperactivity, their persistence as nagging, their questioning as undermining authority, their imagination as not paying attention, their passion as being disruptive, their strong emotions and sensitivity as immaturity, their creativity and self-directedness as oppositional. They stand out from the norm. But then, what is normal?

It is of course unfortunate that something exceptional, something that is outside of the norm, is often looked upon as being abnormal, and that "abnormal" usually means annoying or bad, whereas "normal" means mostly acceptable or good. We forget that these notions come from a statistical convention, the bell curve, which does not tell us what is good and what is bad...

... Had psychology chosen life science as its model—after all, people are living beings—the concept of what is normal would not be the average, but rather what is well-functioning—that is, in good health. Optimal, in life sciences, is often quite different from statistically average or normal, yet optimal functioning is what we hope people will strive for. Such optimal functioning is a major thrust of this book.

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