

NEUROLOGICAL SPECIFICS

Information processed more quickly, and holistically

Gifted children process information far more quickly. Their thoughts develop holistically throughout the brain in one go, which explains the wealth of associations of ideas, the queries and the instantaneous insights (having the result but being unable to explain how it was obtained).

Incomplete sequential organisation

Schools favour analytical and sequential thought, managed by the left hemisphere. With a gifted child, the right hemisphere, which manages holistic and analogue thought whilst leaving space for creativity and intuition, is far more active.

Latent inhibition deficiency

This cognitive process classes and hierarchically sorts all the information the brain has to deal with. The less important stimuli, such as classroom noise, odours and so on, are given lower-order status. In the case of the gifted child, all these data come in simultaneously, with the same degree of importance. The child has to sort the data "consciously", which requires great mental effort.

DEVELOPMENTAL SPECIFICS

Great efforts expended in acquiring knowledge in chosen specific fields

Gifted children, eager for answers which in turn provoke questions, are despite themselves completely overrun by their ideas in domains they are specially interested in.

Intellectual inhibition

The gifted child can be afraid to face effort. It is far more reassuring for the child to fail without making any efforts than to fail, having made efforts. He maintains to himself the idea that if he had worked, he would have obtained good results.

Affection

A gifted child feels different from others, and has a rather negative impression of his own abilities and competencies. For him, his results are always lower than he expected. He doesn't know how to use his intelligence and sensitivity efficiently at school and in the outside world. He needs to have a complicit relationship with his teacher, and feel encouraged, supported, congratulated, valued and thanked.

PARADOXES

A gifted child can exhibit the following traits:

Interest, curiosity Boredom, frustration

Perfectionism Sloppiness

Questions Need for control

Empathy Selfishness

Speed Slowness

The child can be:

Invisible Unruly

Defender of Justice Victim

Sensitive, vulnerable Outwardly insensitive

Expert wordsmith Unclear in speech

Hard-working Easily discouraged

Extrovert Introvert

Gifted children stand out due to their different way of working and their paradoxical behaviour. Their attitude can be upsetting or disturbing. Like every Special Needs child, their path requires some adaptation. This brochure provides some suggestions.

POINTER

Gifted children are those whose IQ is measured to be greater than or equal to 130 on the WPSI or WISC IV scale, a level reached by 2.3% of the population.

This result is only one indication among many, and can be masked by associated troubles such as ASD, depression, etc.

It is important that the child be tested by a psychologist or neuro-psychologist familiar with gifted children.



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FEDERATION

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You find the child insolent?

- Tell him you understand how he/she functions.
- Offer him or her a contract.
- Explain what you are asking of him or her, and why it will work.
- When he points out an error, propose he/she makes a short presentation on the subject to the class later in the week.

INSOLENCE

Adults often find gifted children impertinent and insolent. The interrogations a gifted child has and sometimes expresses are due to their deep need to understand how the world around them functions, and to justify it in a coherent way.

The child is too withdrawn?

- Suggest activities which involve him or her.
- Help the child make choices and become implicated.
- Use theatre and role-play to help the child take and occupy their own place.

Over-adapting, under-adapting

The gifted child who notices a mismatch between what is expected of him and his actual abilities can react in two ways:

- Over-adaptive behaviour, being very pleasant in class, so the high IQ can remain unnoticed (often seen with girls).
 - Under-adaptive behaviour, often seen with boys, who mask their competencies so as to be seen as just like the others: the "negative Pygmalion".
- Both behaviours are a source of anguish and can lead to depression.

If the child refuses to work, or keeps showing off his knowledge?

- Suggest he notes all his answers so you can read them out later, rather than voicing them immediately
- Limit the number of repetitive exercises, if the notion is already acquired
- Propose a tougher, deeper or more complex exercise
- Adapt the learning rhythm to his needs:
 - Paths differentiated by level and/or competency.
 - Acceleration of the course with proper follow-up and supervision
 - Individualised time-table with contracts per period
 - Schooling in a mixed-level class
 - Follow certain subjects in another class
 - Further and deeper learning in successful subjects

Boredom

A gifted child might refuse work assignments, judging them too simple. He can also show his distraction by dreaming, agitation, etc. He understands quickly, and to be attentive, needs to be active physically (drawing, chair-rocking, etc.). He appears either not to have understood the notion in question, or else appears as a know-all.

If the child cannot structure and arrange his or her thoughts?

- Explain what is expected of him/her, and in what form.
- Specify the successive stages.
- Ask specific closed questions rather than open questions.

Organising ideas

The gifted child has a divergent thought process giving access to a wealth of ideas which he cannot organise well, each idea triggering another. He does not comprehend "learning in stages". He can have difficulty choosing or rendering ideas in a test, especially where the question lacks precision.

If the child feels incapable?

- Explain the exercise instructions and objective.
- Ask "What did you understand from what I asked?", and freely reformulate the request.
- Teach him to accept his errors.
- Be flexible concerning neatness and presentation.
- Check for acquisition orally when writing is an issue.
- And of course, congratulate, encourage the child, and value his successes.

Self-esteem

The gifted child feels set aside, different. He will underestimate his worth, and can develop low self-esteem. He can have difficulty understanding the implied components of an instruction, or be unable to respond to a question that is too open. Self-esteem issues are amplified by the mismatch between intelligence and psychomotor skills, often visible in written work, together with learning difficulties that the child compensates for intellectually. These all generate anxiety in the child and incomprehension in adults. Like everyone else, the gifted child needs to be encouraged and helped along.

To de-escalate a situation ?

- Manage crises when things are calm.
- Use humour.
- Have a place where these children can decompress and spend time with others like them, or with reference adults.

Hypersensitivity

The gifted child often reacts disproportionately, as he can manage neither his emotions nor his hypersensitivity. He or she is overly sensitive to anything which appears unjust. He or she can feel annihilated by a simple comment from a classmate or a teacher.