



Emotional Intensity in Gifted and Talented Children

Children who show gifted and talented abilities experience the world differently than other children. It is well understood that children's gifted and talented abilities have an intellectual and cognitive component. However, gifted and talented children may also experience the world differently in terms of their emotions. Just as their thinking may be more complex and deep, their emotions may show more depth and complexity. .

The deep emotional sensitivity that is apparent in children with gifts and talents may create an inner experience consisting of feelings of unreality, feeling overwhelmed, familiarity suddenly feeling alien, inner turmoil, and distress. However, this experience and expression of intense feelings is a sign of a rich inner life as opposed to a sign of emotional instability.

In order to help youth identified with gifts and talents in managing these intense emotions, it is imperative to identify and understand them. Parents can talk to their children to explore how they feel and react to situations. This can, in turn, make children feel safer and understood. In addition, these conversations can serve as a buffer for negative feelings stemming from internal experiences caused by emotional intensity.

Emotional intensity within children with gifts and talents does not mean feeling more than other children but rather a different way of experiencing the world. That is, it must be understood not in terms of degree of feeling but of a different quality of experiencing. In addition, this emotional intensity can be expressed in different ways including intense feelings, strong affective memory, inhibition, in the body, etc.

The heightened response by children with gifts and talents to external stimuli is a normal response. However, they may perceive it as an indication that something is wrong with them. This may result in social problems that, coupled with society's insensitivity to gifted and talented issues, may lead some emotionally intense gifted children to feel despair and cynicism early on.

Furthermore, emotional intensity in children with gifts and talents need not be a negative experience. The bright side of emotional intensity is that it may contribute to empathy and compassion toward others, creativity, heightened self-awareness, enthusiasm, high energy, and a desire to solve problems. Accurate management of potentially problematic consequences of intense emotions while welcoming the benefits can lead a vastly rich and meaningful life for gifted and talented children.

Resources:

1. [Davidson Institute. \(2023, June 26\). *Gifted children: Emotionally immature or emotionally intense?* <https://www.davidsongifted.org/gifted-blog/gifted-children-emotionally-immature-or-emotionally-intense/>](https://www.davidsongifted.org/gifted-blog/gifted-children-emotionally-immature-or-emotionally-intense/)
2. [Dlugosz, M. \(2022a, August 26\). *Emotional intensity in gifted children*. Davidson Institute. <https://www.davidsongifted.org/gifted-blog/emotional-intensity-in-gifted-children/>](https://www.davidsongifted.org/gifted-blog/emotional-intensity-in-gifted-children/)
3. [Hanks, R. \(2024, July 1\). *Helping gifted children understand and manage intense emotions*. Institute for Educational Advancement. <https://educationaladvancement.org/blog-helping-gifted-children-understand-and-manage-intense-emotions/>](https://educationaladvancement.org/blog-helping-gifted-children-understand-and-manage-intense-emotions/)