

Intensity, Perfectionism, and Stress

Outline of Chapter 6 'A Parent's Guide to Gifted Education'

Intensity and Sensitivity

- Intensity of gifted children spreads to everything that they do and think.
- Reactions can seem over-the-top but they are often sensitive in good ways also.

How Others React to Gifted Children

- They are aware that they are viewed as being different; see as "too much..."
- We must be careful to not describe their differences in negative terms.

Asynchronous Development

- Emotional and Intellectual maturity – can understand an event but not handle emotions.
- Asynchrony of abilities – may not have the ability to do what is in their minds.
- Interpersonal asynchrony – feel they don't fit in.

Idealism and Perfectionism

- They can see potential for themselves and society but also think they are not achieving it.
- Excessive perfectionism can lead to procrastination or underachievement.

Is Perfectionism Inborn or Learned?

- Seems to be an inborn trait but it can be reinforced and increased by parents.

Types of Perfectionism

- Achievement driven perfectionism can produce results.
- Unhealthy perfectionism can cause problems

Three Questions to see if Unhealthy Perfectionism

1. Is it good enough?
2. In the long run, will it really matter?
3. What is the worst thing that could happen?

Overachievement: Is it Possible?

- Are you working so hard that there is a cost to personal relationships, health or happiness?

Problems and Opportunities of Stress

- Too much stress can cause feeling of helplessness.
- Some stress is good and challenges us to reach our potential.
- Must learn to set goals and develop confidence.

Handling Excessive Stress

- Get to know your child's stress threshold.
- Remember that their feelings are real, even if they seem extreme to us.
- It is stressful to know that you see the world differently.

Learning to Tolerate Frustration

- Easy learning can cause gifted children to expect an effortless life.
- They must learn resilience and tolerance for frustration to rise to challenges.
- Gradually exposure to challenges that they can achieve teaches them they can handle stress.

Self-Management

- It is important to teach them to manage their own actions and thoughts when others are critical.

Our Inner Voice

- It is not the event that causes stress, but our reactions (thoughts and behaviors) to the event.
- Perfectionists are very self-critical.

Self-Talk Mistakes

- The bad bookkeeping error – focus on one bad thing and ignores the good.
- The proportionality error - focus on negative talk too much.
- Illogical beliefs - Table on pg. 134 – focus on unreasonable beliefs
- Failing to look for evidence – to disprove negative thoughts.

Avoiding Pitfalls

- Help kids see the impact of self-talk.
- Look at whether self-talk is negative.

Additional Suggestions and Strategies

- Talk about self-talk
- Model healthy self-talk
- Don't ignore or deny problems – discuss person or family problems.
- Listen, but give little direct advice – encourage child to think aloud.
- Avoid parental over-involvement
- Allow the child to dream – provides a brief time-out from life.
- Teach ways to look for evidence to challenge unhealthy self-talk
- Practice making predictions – practice making positive predictions and point out that dire predictions are often times not true.
- Explore real vs. false alarms
- Act, rather than fret – Help them solve the problem, don't just talk about it.
- Practice relaxation strategies
- Learn to say “no.”
- Is it my problem, or does it belong to someone else?
- Develop perspective through books and movies
- Use a daily journal – Helps achieve life perspective.
- Expect progress, not perfection
- Encourage pride in attempts
- Convert problems into opportunities
- Avoid blaming others: it does not reduce stress
- Attempt to compartmentalize stressors
- Learn how to ignore
- Bullying and stress – look at list on pg 147
- Relieve tension with humor
- Monitor physical and emotional conditions – HALT: Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired
- Practice other coping strategies

The Alphabet of Resilience – The ABCDE Model

- Adversity – We all experience stress.
- Beliefs – Use positive self-talk.
- Consequences – Explore what is likely to happen next.
- Disputing – Challenge negative beliefs.
- Energizing – Take action.

A Resilient Sense of Self Is Vital

- Stress management, self awareness, and interpersonal skills are skills to focus on.

