

Managing  
Overexcitabilities  
*in* Your  
Gifted Child

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“When I approach a child,  
he inspires me in two sentiments:

Tenderness for what he is,  
and respect for what he may become.”

Louis Pasteur

Dabrowski's  
Theory  
*of* Positive  
Disintegration

“Developmental potential is defined as a genetic endowment of traits which determine what level of moral development a person may reach under optimal conditions.... He theorized during times of great stress or crisis that individuals highest in emotional intensity would suffer a more pronounced kind of pain than those of normal temperament.

“This pain leads to a *positive disintegration* of one’s current developmental level to ascend to a higher level of moral functioning. Those with the most intense feelings (shame, guilt, differentness/inadequacy, inner conflict) could reach the highest level of development.”

--Elizabeth Mika

# High Developmental Potential

## Special abilities

(Creativity, Intelligence)

## Overexcitability

(Inborn heightened abilities  
to receive and respond to stimuli)

## Self-determination

(Ability to overcome environmental influences  
and personality type in order to pursue one's ideals)

# The Path to Potential

Disquietude with Oneself

Dissatisfaction with Oneself

Positive Maladjustment

Subject/Object in Oneself

Self-Awareness & Self-Control

Education of Oneself & Autopsychotherapy

Authentism • Responsibility for Self/Others

Disposing & Directing Center

Personality Ideal

Empathy • Inner Psychic Transformation

“Overexcitabilities feed,  
enrich, empower, and  
amplify talent.”

Michael Piechowski, PhD

# Role *of* Overexcitabilities

- driving energy, commitment, persistence to support intellectual pursuits and achievement (motivation)
- clues to passion and talent
- gives meaning and purpose to loneliness and suffering
- creates hope to pursue vocation



“It is a strange gift, this birthright gift of self. Accepting it turns out to be even more demanding than attempting to become someone else. I have sometimes responded to that demand by ignoring the gift, or hiding it, or fleeing from it, or squandering it --and I think I am not alone.... We arrive in this world with birthright gifts--then we spend the first half of our lives abandoning them or letting others disabuse us of them....

“Then--if we are awake, aware, and able to admit our loss--we spend the second half trying to recover and reclaim the gift we once possessed.”

“Now I Become Myself”

Parker Palmer

excerpt from Let Your Life Speak: Listening to the Voice of Vocation

“If you are here  
unfaithfully with us,  
you are causing  
terrible damage.”

Rumi

“[Vocation is] the place where your deep gladness meets the world’s deep need.”

--Frederick Beuchner

“True vocation joins self to service. Vocation starts with the self and moves wisely toward needs of the world: it begins in the nature of the human self, in what brings the self joy, the deep joy of knowing that we are here on earth to be the gifts God created.”

“If we are unfaithful to true self, we will extract a price from others. We will make promises we cannot keep, build houses from flimsy stuff, conjure dreams that devolve into nightmares, and other people will suffer -- if we unfaithful to true self.”

Parker Palmer,  
doctorate in sociology,  
Quaker, spirituality of education

# Psychomotor Strategies

- Build in time for verbal and physical activity before, during and after normal daily routines.
- Ensure these are acceptable and not too distracting to others.
- Provide time for spontaneity and free-wheeling activities.
- Accept as a legitimate need.

# Sensual Strategies

- Whenever possible create an environment which limits offensive stimuli and provides comfort
- Provide appropriate opportunities for being in the limelight (skits, unexpected rewards)
- Create time to dwell in sensual, soothing environment (bubble bath, listen to rain, garden)

# Intellectual Strategies

- Show how to find answers to questions and encourage them to analyze, synthesize and seek understanding.
- Suggest ways to act upon concerns of pain in the world
- Teach better ways of communicating their critiques and teach to empathize with those they are judging



# Imaginational Strategies

- Help them to separate fact from fiction
- Find ways to use imagination in real world as creative problem-solving
- Find modes to creatively express rich inner life

# Emotional Strategies

- Give words to complexity and depth of emotion.
- Teach to anticipate their strong responses and prepare for them by recognizing warning signs.
- Embrace full intensity of emotion expressed with a calm, assertive presence.
  - Discuss emotions openly
  - Empathize accurately
  - Empathize first, problem-solve second

Model calm & balance

Validate giftedness

Normalize experience

Reframe & cherish uniqueness

Take concerns seriously

Bond generously

Discipline consistently and fairly

Reward effort more than outcome

Admit mistakes

Embrace humor

Reduce stress

Teach self-management

Protect childhood

Co-create sacred space

Encourage passions and curiosity

Act on convictions

Be trustworthy

Foster sense of family & community

Balance needs with those of others

Maintain healthy marriage / partnership

“Giftedness is a greater awareness,  
a greater sensitivity, and a greater  
ability to understand and transform  
perceptions into intellectual and  
emotional experiences.”

Annemarie Roeper  
Giftedness is Heart and Soul,  
Gifted Education Communicator, p. 33 (2000)