

Emotional Development of Gifted Children: The Theory of Positive Disintegration

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Gifted children and adults see the world differently because of the complexity of their thought processes and their emotional intensity. Dabrowski's Theory of Positive Disintegration (TPD) helps us understand the intricate inner lives of the gifted. He coined the term "overexcitability"(OE) to describe characteristics he observed in in bright and creative children. Overexcitability (OE) can be expressed in five areas: Psychomotor, Sensual, Imaginational, Intellectual and Emotional. *Psychomotor OE* is characterized by a surplus of physical energy. *Sensual OE* is enhanced sensitivity of taste, touch, sound, sight, and smell. *Imaginational OE* is demonstrated by creativity, inventiveness and vivid visual imagery. *Intellectual OE* involves an insatiable quest for knowledge, curiosity, and love of ideas. *Emotional OE* includes intense feelings, strong attachments to others and empathy. Research has been conducted in Spain on OEs and giftedness. Dabrowski also described five levels of development, from self-centered to altruistic. He proposed that the OEs, combined with high intelligence and talent, result in greater developmental potential to attain high levels of personal growth and development.

Emotional Development of Gifted Children: Supporting Healthy Social and Emotional Development in the Gifted

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The Columbus Group definition of giftedness as asynchronous development was created immediately after a training workshop on Dabrowski's TPD. The "heightened intensity" in this definition refers to the OEs. Asynchronous development places the gifted outside normal developmental patterns from birth to adulthood, leading to social and emotional complications that can profoundly affect their future. In preparing for life outside the family, it's important for children to acquire a strong sense of belonging in a world where they may be misunderstood. Normal social and emotional growth depends on a child's ability to identify with and bond with other individuals. What happens when the gifted are unable to identify with their chronologically aged peers? Their experience differs from that of their peers, due to emotional intensity and expanded awareness. We will discuss how we can guide our children toward handling emotions, building a positive sense of Self and being in the world in an authentic way.

Bio

Linda Kreger Silverman, Ph.D., is a licensed clinical and counseling psychologist. She directs the Institute for the Study of Advanced Development, and its subsidiaries, the Gifted Development Center [www.gifteddevelopment.com] and Visual-Spatial Resource [www.visualspatial.org], in Denver, Colorado. In the last 38 years, she has studied over 6,400 children who have been assessed at GDC, the largest data bank on this population. This research enabled the creation of extended norms on the WISC-IV. Her Ph.D. is in educational psychology and special education from the University of Southern California. For nine years, she served on the faculty of the University of Denver in counseling psychology and gifted education. She has been studying the psychology and education of the gifted since 1961 and has written over 300 articles, chapters and books, including *Counseling the Gifted and Talented*, *Upside-Down Brilliance: The Visual-Spatial Learner*, *Advanced Development: A Collection of Works on Gifted Adults* and *Giftedness 101* (translated into Swedish and Korean).

