

Dr. Linda Kreger Silverman (Ph.D.) is a highly influential psychologist whose work has profoundly shaped how we understand giftedness, twice-exceptionality, and the inner lives of gifted individuals. Here's who she is and what her most significant contributions are.

Who She Is

- **Professional role:** Silverman is a licensed clinical and counseling psychologist. She is the **Director** of the *Institute for the Study of Advanced Development* (ISAD) and its subsidiary, the **Gifted Development Center (GDC)**, based in Denver, Colorado. [Gifted Development Center+2Gifted Development Center+2](#)
 - **Education:** She earned her Ph.D. in Educational Psychology and Special Education from the University of Southern California in 1973. [Gifted Development Center+2The Sun Magazine+2](#)
 - **Academic experience:** She served on the faculty of the University of Denver for nine years in Counseling Psychology and Gifted Education, where she also developed a course on assessing the gifted. [Gifted Development Center](#)
 - **Publications:** She has authored or co-authored **over 300** articles, chapters, and books. [Gifted Development Center+2SoBrief+2](#)
 - **Journal:** She founded *Advanced Development*, the only peer-reviewed journal dedicated specifically to adult giftedness. [The Sun Magazine](#)
 - **Assessment:** Through GDC, she has overseen assessments of **thousands** of children — in her career, the center has evaluated over 6,500 clients. [Gifted Development Center+1](#)
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Major Contributions

Dr. Silverman's work spans theory, assessment, advocacy, and education. Here are some of her most significant contributions:

1. Advancing the Understanding of Giftedness

- She emphasizes giftedness as a *psychological reality*, not simply high achievement or eminence. In her book *Giftedness 101*, she challenges common myths about giftedness, provides guidelines for assessment, and discusses the emotional and inner life of gifted individuals. [Goodreads+1](#)
- She also explores what it means to be gifted across the lifespan, not just in childhood. [The Sun Magazine+1](#)

2. Defining and Advocating for Visual-Spatial Learners

- One of her most well-known contributions is popularizing and defining the concept of the **visual-spatial learner (VSL)** — people who think more in pictures than in words, and who may struggle with traditional, linear, text-based schooling. [Dyslexia.com Resource Site](#)

- Her book *Upside-Down Brilliance: The Visual-Spatial Learner* provides in-depth insight into this cognitive style and how to support those who have it. [The Sun Magazine](#)

3. Research and Support for Twice-Exceptional (2e) Individuals

- “Twice-exceptional” (2e) refers to people who are both gifted *and* have a learning disability or neurological difference (like ADHD, dyslexia, ASD). Silverman has been a pioneering voice in recognizing, assessing, and supporting this group. [Gifted Development Center+2Scribd+2](#)
- Her research at GDC revealed that **about one-sixth** of the gifted population they assessed had “hidden learning disabilities,” and conversely, a significant portion of learning-disabled individuals show visual-spatial giftedness. [Gifted Development Center](#)
- She contributed to developing key assessment tools, including a **Checklist for Recognizing Twice Exceptional Children**, co-authored with colleagues, which helps parents and educators identify 2e children. [Gifted Development Center+1](#)
- Importantly, Silverman has influenced how intelligence testing is used for gifted/2e identification: her work has contributed to *extended norms* on widely used IQ tests (like the WISC-IV and WISC-V), so that very high-IQ, twice-exceptional children are not disadvantaged by standard scoring. [Gifted Development Center](#)
- She also helped develop a “Gifted Index” (the Expanded General Ability Index, or EGAI) for the WISC-V that better captures cognitive strengths in 2e kids by excluding working memory or processing speed metrics that might under-represent their abilities. [Gifted Development Center](#)

4. Moral and Emotional Dimensions of Giftedness

- Silverman has written and spoken about how gifted individuals often have heightened **moral sensitivity**, deep empathy, and complex inner lives — traits that can make them vulnerable but also uniquely positioned to contribute to society. [giftedreach.org.nz](#)
- She advocates for a more “child-centered” approach, one that respects the emotional and psychological needs of gifted children rather than only focusing on performance. [The Sun Magazine](#)

5. Policy, Advocacy, and Educational Leadership

- As a founding member of the **Columbus Group**, she helped shape a modern, psychosocial definition of giftedness (asynchronous development) that moves beyond purely academic metrics. [Gifted Development Center](#)
- In her role at GDC, she has influenced both national and international practices in gifted assessment, training professionals, and shaping policy. [Scribd](#)

- She has also been a vocal advocate for using expanded and appropriate norms in intelligence testing so that highly gifted and twice-exceptional children are fairly assessed and supported. [Gifted Development Center](#)

6. Public Education and Writing

- Her many books are used by psychologists, educators, parents, and the gifted individuals themselves. In addition to *Giftedness 101* and *Upside-Down Brilliance*, other notable works include *Counseling the Gifted and Talented*. [Gifted Development Center](#)
- Through lectures, workshops, and training, she has raised awareness about the needs of the gifted, especially those who don't fit traditional stereotypes (e.g., 2e, visual-spatial thinkers). [Scribd](#)

Why Her Work Matters

- **Broadening the conception of giftedness:** Before Silverman's influence, "gifted" often meant extremely high test scores or academic achievement. She helped shift the field toward a more nuanced, human-centered view that recognizes emotional depth, moral sensitivity, and cognitive diversity.
- **Supporting overlooked populations:** Her work on twice-exceptionality has given a voice and framework to children who are intellectually advanced but also have learning or neurodevelopmental challenges — a group that often falls through the cracks.
- **Improving assessment practices:** By advocating for extended norms on intelligence tests and developing tools like the EGAI and checklists, she has made it more possible to accurately identify and support exceptionally gifted and 2e individuals.
- **Advocacy and systemic impact:** Through her leadership at ISAD/GDC and her writings, she has influenced not just individual practice (psychologists, schools) but also broader policy and public understandi

Dr. Silverman gives a lecture titled:

I'm not Weird, I'm Gifted!celebrating uniqueness

She talks about:

The gifted are part of the biodiversity of the population.

Many gifted adults—the walking wounded—feel estranged and lonely, not realizing it is their own giftedness that is at the heart of this experience.

They feel that there is something wrong with them that is not fixable.

They struggle constantly between integrity and accommodation, viewing all of life as a complex set of ethical dilemmas.

Professionals have a tendency to over-diagnose in the area of their expertise.

If all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nai

Psychologists and therapists receive no training in giftedness.

They may perceive anything other than neurotypical as a disorder.
If you are not “normal” or “neurotypical,” there must be something wrong with you.
Look up the bios or CVs of your therapists.
What are their specializations?
What have they written about?
THIS IS WHAT THEY KNOW ABOUT.
You will be treated accordingly.
You are their nail.
You need to inform your therapist about giftedness.
Share whatever you read that speaks to you.
A good therapist wants to hear your perspective.
Do not assume that your therapist knows more about you than you do about yourself

Dabrowski found a much higher incidence of anxiety in the gifted population.
He believed that our neuroses enable us to strive to be the best versions of ourselves.
We are not adjusted to the world as it is; instead, we are adjusted to the world as it could become.

For you see sensitivity in the insensitivity of the world, uncertainty among the world’s certainties.

For you often feel others as you feel yourselves.

For you feel the anxiety of the world, and
its bottomless narrowness and self-assurance.

For your phobia of washing your hands from the dirt
of the world, for your fear of being locked in the world’s limitations, for your fear of the absurdity
of existence.

For your subtlety in not telling others what you see in them.

For your awkwardness in dealing with practical things, and for your practicalness in dealing with
unknown things, for your transcendental realism and lack of everyday realism, for your
exclusiveness and fear of losing close friends, for your creativity and ecstasy, for your
maladjustment to that “which is” and adjustment to that which “ought to be”, for your great but
unutilized abilities.

Why would you yearn to be neurotypical?

A gifted mind is a gift.

A gifted heart is a gift.

These gifts were given to you for a reason.

Would you trade these in to be like everyone else?

Would your life be more satisfying being like everyone else?

Look at your life through the lens of giftedness.

You are wired to be different.

If you cherish your weirdness, everyone will join you.

You are here for a reason.

You are wired the way you are because who you are is what the world needs.

You are perfect just as you are.

Giftedness is not what you do
or how hard your work.

It is who you are.

You think differently.

You experience life intensely.
You care about injustice.
You seek meaning.
You appreciate and strive for the exquisite.
You are painfully sensitive.
You are extremely complex.
You cherish integrity.
Your truth-telling has gotten you in trouble.
Should 98% of the population find you odd,
seek the company of those who love you
just the way you are.
You are not broken.
You do not need to be fixed.
You are utterly fascinating!

Every gift contains a danger. Whatever gift we have we are compelled to express. And if the expression of that gift is blocked, distorted, or merely allowed to languish, then the gift turns against us, and we suffer.

(Johnson, 1993)

**You are a gift to the world:
You are needed.
Your gifts are needed in the world.
Never forget that!**