

Major Obstacles Gifted Children Face

Perfectionism

Perfectionism is the inner drive to be perfect or flawless. Children who suffer from perfectionism have an intense fear of failure and will often not take risks or try new things for fear of failing. They often set unrealistic standards for themselves. These children have a high need for control. Children who are perfectionists need to have time for fun and relaxation. Parents should try not to compare the child to other peers or siblings. These are children that should not be rewarded for good grades, but rather commended on their effort and hard work. Let them see you make mistakes and give them permission to sometimes be wrong.

Competitiveness

Some gifted children have an over-exaggerated level of competitiveness. They have a strong desire to always be the best. They thrive on opportunities to demonstrate their superiority. They have a need to out do others. They often feel like things in life are “unfair.” They can often be aggressive. Parents can support their competitive child by helping the child keep things in perspective. Stress the importance of learning versus winning. Don’t reward the “win”, but rather reward the effort. Make sure to point out the strengths of others. Outlaw the word “unfair” in your home.

Unrealistic View of Abilities

Gifted children may have unrealistic or exaggerated beliefs about their talents or abilities. They like to brag about their intelligence and don’t understand the idea of humility. They are overconfident in their abilities and this can in turn lead to severe disappointment or failure in the future. Children who envision their abilities to be greater than they really are may be unable to combat future struggles and challenges. As school and classes become more challenging, they may begin to feel like they are no longer “gifted” or not as smart as they once used to be. Encourage this child to act with humility and instead of talking about themselves, talk about others. Let them face challenges early and learn how to experience defeat. The greatest learning often comes from having to first struggle.

Rejection of Peers

The gifted child is often seen as the class “nerd” or geek. Other children may be jealous or resent the gifted child’s abilities. Gifted children often have difficulty establishing a relationship with their peers and prefer to spend time alone or with adults. They dislike socializing and working in groups. They have unrealistic expectations of others and have difficulty accepting criticism. As a result of peer rejection, gifted children may try to become “normal” or “dumb themselves down” to fit in with peers. They can exhibit depression, appear withdrawn or aggressive. They often try to hide the rejection by becoming nonconformist and trying to be the most “different” child in the class. For these children it is important to show empathy and understanding. Contact the school if you suspect harassment or bullying. Provide opportunities for your child to be with other gifted children. Keep the lines of communication open. Help your child develop appropriate social skills.

Parent/Social Pressure

It is only natural that when a teacher or parent recognizes a child as “gifted” the expectations for the child become increased or elevated. Sometimes these expectations can be unrealistic. We often expect the gifted child to act like an “adult” or to be smart all of the time in all subjects. We often say, “I expected more from you than this.” We overbook them in camps, lessons, clubs, and school work. We often forget the gifted student is still just a child and should be allowed to act like a child. We need to make sure to honor the child’s values and allow the child to have free time for just fun. We need to have high expectations and encourage a high level of achievement in the talent area, but continually remind ourselves to not expect perfection and allow for mistakes. Gifted children can often sound like an adult, often we make the mistake of expecting adult-level behavior from the child.

Underachievement

Underachievement is a term used when a student is not working to his or her full potential. Underachievement often begins to be exhibited by children when they enter middle schools. Gifted girls and minority children are at the most risk for underachievement.