

# Guiding Gifted Youth Through Self Awareness

## Discussion Guide

### **10 Social and Emotional Differences of Gifted Students**

1. Strengths and potential problems can be flip sides of the same coin.
2. Gifted children's physical, emotional, social, and intellectual growth is often uneven.
3. Gifted students may doubt that they are actually gifted (imposter syndrome).
4. Gifted students may face social challenges not just from peers, but parents and teachers as well.
5. As they get older, gifted students may take fewer risks (perfectionism.)
6. Gifted students often have heightened emotional sensitivity.
7. Gifted students are often introverted and know that introversion is looked upon in a negative light.
8. Gifted students' abstract intuition may conflict with teachers' desire for concrete thinking.
9. Gifted students' needs cannot be met by one style of learning.
10. Gifted adults wish they had been better informed about giftedness as children.

Source: [www.byrdseed.com](http://www.byrdseed.com)

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### *“True” Identity Begins With Self Awareness*

As a gifted child grows up, a primary task to complete in psychological development is identity formation. Gifted children receive contradictory messages that destine them to engage in social coping behavior.

Self awareness requires reflecting on questions such as

- Who am I as a gifted person?
- How is my world different and expressly me?

Social expectations incite gifted children to deny their

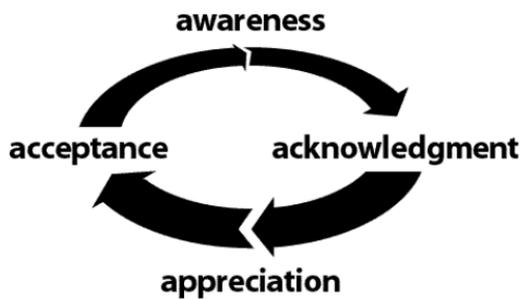
- Depth of feeling
- Intensities
- Behaviors
- Sensitivities

Gifted children have a natural tendency to deny or *step around* awareness of these unique qualities.

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## Awareness Model



Source: [www.counselingthegifted.com](http://www.counselingthegifted.com)

1. Gifted child becomes **aware** of unique qualities that are part of being gifted
2. Child **acknowledges** that differences are precious aspects of self
3. Child comes to **appreciate** differences; characteristics that were once thought of as undesirable become valued assets.
4. Child accepts true self; lets go of things that were once foreign to her awareness.

**Parents and teachers can facilitate this cycle.**

## Recommendations for Parents

Avoid protecting a gifted child from his nature (e.g. by rationalizing, pushing for conformity).

- Gifted children have life experiences and issues that are different.

Create an environment in which children feel fully accepted

- **Differences are okay** (it's okay to have few friends, there's nothing wrong with preferring to be alone)
- Feeling different is normal for gifted children
- Love and respect who they are
- **DOING** rather than **BEING**
- Differences rarely develop into serious problems!

Reinforce positive social behavior.

- What to say when a peer says "you're weird..."

Teach social skills and stress management through modeling and role play.

Poor grades - be calm

- View poor grades as signs that a different approach or more effort is needed.

Communicate values that generate **motivation** and promotes a **love of learning**.

Foster a self-concept that extends beyond academics...

- Avoid labels like "gifted"
- Dweck's "two mindsets" (fixed mindset vs. growth mindset)
- Communicate that placement in the gifted program is a response to learning needs
- Place value on **hard work** and **persistence**, not ability
- Avoid comparing children; instead, compare previous and current performance.

Encourage expression of thoughts and feelings

- Journaling, visual art, photography, poetry, music

Encourage sophisticated understanding of diversity

- Their differences are both normal *AND* exceptional!
- People all differ in unique ways.
- Activities - trade perspectives; read bios of eminent people.

Use personality, style, and interest assessments to help your child learn about himself or herself.