

(continued from p. 3)

the ceiling effect for gifted children, especially those who are highly, exceptionally, or profoundly gifted. Take my parents' account of my giftedness seriously; research shows that parents are the most accurate predictors of the level of their children's giftedness, particularly for highly, exceptionally, and profoundly gifted children.

## I am . . . incredibly unique.

Not all gifted children are the same. My abilities may differ from other gifted kids you know. I may be lousy at math, but years ahead in reading. I may be incredibly talented in science, but after years of not being challenged in school, I may have very poor work habits and may have lost my innate love of learning. Or my advanced potential may lie in non-academic areas, or areas that schools don't always measure well, like pattern-spotting, social and leadership skills, emotional precociousness, creativity, or the arts.



The further along the giftedness spectrum I am, the more likely it is that you have never encountered a patient like me before. I likely will not fit descriptions or profiles of patients of my chronological age. My sense of isolation and emotional distress from being so different may be central to my personality. This is particularly true if I am gifted but learning disabled ("twice exceptional").

**What you can do:** Educate yourself about how unique gifted children are even from one another. Get to know me. I am unique!

Resources for further learning are available on the Gifted Homeschoolers Forum website at <http://giftedhomeschoolers.org/professionalresources.html>.



# I AM...

## HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS' GUIDE TO GIFTED CHILDREN

INTENSE \* ASYNCHRONOUS \* MISUNDERSTOOD

## I am . . .

## intense.

Intensity defines me. Children who are highly, exceptionally, or profoundly gifted develop differently than those who are mildly or moderately gifted. The further along the IQ spectrum I am, the more intense I am likely to be. This intensity is often classified using psychiatrist Kazimierz Dąbrowski's "overexcitabilities" framework.

My fears may be fueled by my extremely complex interpretation of what you say or leave unsaid. I may be embarrassed at the personal nature of healthcare. I may feel angry if you seem condescending.

I may follow logic to extreme conclusions. My thirst for intellectual stimulation and understanding is all-consuming, and my knowledge of health and human anatomy may be advanced. I am very likely to be perfectionistic, causing me intense anxiety.

I am likely to be extraordinarily sensitive, but may also be sensory-seeking. A minor bruise may feel like a broken bone to me, or I may hardly feel a serious injury. Like many gifted children, I may have allergies, and if I am still nursing, I can be acutely sensitive even to what Mom eats. I may be unusually sensitive to medications.

**What you can do:** Look out for stress-related health complaints typically seen only in adults, such as ulcers, existential depression, and even suicidal thoughts, even if I am very, very young. Understand that I don't choose my sensitivities, but you can help me learn to cope with them. Explain what you are doing, and ask me before entering my "space," including to shake hands or make eye contact. Adjust dosages and formulations to reflect sensitivities and allergies.



# UNIQUE

## I am . . . asynchronous.

I am many ages at once: 8 years old chronologically, but 15 when I read or do math; 10 socially, but only 6 when I write. My asynchrony may work in my favor in one situation, but not in another.

Even though my intellectual understanding is advanced, my emotional coping skills may not be as strong.

I may hit developmental markers early, but start speaking late. I may hit puberty earlier (or later) than my age-mates.

Even at a surprisingly young age, I am acutely aware of how different I am from my age-mates. I can see that others treat me as if there is something “wrong” with me. But asynchrony isn’t an indicator of a problem in itself; it is part of who I am.

**What you can do:** Discuss my asynchrony openly with me, but without *I am many ages at once.* fanfare.

Address me as you would an older child, or even an adult. I will ask if I don’t understand you. Ask my parent or me if you are unsure.

Judge my educational achievement in the framework of my intellectual age, not my chronological age, and note any large achievement gap. I may be compensating for a learning disability, even if I am achieving above grade-age level.

Encourage my family to investigate, remediate, and support my weaknesses and disabilities, so that I can reach my full potential. This is crucial to my well-being.

*I am an outlier, and “normal” may not apply, even in physical brain development stages.*

My family likely needs intense support. I wear them out! Ask my parents if they are taking care of their own needs as well.

## I am . . . misunderstood.

You may never have met anyone like me before (see table on p. 3). I have astounding educational, social, and emotional needs stemming from my intensity and asynchrony.

Beyond moderate giftedness, the higher my IQ, the less likely I am to perform well in school. I deeply crave high-level concepts and the acquisition of vast quantities of information. My need to learn drives me, every waking moment.

I will not “level out” with typical children in third grade; I may refuse to perform or try to hide who I am, especially if I am a girl. But I will remain this gifted my entire life.

I may have behaviors that resemble ADHD or Asperger’s, but are not, leading to misdiagnoses. I may act out because my needs are not being met; this is the case even if I am extremely young. Sometimes I may “shut down” altogether. I will not

show my teacher what I am capable of. I may be slow to answer questions as I mull over the many possible answers, or I may require movement in order to channel my energy while I learn. I may refuse to endure practicing rote materials I’ve known for years. I almost certainly will question authority and reject illogical or unjust rules.

I will refuse to socialize with children with whom I have nothing in common other than a birth year. I likely get along better with much older children, or even adults, and contrary to popular beliefs, will benefit socially from acceleration, especially if the older class is given advance preparation for my arrival. In the correct educational setting, matched to my intellectual age and pace, with true intellectual peers, nearly all of my challenging behaviors vanish.

My family may homeschool me out of necessity to meet my needs. Much of that time will likely be spent seeking suitable resources, mentors and classes, as well as friends who are asynchronous like me.

I do not wish to show off my abilities to you, especially if doing so has drawn unwelcome attention in the past. My giftedness, even if profound, is not the result of my working hard (but my family and educators can and should help me learn to do so).

My IQ is	Then I am	Kids like me occur
145-160 on WISC-IV w/ extended norms (3-4 S.D. from the mean)	Highly Gifted (HG)	1:1,000 - 1:10,000
160-174 on WISC-IV w/ extended norms (5-6 S.D. from the mean)	Exceptionally Gifted (EG)	1:10,000 - 1:1 million
175+ on WISC-IV w/ extended norms (6+ S.D. from the mean)	Profoundly Gifted (PG)	Fewer than 1:1 million

Adapted from <http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/underserved.htm>

**What you can do:** Educate yourself about the top myths about giftedness and gifted education. (Resources are listed on the GHF website.) Know that one of my greatest challenges in childhood will be coping with my understanding of how different I am from my age-mates, and even from other gifted children. Facilitating my inclusion with true intellectual peers is the surest way to help me.

*Giftedness is not an achievement; it is a condition. It is part of my original equipment and will stay with me my entire life.*

Understand that my giftedness does not imply that I work hard; nor does it imply that my parents are pushing or “hot-housing” me. It is who I am, and I am dragging my parents along for the ride.

If you seek to measure my IQ or achievement, understand the ramifications of

*(continued on p. 4)*