

**Combined Notes from NAPAGE presentations
on Executive Functioning
Dr Anna Marie Breaux 10/20/2014 and
Dr Susan Oliverio 10/17/2016**

When you are parenting a gifted or talented child, your role as a parent includes advocacy for your child in the school setting. Even parenting your child at home can be a challenge, leaving you feeling unprepared and overwhelmed. Parents of gifted children need to learn about the unique social and emotional issues that such children often face, including perfectionism, competitiveness, the conviction that their ideas are just as good as their parents', and the desire to be treated as an adult.

Social behavior of gifted students on a whole: highly motivated, well behaved, gregarious and supportive (do not demonstrate snobbery)
Emotional maturity – mental, physical, and emotional ages are not the same.

Characteristics of the Gifted Child:

Perfectionistic tendencies

- ability to discern between mediocrity and excellence
- greater awareness and sensitivity (to criticism)
- sense of justice and injustice
- idealistic
- affronted by double standards or deviating from "the plan"
- experience life intensely emotionally
- perceive world at a greater level of complexity
- recognize world problems and frustrated by inability to solve them
- tend not to ask for help
- do not want to disappoint

Strengths

- academic success
- enthusiastic
- interact well with adults
- good sense of humor
- opportunities to build self-esteem

Sources of Stress

- few outlets for potential
- boredom/frustration
- mismatch with environment
- heightened sensitivity to criticism
- overextended
- leadership responsibilities
- peer problems
- multi-potentialities (too many options)

Procrastinating Perfectionists

- fears inability to achieve vision of perfection, paralyzing student
- intends to start, but doesn't
- sets self up for perceived failure

Perfectionism can propel to greatness or can immobilize

- healthy: sense of pride from achievement and strive for success
- unhealthy: unrealistic standards (for self and others), unable to relax standards
- can lead to: fear of failure, procrastination, being paralyzed, dichotomous thinking (success or fail, no in between)
- being a workaholic

Seven Steps to Teaching EF Skills

1. Identify specific problem behaviors (pick 1 or 2 items to work with).
2. Set a goal.
3. Outline the steps that need to be followed in order for the child to achieve the goal.
4. Whenever possible, turn the steps into a list, checklist, or short list of rules to be followed.
5. Supervise the child following the steps.
6. Evaluate the program's success and revise if necessary.
7. Fade the supervision.

Parenting Strategies

- create an environment of acceptance
- help your child set high, but realistic, short, medium, and long-term goals in multiple arenas of life and take joy in getting to each step – not just the end product
- support and reward effort, progress, and persistence rather than outcome
- offer encouragement – learning is the goal
- celebrate learning and growth – again, not just the end product
- teach that making mistakes is a learning process
- help student pursue creative activities where there is no “right” answer
- encourage collaborative rather than competitive activities
- model coping strategies for “failure”
- don’t hold excessive expectations
- model appropriate self-evaluation
- discuss negative effects of perfectionism
- due to sensitivity to criticism, sandwich it between positives
- say “this is one way to do it” which gives them the choice
- use humor
- help them to prioritize
- break large tasks into smaller pieces
- help them make chart of items to do
- set up and practice good study skills
- provide homework supply bins (pencils, paper, etc.)
- create/help to create a visual schedule/list and remind them to check it
- after the fact, review steps to see what did or did not work
- use incentives: when they get to a certain point, give them a small break to do something fun

Executive Functioning does go in jumps. Your child may stall at a step, just keep at it.

Those who pursue excellence work hard, are confident trying new things, take risks, feel good about low A’s, learn from mistakes.

Helpful resources for parents:

Letting Go of Perfect: Overcoming Perfectionism in Kids by Jill Adelson

Practical Advice for Guiding Gifted Children by Tracy L Cross

The Social and Emotional Lives of Gifted Kids: Understanding and Guiding Their Development by Tracy L Cross

Parenting Gifted Kids: Tips for Raising Happy and Successful Children by James R Delisle

Freeing our Families from Perfectionism by Thomas S Greenspon

The Good Enough Child: How to Have an Imperfect Family and be Perfectly Satisfied by Brad E Sachs

The Art of Learning: An Inner Journey to Optimal Performance by Josh Waitzkin

Smart but Scattered by Richard Guare & Peg Dawson

Smart but Scattered Teens by Richard Guare, Peg Dawson, & Colin Guare

Executive Skills in Children and Adolescents by Richard Guare & Peg Dawson

Helpful resources for children:

Nobody's Perfect: A Story for Children About Perfectionism by Ellen Burns

See You Later, Procrastinator! by Pamela Espeland and Elizabeth Verdick

What to Do When Good Enough Isn't Good Enough: The Real Deal on Perfectionism by Thomas S Greenspon

The Mysterious Benedict Society by Trenton Stewart

A Crooked Kind of Perfect by Linda Urban

Helpful resources for teens:

Perfectionism: What's Bad About Being Too Good by Miriam Adderholdt & Jan Goldberg

The Gifted Kids Survival Guide: A Teen Handbook by Judy Galbraith & Jim Delisle

Resources for gifted adults:

When Perfect Isn't Good Enough: Strategies for Coping with Perfectionism by Martin Anthony & Richard Swinson

Even June Cleaver Would Forget the Juice Box: Cut Yourself Some Slack (and Still Raise Great Kids) in the Age of Extreme Parenting by Ann Dunnewold

Some online resources:

http://psychologytoday.tests.psychtests.com/take_test.php?idRegTest=3262

www.giftedkidspeak.com

www.hoagiesgifted.org