

Accommodations for Students who are Gifted and Depressed

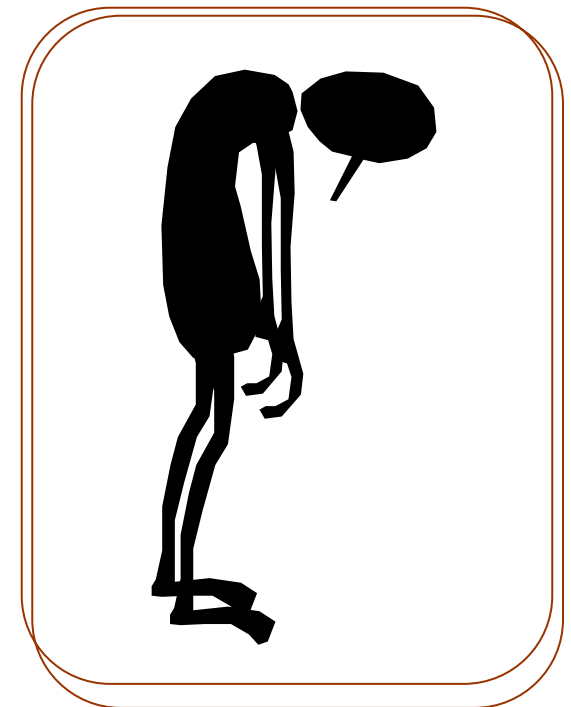
- ❖ Cluster grouping with like minded individuals in the general education setting to avoid feelings of isolation and loneliness.
- ❖ Allow students to participate in support groups.
- ❖ Assess interests and allow students to pursue studies in these areas.
- ❖ Allow students to use both verbal and nonverbal ways to present knowledge and research such as drawings, models, role-playing, and demonstrations.
- ❖ Use of alternate methods of assessment.
- ❖ Access to counseling or psychological services.

- ❖ **Online Resources** Bright star -- black sky: A phenomenological study of depression as a window into the psyche of the gifted adolescent
http://www.sengifted.org/articles_counseling/Jackson_BrightStarBlackSky.shtml
- ❖ Existential Depression in Gifted Individuals
http://www.giftedbooks.com/aart_webb2.html
- ❖ Suicide Among Gifted Adolescents: How to Prevent It
<http://www.sp.uconn.edu/~nrcgt/news/spring01/sprng012.html>
- ❖ Adolescence and Gifted: Addressing Existential Depression
http://www.sengifted.org/articles_counseling/Ellsworth_AdolescenceAndGiftedAddressingExistentialDread.shtml



Teaching Students who are Gifted and Depressed

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"The world leans on us. When we sag, the whole world seems to droop." - Eric Hoffer (1902-1983) American philosopher and author



Characteristics of students who are Gifted and Depressed

- ❖ Persistent depressed or irritable mood
- ❖ Diminished interest or pleasure in activities
- ❖ Loss of appetite and/or noticeable weight gain
- ❖ Insomnia or hypersomnia
- ❖ Fatigue/loss of energy
- ❖ Decreased concentration
- ❖ Heightened sensitivity
- ❖ Utilization of elaborate and complex defense mechanisms
- ❖ Feelings of alienation and isolation
- ❖ Reduced capacity to perform higher level thinking and production tasks
- ❖ Feelings of futility, anger and frustration with the world and those around them
- ❖ Unrealistically high personal expectations
- ❖ Recurrent thoughts of death or suicidal ideation

Program/Service Needs of Students who are Gifted and Depressed

Gifted and depressed students have three key needs:

1. The need for *knowledge* about self, others, relationships, phenomena, and the cosmos.
2. The need for *communion*, the deeply felt desire to be able to exchange thoughts, emotions, experience with a strong emotional or spiritual essence.
3. The need for a means of *expression*, to be able to transform into words or manifest an emotion or feeling without words through music or art or some other nonverbal means

Educational programming for these students should include opportunities to interact with true peers, programming which addresses cognitive and affective issues, activities to increase awareness and self-knowledge, and differing forms of creative expressions.

Strategies for Differentiating Instruction for students who are Gifted and Depressed

- ❖ Create an emotionally safe learning environment where ideas and feelings are accepted and valued.
- ❖ Help students understand and embrace their gifts.
- ❖ Directly teach social interaction skills.
- ❖ Enrich curriculum with sophisticated materials and strategies such as real-world, problem based learning experiences.
- ❖ Encourage differing forms of creative expression.
- ❖ Have students participate in group discussions or Socratic debates which focus on emotional, stressful, personal and global issues.
- ❖ Respect and understand high emotional vulnerability.
- ❖ Assist students to face their fears about the future.
- ❖ Closely monitor emotional responses.