

Accommodations for Students who are Gifted and Have Anxiety Disorder

Consider what might be triggering the anxiety and its severity. Is it separation anxiety for a younger child or test anxiety for an older one? The parent, teacher, and counselor may need to devise an effective way to help the child deal with the separation. They may consider play therapy, bibliotherapy, family therapy, parent or teacher-assisted relaxation techniques. With severe test anxiety, therapy including relaxation techniques may prove to be effective. Does the student suffer from feelings of being closed in or agoraphobia with fear of crowds? Is it general anxiety where there seems to be little connection to a particular situation except that it makes itself known in very physical and emotional ways? Parents and education personnel may need to consider the different forms of therapy including those already mentioned and cognitive, behavioral, or use of medications as a last resort. Accommodations then may be necessary depending on the way in which the anxiety manifests itself or the reason identified for the condition.

Online Resources

Kemp, G., Jaffe, J. & Segal, J. (8/16/05). Separation Anxiety and Separation Anxiety Disorder: Causes, Prevention and Treatment. http://www.helpguide.org/mental/separation_anxiety_causes_prevention_treatment.htm

Talent Development Resources, <http://talentdevelop.com/ASAT.html>

Repich, D.. Six Simple Habits That Defeat Anxiety. <http://www.conqueranxiety.com/>

Neihart, M. (November 2003). The Impact of Giftedness on Psychological Well-being. http://www.sengifted.org/articles_counseling/Neihart_TheImpactOfGiftednessOnPsychologicalWellbeing.shtml

Mahoney, A. S.. Exceptional Children Require an Exceptional Approach: Issues in counseling gifted children. <http://www.counselingthegifted.com/articles/counselingissues.html>

The Health Center: Anxiety Disorder in Children <http://www.thehealthcenter.info/child-anxiety/anxiety-and-you.htm>



Teaching Students who are Gifted and Dealing with Anxiety Disorder

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Characteristics of Gifted Students with Anxiety Disorder

Physical Symptoms of Child Anxiety

- *Sweaty palms *Trembling
- *Shaking hands and feet
- *Muscle aches and tension
- *Upset stomach *Headaches
- *Difficulty sleeping
- *Change in eating habits

Mental Symptoms of Child Anxiety

- *Persistent worry (more than 6 months)
- *Irrational fears *Irritability
- Lack of social activity
- Fits of crying

(From The Health Center article, How Can Anxiety Disorder Affect My Child's Life?)

Gifted characteristics such as intensity, sensitivity, concerns about issues normally considered by older "normal" people, perfectionism, strong feelings of right and wrong, abstract thinking, and possible social difficulties can individually or collectively combine to make the gifted young person a prime candidate for anxiety disorder. It becomes a case of worrying about being worried.

Program/Service Needs

Students who are already carrying a heavy load of concern for themselves and the world need to have a strong supportive circle of caring adults in their lives. They must be prepared to understand and accept that the physical ailments the child suffers may make it difficult for him/her to perform at the reported level of potential. The gifted child, who is dealing with an anxiety disorder, may benefit from having more optimistic, positive, although still challenging activities to participate in through the regular education program and any gifted supplemental services. In addition to the academic aspect of his program, this student may require the services of a medical and/or mental health professional trained in dealing with gifted children. Counseling sessions may also be needed for those moments when the child simply needs to get started for the week or deal with the unexpected occasion of panic where the teacher or facilitator is not enough. "Not only do parents and teachers need to recognize the needs of these young people, the young people themselves need to be assured of the sanity of their feelings of dread."

Strategies for Differentiating Instruction for students who are Gifted and Have an Anxiety Disorder

Provide opportunities for meeting with like-ability peers through clustering, pull-out, and other small group sessions when possible. Aid pupil in establishing consistent, open channels of communication throughout the school setting.

Conduct Socratic debates, discussing issues of importance to society and students alike.

Redirect negative self-talk by teaching "power language", i.e., "I can't control my anxiety" becomes, "I can control my anxiety, and I'm learning skills to conquer it."

Use team approach including parents, teachers, counselors, medical and mental health professionals when considering the differentiation.

Use bibliotherapy or literary therapy for younger and older students to model positive behavior through stories and picture books.

Carefully explore and select materials depicting lives of other successful individuals who also involved themselves in seeking solutions to problems so the student can relate to positive outlooks and endeavors.