



Parent Session

Strengths
of
Twice-Exceptional Children

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Suggested Pre-Readings

Chapter 12, Children Who Are Twice-Exceptional, of: Webb, J. T., Gore, J. L., Amend, E. R., DeVries, A. R. (2007). *A Parent's Guide to Gifted Children*. Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press.

Silverman, Linda. (2005). The Two-Edged Sword of Compensation: How the Gifted Cope with Learning Disabilities. PEGY.

<http://www.pegy.org.uk/Two-edged%20sword%20of%20compensation%20PEGY%20pdf.pdf>

- *Do you agree that learning disabilities are not just weaknesses in being able to master a specific subject area but that they may be auditory processing weakness, sensory-motor integration difficulty, visual-perceptual difficulties, spatial disorientation, or attention deficits?*
- *Silverman talks a lot about twice-exceptional learners' strengths in being able to compensate. Do you find this to be the case with you own child? In what ways do you see him or her "compensating"?*

Gallagher, Teresa. (1997). Evolution, Creativity and ADD. Born to Explore.
<http://borntoexplore.org/evolve.htm>

- *Do you think ADD/ADHD and creativity are always found together?*
- *Do you agree with the author's arguments that ADD is an altogether good thing to advanced human survival?*

The Eight Asperger Advantages. The Asperger Advantage.
<http://www.coachingasperger.com/advantages.htm>

- *Which of the 8 AS strengths do you think is most important for being successful in school?*

Armstrong, Thomas. (1994). Learning Differences—NOT Learning Disabilities. Intelligence Connections.

<http://www.davidlazeargroup.com/multi-intell/articles/Learning-Differences.htm>

- *Armstrong claims that LD children are non-verbally creative, good at visual-spatial tasks, talented in non-academic and more spatial tasks (e.g. architecture), and often highly talented in specific language or mathematical areas. How do you get this to "jive" with what Silverman suggested were issues for GT/LD children (your first article in this module)?*



Discussion Notes

Topic	Strategies to try
From the readings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you already do? • What do you want to try? • Share ideas from the reading • Share your child's strengths 	
GT/ASD strengths <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large vocabulary • Attention to detail • Specialization • Is your child an Apple or a PC? • Self-advocacy • Adaptability 	
GT/ADD/ADHD strengths <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High energy • Creativity • Big picture thinkers • Stamina • Self-advocacy • Adaptability 	
GT/LD strengths <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong compensatory strategies • Self-advocacy • Empathy • Sensitivity • Flexible thinking • Self-advocacy • Adaptability 	
GT/highly emotional strengths <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empathy • Creativity • Responsibility • Self-advocacy • Adaptability 	
Miscellaneous <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further reading • Other resources • Related topics 	



Discussion Questions

1. Compensation strategies.
 - a. What strategies does your child use?
 - b. How can these be channeled into other areas?
 - c. If the compensation strategies are frustrating to you, what are some substitutes you can suggest?
2. Stamina
 - a. It takes enormous energy to get through the day in a difficult environment.
 - b. Meltdowns at the end of the day are common.
 - c. What strategies do you use to deal with the extra energy?
 - d. What strategies do you use to deal with the meltdowns?
 - e. What works for your energy issues?
3. “Hardheadedness is a survival skill.” (*Out-of-sync Child*, p. 278).
 - a. It can be tough to appreciate hardheadedness.
 - b. How will this trait be beneficial in the future?
 - c. Are you strong-willed?
 - d. If so, where has that helped you?
4. Adaptability and flexibility
 - a. Twice-exceptional (or twice non-typical) kids adapt every day to a world designed for typical people.
 - b. How does your son or daughter adapt?
 - c. How do you adapt to uncomfortable situations or environments?
5. Creativity
 - a. Associative thinking, an ASD trait, can lead to improved systems.
 - b. Scattered thinking, an ADD trait, can lead to new inventions.
 - c. Compensatory thinking, an LD trait, can lead to improved ergonomics.
 - d. Emotional and imaginal thinking lead to art in all forms.
6. Responsibility
 - a. Concern for the environment
 - b. Concern for others
 - c. Strong sense of justice or fairness
7. Self-advocacy
 - a. 2X kids self-advocate in the ways they know
 - i. Tantrums
 - ii. Shutting down
 - iii. Digging in
 - iv. Hyper-focus
 - v. Exercise
 - vi. Video games (tuning in and tuning out)
 - vii. What other ways?
 - b. What are some new strategies to show them?
 - i. Speak up
 - ii. I matter enough to get help
 - iii. Demonstrate what works



- iv. Learn to explain
 - v. Emotional vocabulary
 - vi. Physical vocabulary
 - vii. Understanding their unique biology
 - viii. Educating others
8. Making a difference
- a. Others have similar biological and neurological experiences
 - b. Many others do not have a comprehensive support system
 - i. How can 2X kids reach out to other kids?
 - ii. How can they use their gifts to illuminate others about their disabilities?

“Be in awe of their courage and their strengths!” (*Out-of-sync Child*, p. 275).



Rules for the Road

HOCUS, POCUS, HYPERFOCUS!!!

Betty Maxwell, M.A.

This magical technique takes advantage of the natural ability of visual-spatial children to hyperfocus. *(This is also a strength noted in Gifted/ADD/ADHD children. Take advantage of the skill of intense focus your child may have developed playing video games or reading books to help him do short bursts of work interspersed with activity breaks, rather than one long, unproductive, frustrating marathon of homework.)*

1. Use a quiet work space with a minimum of distractions: no TV, radio, or intrusions. Bring a kitchen timer to the table. Have at hand some specific assignment to complete.
2. The aim is to shut out everything from mind but the work at hand. Get into this mind set of total focus before starting. Taking a deep breath helps. Some children like to wave away “all that stuff around my mind.” (Or think it.)
3. Set the timer for a short period of time, say 8 or 10 minutes. As soon as the timer begins to tick, tell the child, “**Now! Hocus Pocus Hyperfocus!** Do your very best work as fast as possible.” Simply let child work. When the timer goes off, the child **must stop working**. He/she should get up and do something physical (jump on a trampoline, make a sandwich, play with the dog, etc.). No reading or TV watching allowed! After intense concentration, the mind tends to be scattered. A “mini-vacation” acknowledges this.
4. After a brief time (5-8 minutes—will vary with child), reset the timer for the same period of time and have the child again hyperfocus on doing “your very best work as fast as possible. Hocus, Pocus, Hyperfocus!!”
5. As before, when the timer goes off, **stop**. Probably the work will be completed by now, and the quality will be high. Intense focus makes for minimal errors. If not finished, focus again after another “mini-vacation.”
6. Even very long assignments can be completed, taking breaks periodically. With older children or adults, the timer might be set for slightly longer times, say, 12-15 minutes. Generally it is best to keep the periods of intensity short and get into the rhythm: Focused work. Relaxation. Renewed Focus. Occasionally, someone may get drawn into the process and be determined to continue working. If so, that’s fine, but don’t press to make it happen. The **HPH** method works well just as it is even for adults. It is actually a life skill that is great to learn early!
7. If full concentration is not maintained for the short time period set, try a shorter period, 5-7 minutes, for example. The aim is to induce hyperfocus and then use it to advantage.
8. The appropriateness of the task should also be considered. Mindless drill that teaches nothing does induce rebellion rather than hyperfocus. But that is another story!

Retrieved from: http://www.gifteddevelopment.com/PDF_files/sbofa.pdf



Food for Thought

As parents we get wrapped up in the difficulties our child experiences in school. After all, kids spend nearly a quarter of their waking hours in school between the ages of 5 and 18! Sometimes we need to take a step back and remember that this is all a growing process, and unless your child has career aspirations in academia, performance in school isn't necessarily an indication of career success. Many of the most important people in history didn't "fit" well in a regular school environment. Think of all the amazing things your child can do with the very strengths that can cause difficulties in school.

In the module on Overexcitabilities, we looked at ways to manage the five areas of super-sensitivity. In this section, we celebrate the unique talents our children can develop as a result of them. You and your child can add to this list, find ways to capitalize on these strengths in school, and remember that the future is filled with possibilities that don't necessarily include turning in a math assignment on time!

Strengths and Possible Career Ideas Associated with Strengths

Based on ideas from~

Living with Intensity: Understanding the Sensitivity, Excitability, and Emotional Development of Gifted Children, Adolescents, and Adults, by Michael Piechowski and Susan Daniels

Emotional strengths:

Compassion—doctor, counselor, veterinarian

Self-awareness—author, teacher, mentor, actor

Social responsibility—a career in non-profit, lawyer, advocate, environmentalist

Psychomotor strengths:

Energy-- athlete, builder, dancer

Stamina-- explorer, field scientist, mountain climber

Sensual strengths: "...enhanced refinement and aliveness of sensual experience." (Daniels & Piechowski, p. 9.)

Keen vision—artist, designer, architect

Hearing—musician, singer, conductor, composer

Feeling—career in ergonomics, textile artist

Keen smell—wine taster, perfumier



Taste—chef, food critic, baker, chocolatier

Intellectual: The search for truth and understanding.

Detail focus—trouble shooter, computers, surgeon, accountant

Big picture focus—engineer, architect, internist, CEO

Imaginational: Richness of association.

Inventive—inventor, designer

Imaginational—playwright, actor, author

Associative—artist, poet