

JAMES T. WEBB, PH.D, ABPP-CL
Clinical Psychologist
1650 N. Kolb Rd., Suite 200
Tucson, AZ 85715
(520) 777-6161
Fax: (520) 777-6217
Jwebb@greatpotentialpress.com
www.greatpotentialpress.com



WORKSHOP AND KEYNOTE PRESENTATIONS

Social and Emotional Needs of Gifted Children

A widespread myth about gifted children is that, because they are bright, they can simply "make it on their own." However, the characteristics of gifted children—combined with current educational practices—often put them "at risk." The social, emotional, and interpersonal needs of gifted/talented children can result in significant problems if these children are not understood and nurtured. This session describes how characteristics of gifted children relate to their social/emotional needs, interpersonal and emotional styles, and frequent difficulties. This information will help parents and teachers understand why gifted/talented children experience peer difficulties, underachieve, challenge or rebel against traditions, or show patterns of perfectionism or depression.

Many Faces of Gifted

A new definition of gifted by the National Association for Gifted Children now recognizes the upper 10% of the population in any one or more domains. More recognition is being given to levels of giftedness, asynchronous development, educational effects on brain development, and factors that promote or inhibit talent development. This session highlights several types of gifted children and behaviors, along with behavior patterns and cultural factors, which too often result in gifted children being overlooked, not recognized or served in schools, and even mislabeled. "High achievers" and "social leaders" are likely to be identified and served, but "creative intellectuals" and "nonconformist rebels" are not. Other gifted children are never identified because they are learning disabled or because of their disadvantaged background. The needs of gifted children in five areas are described and recommendations made.

Finding Gifted Children: Gifted Behaviors In and Out of the Classroom

Many gifted children are never identified, often because they are underachieving, have an unusual learning style, are learning disabled, are educationally misplaced, or because of family issues. Though test scores and grades are helpful in identifying gifted children, specific behaviors are at least as important. Gifted behaviors can appear in many forms and in many degrees, yet are often overlooked or even mistaken for pathology, resulting in gifted children being misdiagnosed as ADHD, Asperger's Disorder etc. This session will highlight several types of gifted children and behaviors, along with behavior patterns, that too often result in gifted children, particularly those from minority groups, being overlooked and not recognized or served in schools.

Helping Parents Guide to Gifted Children

Based on *A Parent's Guide to Gifted Children*, Dr. Webb describes the social/emotional needs, interpersonal, and emotional patterns of gifted children. Characteristics of gifted children are influenced by four major factors: the level of giftedness, asynchronous development, overexcitabilities, and thinking styles. This helps parents understand how the characteristics and factors influence issues such as peer difficulties, underachievement, power struggles, rebelling against traditions, perfectionism, and depression. Practical suggestions will be given, along with answers to questions from the audience about situations with their gifted children.

Twelve Key Concerns for Parents of Gifted Children

Twelve frequent concerns for parents of gifted children are: (1) characteristics of gifted children, (2) finding a good educational fit, (3) motivation and underachievement, (4) discipline, power struggles, and self-management, (5) intensity, stress and perfectionism, (6) acquaintances, friends, and peers, (7) communication and relationships, (8) siblings and only children, (9) values, traditions, and uniqueness, (10) idealism, unhappiness, and depression, (11) complexities of modern parenting, (12) misdiagnosis and dual diagnoses. Information will be given about each, along with how four major factors—range of ability, asynchronous development, overexcitabilities, and thinking styles—influence these issues.

Ten Things Parents Should Know about Gifted Students

Ten key issues must be considered by parents of gifted children: (1) the school climate, (2) social and educational climate, (3) myths about gifted children, (4) ignorance, bias, and misinformation about parents of gifted children, (5) lack of knowledge about characteristics of gifted children, (6) finding a good educational fit, (7) behavioral concerns of parents and teachers, (8) stresses and complexities of modern parenting, (9) misdiagnoses and dual diagnoses, (10) finding appropriate professional help. Information will be given about each issue, along with how four major factors—range of ability, asynchronous development, overexcitabilities, and thinking styles—influence these issues, and parents will be directed to helpful resources.

Parenting Successful Children

In today's society, it is more difficult to successfully parent children, as well as to parent successful children. Success is more than simple academic, vocational, or professional achievement. Resiliency, self-esteem, self-motivation, and self-discipline are keys. Although relationships are of paramount importance, the pace of modern life and technological innovations often create barriers to relationships. This session describes practical parenting strategies to promote relationships that can help a child find his or her passion in life, and that allow a child to learn values, develop the ability to set priorities and the persistence to follow through on them, yet achieve a sense of personal balance. Specific approaches and techniques are described to help parents raise successful children.

Motivation and Underachievement

Many gifted children underachieve and have issues with motivation in the classroom. Motivation—far more than intellectual ability or creativity—can be influenced, shaped, and developed. Dr. Webb describes the most common reasons for motivational problems, and then focuses on practical "how to" techniques useful for parents and teachers of all children, but particularly appropriate to gifted children. Transfer of motivation, successive successes, anticipatory praise, and similar techniques are used to develop internalized motivation, appropriate goal-setting, mindset, and tolerance of frustration. Research results from Torrance's "teachers who make a difference" results are shared.

Managing Stress, Perfectionism, and Depression

Stress, perfectionism, and depression are frequent in bright children and are related to their intensity, sensitivity, and idealism. Although bright children need challenges, undue stress, perfectionism, and depression seldom come from the challenges of specific situations or tasks. Instead they are more likely to come from what these children say to themselves about the events and about themselves. This workshop focuses on such concepts as self-talk, irrational beliefs, and self-management of stress. Specific techniques are described to help prevent and overcome perfectionism and depression, along with ways to build habits of resiliency.

Misdiagnoses and Dual Diagnoses of Gifted Children

Many of our brightest, most creative, most independent-thinking children are being incorrectly diagnosed as having behavioral or mental disorders, such as ADHD or Oppositional Defiant Disorder. Stigmatizing labels can harm their sense of self, and treatment may be unnecessary and even harmful. Some health conditions, such as allergies and asthma, are actually more common among gifted children, yet few professionals are aware of this connection. Though teachers cannot diagnose, research indicates that teachers are important in suggesting referrals. Because few psychologists, physicians, or other health care or counseling professionals receive training about gifted children, educators and parents must become informed. Similarly, since giftedness is not something that you leave behind in childhood, there are misdiagnoses and inappropriate treatment of gifted adults. They, too, need to become informed so that they can understand why so often their intensity, sensitivity, idealism, and impatience are not understood or accepted by others, which may result in misdiagnoses of adults. Based on recent research and clinical experience, this workshop describes the most frequent misdiagnoses, along with ways to differentiate whether a child or adult suffers from disorders such as ADHD, or whether the child or adult is simply showing gifted behaviors. Additional focus is given to dual diagnoses of gifted children and adults, those who are twice-exceptional (2e).

Idealism, Unhappiness, Depression, and Resiliency

Gifted children and adults are often intense, sensitive idealists concerned with issues such as fairness. Why does depression seem related to their idealism and their intensity? How widespread is depression and unhappiness in gifted children? How can parents, educators, and counselors enhance resiliency in these children? This session will focus on answers to these questions, as well as sources of depression, which children are more at risk, symptoms of depression and suicide, and existential depression.

Depression and Suicide in Gifted Children and Adults

Gifted children are prone to stress because of their intensity, sensitivity, and idealism, particularly when they are in environments that do not value them. Gifted children are likely to experience depression, and some may attempt suicide. This workshop focuses on characteristics and causes of depression, including existential depression, as well as some specific ways to prevent or ameliorate depression. Though depression does not always lead to suicide attempts, it is important to evaluate the seriousness of suicidal thoughts. Ways to assess lethality will be discussed.

Existential Depression and Positive Disintegration

Gifted children and adults are prone to existential depression because of their intensity, sensitivity, and idealism, and because they can see the inconsistencies in the values and behaviors of others around them. In their search for meaning, gifted children are likely to question traditions, particularly those that seem meaningless or unfair, but this prompts others to withdraw from them. As a result, gifted children feel alone in an absurd, arbitrary, empty, and meaningless world where they also feel powerless to change that world. This workshop describes processes that lead to existential depression, relates these to Dabrowski's theory of Positive Disintegration, as well as to other psychological theories, and offers some specific ways to ameliorate existential depression.

Searching for Meaning: Bright Minds, Idealism, Disillusionment, and Hope

Bright minds search for meaning; they see opportunities and alternatives, are concerned with fairness, and are idealists. Yet with each passing year, they experience disillusionments, which continue into adulthood and often leads to loneliness, dissatisfaction, cynicism, burnout, and existential depression not only in adults, but also in adolescents and sometimes younger children. This session describes less healthy ways, as well as more healthy ways, that gifted children and adults use as they try to cope with their disillusionments, and then turns the focus toward how to develop and maintain hope and life satisfaction. Practical suggestions will be offered so that educators and parents can encourage beneficial development that nurtures and maintains idealism and hope.

Peers for Gifted Children: Issues and Answers

Peer relations can be difficult for gifted children. Parents and teachers often worry that the gifted child has too few friends, or is intolerant of others. Gifted children often have problems finding peers to relate to. For others, peer pressure and the desire to fit in with others can be a major source of underachievement. This session discusses issues such as: Who are peers for gifted children? How worrisome is it if a gifted child has few friends? How much time alone is okay? How can we help gifted children withstand inappropriate peer pressure? How can we help them be more understanding toward their peers?

Discipline Issues with Gifted Children

Because of their intensity, gifted children often are strong-willed and prone to power struggles and problems in discipline, and it is not uncommon for them to be diagnosed as Oppositional Defiant Disorder. This session will focus on frequent causes of discipline problems for gifted children at home and at school, along with specific strategies to help minimize discipline problems as well as to promote appropriate self-discipline in the child. If discipline issues continue, the result is likely to be anger, power struggles, underachievement, and depression. Guidelines for discipline, and ways to avoid or minimize power struggles, will be emphasized.

Grandparents and Gifted Children

Grandparents are often the first to recognize giftedness in a grandchild, and connections between grandparents and grandchildren offer opportunities, challenges, and satisfaction. Based on the book, *Grandparents' Guide to Gifted Children*, the authors describe ways that grandparents, with their greater life experience, can nurture their talented children without being pushy. Grandparents can be effective advocates to see that their grandchildren receive appropriate opportunities to fully develop their unusual potential. Besides offering social, emotional, and financial support, grandparents can encourage interests and provide stimulating opportunities to share adventures and explore ideas.

Adult Gifted: You Don't Just Outgrow It!

Most gifted adults are unaware of how bright they are, and how it affects their lives. Adults, like children, go through life stages, and gifted adults seem to encounter these stages earlier and more intensely. This workshop describes characteristics of gifted adults as they encounter adult life stages, the tasks involved, and some myths about bright adults, and these are related to Dabrowski's Theory of Positive Disintegration. Common issues and problems are described. Brief activities are used to heighten self-understanding.

Gifted Burnout: Why You Have It and What You Can Do About It

Teachers of gifted children often feel burnt out, as do parents of gifted children. The intensity, sensitivity, and idealism of gifted children can be exhausting, and their asynchronous development requires accommodations that are detailed, but administrative and societal support for good gifted education is frequently minimal. The high expectations and demands that surround gifted children, combined with a lack of support, often leave teachers and parents feeling "burned out." This session focuses on the factors in burnout, the feelings of helpless anger, blame, and frustration that arise, and implications for gifted children and their teachers and parents. Concrete suggestions are offered for preventing, coping with, and overcoming burnout.

Bridging the Gap between Home and School

Parents of gifted children frequently feel frustrated with the "non-responsiveness" of schools; and school personnel often feel attacked or unappreciated by parents. Disagreements frequently arise over failure to identify, expecting too much or too little, acceleration/early entrance, elitism, handling stresses, and deciding who is responsible for actions with the child. Understanding the historically different roles and limitations of parents and schools is an essential first step. Specific practical can help parents and teachers bridge the gap between parents and school, and to achieve cooperative, rather than confrontive, interactions.

Cultivating Courage, Creativity, and Caring, Yet Maintaining Academic Rigor and Critical Thinking

Programs for gifted children typically focus on the aspects of intelligence, creativity, and motivation. But two other “non-intellectual” dimensions that are necessary if one is to be fully functioning—namely, courage and caring. What happens when a bright and motivated person is lacking in courage, in caring, in creativity—or in some combination of these? Examples are used to illustrate personal and societal consequences that occur. The cultivation of courage and caring are essential, particularly in these turbulent and disillusioning times. Teachers and parents can incorporate these key dimensions into their work with gifted children.

Being Bright Is Not Enough

The attitude still prevails that gifted children need no special help, that they will make it on their own since they already have so much going for them. Particularly neglected are the social and emotional needs of these children. Dr. Webb relates professional and personal experiences demonstrating that simply being bright is not enough. In fact, many responses to bright children make being gifted a liability rather than an asset. Concrete suggestions for parents and teachers are offered to help them re-think their perspectives and their behaviors. Encouragement is given to establish programs that focus on social and emotional needs of these youngsters.

Establishing and Maintaining Communication and Relationships with Gifted Children

One person can be the key in whether a gifted child succeeds, but that implies communication and a relationship. However, because of their intensity, sensitivity, peer pressure, and power struggles, communication with gifted children can be difficult. In addition, modern technology can interfere. This session will focus on ways to foster communication and nurture healthy relationships at home and school, as well as ways to prevent or overcome barriers to communication and good relationships with adults. Practical suggestions are offered.

Preparing Gifted Children for College? Or Preparing Them for Life?

Academic success is helpful, but other areas of success are more important. As parents and educators, we must focus on social and emotional development if we are to nurture gifted children and adults so that they develop their human potential. Cultivating courage, caring, and creativity are as important as academics and developing intellectual abilities. What is appropriate for us to expect and demand in academic achievement, and how do we keep alive and foster the passion for learning and personal development even when it is not in traditional academic areas?

Working with Parents of Gifted Children

Educators need to involve parents of gifted children if school and home are going to work harmoniously together. This session discusses ten issues that are key for parents of gifted children: (1) the school climate, (2) society's social and educational climate, (3) myths about gifted children (3) misinformation about parents of gifted children, (5) characteristics of gifted children, (6) four factors that affect educational, social, and emotional functioning, (7) finding a good educational fit, (8) complexities of modern parenting, (9) misdiagnosis and dual diagnoses, (10) where to turn for resources and professional help. Practical suggestions and resources will be presented.

Partnering with Parents of Gifted Children

Parenting and teaching gifted children is challenging, and often conflicts arise about issues such as making exceptions, acceleration, and 2e issues. Because schools affect so much life space for children, it is best if parents and teachers can work as partners. To do this, each must understand the current educational climate and limitations, sensitive points for each, and ways to communicate effectively. Often this involves mutual education and thoughtful advocacy. Practical suggestions are offered.

Social (Pragmatic) Communication Disorder: Is It the New Fad Diagnosis for Gifted Children?

Social (Pragmatic) Communication Disorder (SPCD), a new diagnosis added to DSM-5, is likely to become a new fad diagnosis that will be applied and misapplied to gifted children. Educational professionals and parents need to know about this new diagnostic category that emphasizes "persistent difficulties in the social use of verbal and nonverbal communication," particularly since it appears to be a replacement of sorts for Asperger's Disorder, which was deleted from the DSM-5. Diagnostic DSM-5 criteria listed will be compared to frequent or typical behaviors for gifted children, and guidelines offered to differentiate whether there is a disorder.

Gifted Parent Groups: The SENG Model

Parents of gifted children need (and desperately want) settings to interact with other parents and to receive support, guidance and advice. The SENG model provides support and guidance to facilitate parental understanding and parenting skills in nurturing emotional development of gifted children and their families. The model is structured so that the SENG discussion groups can be established in various locations. This session describes specific facilitator skills and content used in the ten-session series SENG model, and role-play is used to model the techniques and approaches used. Attendees are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the book, *Gifted Parent Groups: The SENG Model, 2nd edition*.

The History and Evolution of SENG (Supporting Emotional Needs of Gifted): Advice for Other Groups

SENG (Supporting Emotional Needs for Gifted) began in 1982 from the tragic suicide of a highly gifted 17-year-old boy. Since then, it has become a non-profit organization that has influenced the lives of many families throughout the United States and other countries. SENG Conferences, SENG Model Parent Groups, the SENG Misdiagnosis Initiative and the SENG Webinars are examples of these helpful initiatives described in this session. Similar programs can be established by other groups and associations that work with gifted children and their families.

High Potential: Guiding the Gifted Child

We talk about the importance of helping a child reach his potential, but we usually only measure current performance. Academic rigor and challenge are important, but so are social and emotional aspects. A number of issues are particularly likely to arise for gifted children, and this keynote address describes these issues, along with factors that help or hinder a child in reaching his or her potential.

The Future Is in Our Minds

This title has two meanings. First, our brightest minds will shape our future, and second, the future will only be as we envision it to be. Futurists try to anticipate what changes will occur in the near future as well as long term. This session describes some of those predicted changes, such as gene manipulation and bionics, along with challenges that will arise as a result. These changes will need to be dealt with by our brightest minds, but our current societal support for gifted students often is lacking. The future will be as we conceive it to be, and as we nurture our bright minds.

JAMES T. WEBB, PH.D., ABPP-CL
Clinical Psychologist
1650 N. Kolb Rd., Suite 200
Tucson, AZ 85715
(520) 777-6161
Jwebb@greatpotentialpress.com
www.greatpotentialpress.com



James T. Webb, Ph.D., has been recognized as one of the most influential psychologists nationally on gifted education. Dr. Webb has written 16 books, over 80 professional publications, three DVDs, and many research papers for psychology conventions or for conferences regarding gifted and talented children. Six of his books are on gifted children and adults, four have won “Best Book” awards, and several have been translated into other languages.

- *Guiding the Gifted Child: A Practical Source for Parents and Teachers*-- which won the National Media Award of the American Psychological Association as the best book for "significantly contributing to the understanding of the unique, sensitive, emotional needs of exceptional children."
- *Grandparents' Guide to Gifted Children* – winner of two awards
- *Misdiagnosis and Dual Diagnoses of Gifted Children and Adults: ADHD, Bipolar, OCD, Asperger's, Depression, and Other Disorders* – winner of three awards
- *Gifted Parent Groups: The SENG Model, 2nd Edition*
- *A Parent's Guide to Gifted Children* – winner of three awards
- *Searching for Meaning: Idealism, Bright Minds, Disillusionment, and Hope*

In 1981, Dr. Webb established SENG (Supporting Emotional Needs of Gifted Children, Inc.), a national nonprofit organization that provides information, training, conferences, and workshops, and he served as Chair of SENG's Professional Advisory Committee. In 2011, he received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Arizona Association for Gifted children, the Community Service Award from the National Association for Gifted Children, and the Upton Sinclair Award by EducationNews.org, and in 2015 the Lifetime Achievement Award from SENG.

A frequent keynote and workshop speaker at state, national, and international conferences, Dr. Webb, a licensed and board-certified psychologist, has appeared on *Good Morning America*, *CBS Sunday Morning*, *The Phil Donahue Show*, *CNN*, *Public Radio International*, and *National Public Radio*.

A Fellow of the American Psychological Association, he served for three years on its governing body, the Council of Representatives. Dr. Webb is a Fellow of the Society of Pediatric Psychology and the Society for Personality Assessment. In 1992, he received the Heiser Presidential Award for Advocacy by the American Psychological Association, and also the National Award for Excellence, Senior Investigator Division, from the Mensa Education and Research Foundation. He has served on the Board of Directors for the National Association for Gifted Children, and was President of the American Association for Gifted Children. Currently, Dr. Webb is President of Great Potential Press, Inc.

Dr. Webb was President of the Ohio Psychological Association in 1974-1975, and a member of its Board of Trustees for seven years. He has been in private practice as well as in various consulting positions with clinics and hospitals. In 1978, Dr. Webb was one of the founders of the School of Professional Psychology at Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio, and from 1978-1995 he was a Professor and Associate Dean. Previously, Dr. Webb directed the Department of Psychology at the Children's Medical Center in Dayton and was Associate Clinical Professor in the Departments of Pediatrics and Psychiatry at the Wright State University School of Medicine. From 1970-1975, Dr. Webb was on the graduate faculty in psychology at Ohio University.

Born in Memphis, Tennessee, Dr. Webb graduated from Rhodes College, and received his doctorate degree from the University of Alabama. Dr. Webb and his wife are parents of six daughters.