

Peer Relationships

Have you ever wondered why your gifted child prefers to socialize with adults? Do they spend a lot of time alone? Do they have a hard time forming lasting friendships with peers? Have you ever felt frustrated by this as a parent? A common misconception that society has is that gifted children are smart, therefore they should be able to “fit in” just fine. This pamphlet will address the very important social issue of peer relationships amongst our gifted children. You will understand why your gifted child is struggling socially . You will also learn ways to help your gifted child cope and manage social relationships with their peers.

Readings

Paula Olszewski-Kubilius, Seon-Young Lee, and Dana Thomson
Family Environment and Social Development in Gifted Students
Gifted Child Quarterly July 2014 58: 199-216

Seon-Young Lee, Paula Olszewski-Kubilius, and Dana Turner Thomson
Academically Gifted Students' Perceived Interpersonal Competence and Peer Relationships
Gifted Child Quarterly April 2012 56: 90-104

Sherry K. Bain and Sherry Mee Bell
Social Self-Concept, Social Attributions, and Peer Relationships in Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Graders Who Are Gifted Compared to High Achievers
Gifted Child Quarterly Summer 2004 48: 167-178

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Understanding Your Gifted Child

Peer Relationships and the Gifted Child



Peer Relationships Summary

Based on the three articles cited in the bibliography, researchers agree that gifted children tend to be more socially awkward than non-gifted children. One of the reasons that gifted students struggle with forming peer relationships is because of asynchronous development. Asynchronous development refers to the different levels at which a child develops in certain areas. Their intellect can be many years ahead of their maturity and actual age. For example, a six year old can have the intellect of a nine year old, but maturity wise, they are still a six year old.

This gap between intellect and maturity can be problematic for the gifted child, parents, and teachers. The gifted child can have trouble relating to peers his/her own age because of the gap in intellect. This will become more evident as a child matures and reaches adolescence.

The research stated that peer relationships were easier for elementary aged gifted

students to form than older gifted students in middle and high school. This is because most elementary aged gifted children can easily conform to their peers. They also have a high sense of self-concept. They view themselves as likeable and being able to relate and form friendships easily.

As students get older, their self-concept diminishes. They can also have a higher gap between their intellect and age (asynchronous development) than that of their peers. What may be a non-gifted student not understanding can come across as rejection to the gifted student.

Strategies for Coping

- Maintain a positive family environment
- Encourage interests and talents
- Seek out gifted cohorts
- Try to get your gifted child around other gifted children in school and out of school
- Don't stress popularity and forming friendships
- Seek out a mentor for your child
- Grade advancement
- Online Schooling
- Seek family and/or individual counseling

Additional Resources

Sengifted.org (Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted)

www.nagc.org (National Association for Gifted Children)

www.hoagiesgifted.org (All things gifted)

www.davidsongifted.org (Nonprofit organization supporting gifted students)

