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University of Lower Silesia

# "New Dimensions Toward Education, Advocacy and Collaboration for Individuals with Special Needs"

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# MANAGING BEHAVIORAL DISORDERS AMONG GIFTED STUDENTS THROUGH BIBLIOTHERAPEUTIC INTERVENTIONS

**Gboyega Adelowo Adelodun, Ph.D**

## Background to the Study

The characteristics of gifted children often lead to social and emotional problems that can affect their emotional and social development. To understand one's gifted child completely, it is a good idea to see how his or her giftedness can influence his or her behavior. Behavioral disorders, also known as disruptive behavioral disorders, are the most common reasons that parents are told to take their children for mental health assessments and treatment. Behavioral disorders are also common in adults. If left untreated in childhood, these disorders can negatively affect a person's ability to hold a job and maintain relationships.

An emotional behavioral disorder affects a person's ability to be happy, control their emotions and pay attention in school. According to Gallaudet University, symptoms of an emotional behavior disorder include:

- Inappropriate actions or emotions under normal circumstances
- Learning difficulties that are not caused by another health factor.
- Difficulty with interpersonal relationships, including relationships with teachers and peers.
- A general feeling of unhappiness or depression.
- Feelings of fear and anxiety related to personal or school matters.

According to Olanrewaju (2014), behavioral disorders may be broken down into a few types which include:

- Anxiety disorders.
- Disruptive behavioral disorders
- Dissociative disorders
- Emotional disorders
- Pervasive developmental disorders

## What causes a Behavioral Disorder among Gifted Persons?

Adejare (2013) is of the opinion that a behavioral disorder can have a variety of causes. According to him the abnormal behavior that is usually associated with these disorders can be traced back to biological, family and school-related factors. Some biological causes may include: Physical illness or disability, malnutrition, brain damage and hereditary factors.

Other factors related to an individual's home life may contribute to behaviors associated with a behavioral disorder:

- Divorce or other emotional upset at home
- Coercion from parents
- Unhealthy or inconsistent discipline style
- Poor attitude toward education or schooling.

## Emotional and Physical Symptoms of Behavioral Disorders Among Gifted Persons

According to Boston (2006), some of the emotional symptoms of behavioral disorders include:

- Easily getting annoyed or nervous
- Often appearing angry
- Putting blame on others
- Refusing to follow rules or questioning authority.
- Arguing and throwing temper tantrums
- Having difficulty in handling frustration

Unlike other types of health issues, a behavioral disorder will have mostly emotional symptoms, with physical headache being absent. However, sometimes people suffering from a behavioral disorder will develop a substance abuse problem, which could show physical symptoms such as burnt fingertips, shaking or blood shot eyes (Adelowo, 2013).

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## Short-Term and Long-Term Effects of a Behavioral Disorder Among Gifted Individuals

If left untreated, a behavioral disorder may have negative short-term and long-term effects on an individual's personal and professional life. People may get into trouble for acting out, such as face suspension or expulsion for fighting, buying or arguing with authority figures. Adults may eventually lose their jobs. Marriages can fall apart due to prolong strained relationships, while children may have to switch schools and then eventually run out of options.

According to Temitope (2013), the most serious actions a person with a behavioral disorder may engage in include starting fights, abusing animals and threatening to use a weapon on others. The earlier a behavioral disorder is diagnosed and properly treated the more likely it is that a child or adult suffering from it will be able to control their behavior (Jonson 2013).

## Behavior Management Strategies

Tips for Becoming an Effective Behavioral disorder Manager (Mac 2008)

- Phrasing comments to enhance chances of compliance and build self-discipline in kids
- Giving effective (versus ineffective) Praise.
- Praising resistant kids.
- Giving criticism that helps (not hurts)
- Getting respect by giving it away.
- Managing behavior with your instructional style.
- Managing the behavior of groups
- Promoting positive peer pressure in your classroom.
- Quieting the noisy classroom
- Quieting the talkative student
- Raising achievement test scores
- Remembering to focus on your initial goal (when kids get you flustered)

## Ways To Reduce Behavior Problems

Gifted students generally do not develop behavior problems when they are:

(i) Placed with a teacher who enjoys teaching gifted children and learning with them;
(ii) Afforded frequent opportunities to learn with intellectual peers;
(iii) Actively engaged in learning that is appropriately complex, challenging, and meaningful; and
(iv) Provided guidance in how to understand and cope with their giftedness in society.

## Recommendations

In order to successfully manage behavioral disorders among gifted students, it is recommended for parents and teachers of such children that during times of trouble, when emotions run high, they should help children to develop the skills necessary to manage their feelings, to cope at unpleasant or adverse realities and to acquire greater emotional stability. In order to support children in better understanding their world, parents and teachers may have to help them come to terms with circumstances that are frightening, confusing, overwhelming, or possibly unrelated to their past experience.

## Suggestion for Future Research

There is a need to carry out further researches looking into how to manage behavioral disorders among other categories of students with special needs like the visually impaired, hearing impaired, intellectually disabled ones, students with learning disabilities and so on.

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## STRATEGIES FOR MAXIMUM LEARNING WITH MINIMUM STRESS

**Kay D. Thomson**

### Conceptual Framework and Background

Students of any age are a mix of personality traits, what they have learned, and human tendencies. Even students with emotional difficulties can learn expectations if those expectations are explicitly stated, practiced, and effectively monitored and upheld. How much practice is required is often a matter of consistency and clarity of the actual expectations themselves, combined with a student's ability to learn, process the information, and internalize it.

Instructional time is a finite and valuable resource. However, instead of instructional use, it can be used up on office referrals, interactions such as repeated warnings or requests, confrontations, and documentation. Teachers spend countless hours conferencing with parents, other teachers, and administrators over a few students, while "well-behaved" ones are often neglected. Parents may also become resentful, as they sometimes feel what should be handled within the classroom and school setting is not. Little things can escalate into big things. According to Adelman and Taylor, (2005) "an estimated one-third of students fail to learn because of psychosocial problems that interfere with their ability to fully attend to and engage in instructional activities." In a poll of the American Federation of Teachers (Walker, 2004) "17 percent said they lost four or more hours of teaching time per week thanks to disruptive student behavior; another 19 percent said they lost two or three hours. In urban areas, fully 21 percent said they lost four or more hours per week. And in urban secondary schools, the percentage is 24. It's hard to see how academic achievement can rise significantly in the face of so much lost teaching time, not to mention the anxiety that is produced by the constant disruption (and by the implied safety threat), which must also take a toll on learning." In England, a survey showed "69% of members of the National Union of Teachers (NUT) reported experiencing disruptive behavior weekly or more frequently" (Neill, 2001). Much of the literature suggests that it is 'low-level' frequent disruption that is the most common form of pupil misbehavior (ATL, 2010; ATL, 2011; Munn et al, 2004 and Scottish Executive 2006, both cited in Hallam and Rogers (2008), Continental Research (2004), and Ofsted (2005).

### Method

Whether the disruptions are due to significant psychological and/or emotional issues, or simply an escalation or continuance of less severe behaviors, certain aspects are common to effectively increasing learning time with less behavioral disruptions. These aspects include 1) unconditional positive regard, 2) warmth and nurturing, 3) clear and specific expectations, 4) effective follow through, 5) consistency of "enforcement" 6) physical environment, and 7) communication and interaction between teacher and student(s).

Unconditional positive regard looks differently for a teacher/student relationship than a parent/child relationship. While a teacher likely doesn't "love" their students in the same sense as a parent loves their children, a teacher will like their students and can separate the student from his/her undesirable behavior(s) to let them know they are liked simply because they are members of the class. A student can get the same sense of this positive regard from the teacher who has communication, shows interest, and has involvement with the student outside of instructing academics. For instance, a teacher might ask, "How was your game Friday night?" Or, "How is your sister doing with her science project?" Showing involvement might be something like, "Do you want to practice those math facts 1 more time with me before you head to math class?" Having unconditional positive regard demonstrates warmth, caring, and nurturing.

Teachers sometimes do not understand either the importance of clear and explicit expectations, or how to create classroom rules in this manner. Expectations must be clearly defined and measurable in order to be effective. Without clarity, they are more difficult to enforce. The rules a student is most likely to follow, are the ones that are monitored and enforced. Following through with a request, expectation, or demand every time (consistency) is vital to a classroom climate in which maximum learning with minimal disruption occurs. Inconsistent follow through of expectations creates anger in the student, and can escalate smaller things into

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