

香港資優教育學院
The Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education

Factsheet

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL ADVICE SUPPORTING A CHILD SOCIALLY

Gifted children can find it difficult to make friends. They often seem to prefer either their own company or that of adults or much older children. There are lots of reasons for this, gifted children may feel like they have little in common with peers, they don't understand the games they want to play; they are uncomfortable about being seen as more intelligent! Talking these issues through with your child is an important step forward. Sharing with them the idea that we have different friends for different reasons is a valuable way of helping. Your child might, for instance, spend time with one friend because they like dinosaurs or a particular kind of music and with another for very different reasons. Teaching your child not to expect everyone to satisfy every requirement your child has for friendship is a useful first step and can avoid some disappointment.

When trying to teach any behaviour, modelling it yourself is a very useful way of helping your child understand it. Demonstrating to your child the fact that we all have difficulties with relationships at different times can support your child in their struggles to sort out how relationships are supposed to work. If you come in from work and someone has been a little bit sharp with you then tell the story of it to your child and explain how you dealt with it, saying that you are sure they were just having a bad day. Include your child in as many social situations as possible. Before you get there explain some of the social rules to them such as, "this is a party and the best thing to do is to ask someone about their holidays, or their hobbies etc so that you can talk to them about it". You can also say that it is best to find something nice to say to someone to make them feel relaxed talking to you. It sounds odd but a gifted child may not always pick up on these social norms and so teaching them explicitly sometimes helps them to feel confident that they know what to do in different situations.

Meeting up with other able children is a very valuable way for your child to learn to interact successfully in a less pressured environment. As a parent you can go and talk to other parents of gifted children. They are often the best people to ask for practical advice.

Mentors/Buddies

Schools can run a buddy system where an older child is paired with a younger one to support them at various times in the school day. It is beneficial for the older child as it is a position of responsibility and for the younger as they have someone other than an adult to turn to for help. **It is essential to coach the older buddies on what to do if they hear something worrying and to designate an adult supervisor for the scheme.**

An adult other than a teacher or the child's teacher can be designated as a mentor in school. Time can be set aside for meetings where information can be shared confidentially.

At home a mentor can also help - someone trusted but outside the immediate family, an uncle or aunt, a family friend.

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Supporting a Child Emotionally

Able children worry about lots of things for all sorts of different reasons. They worry about school because they think they are different, they are bored, they think they don't understand because they see a wider task than the one outlined by the teacher. Some children worry about new situations, they can visualise possibilities for disaster that others can't envisage. Some worry about issues that are happening in the world that they find in the media. Some children have a low self-esteem and worry what others think of them. What ever the reason there are steps that can be taken to help alleviate some anxieties. Different things work for different children and all of these techniques can be modified to suit different situations

Worries/Happies books (for younger children)

Find two empty notebooks - ask your child to make a front cover for each if you like and label one "Worries Book" and the other "Happies Book".

At the end of every day write down things that your child is worried about in the worries book. You can share some of your worries too to model for your child how to do it. Don't make the child write it if they don't want to but it can help if they do.

Then take away the book and put it in a safe place that your child cannot reach. Say to your child; *"I am going to take these worries away with me. I will read them again and if I can help you with it then I will. If I can't do anything at the moment then we will leave it in the book for a time when we can do something"*.

Make sure you take it away from your child so that they understand that you are taking responsibility for those worries just now.

Then write or draw happy things from the day in the Happies book. Again, you can model how to find the happy things yourself and encourage your child to add theirs. Remember to include the small things as well, like hearing a bird today, or the sky was really blue, or even I got dressed by myself.

The Happies Book is then kept by the child, under their pillow or close by.

For older children and young adults writing down concerns is often a good way of letting them go or sharing them with another person. Sometimes getting rid of the written worries is often quite liberating - burning them or shredding them, for instance. Writing down concerns can be used at school in various formats to let teachers know when issues are arising in class that can be worrying but difficult to talk about.

Talk Tin

- in a quiet corner of the classroom place a box or tin with a lid. Next to it leave a pile of post-it notes and a pencil. Spend time outlining the rules to the class. The rules are:
- anyone can write anything they want to write – no limits.
- if it is placed inside the tin it is just between the writer and the teacher.

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- if it is stuck on the top it is an issue to be shared with the class.
- no-one needs to write their name (although handwriting is often recognisable don't make an issue of it).
- make the children aware that if what is written is about something harmful or dangerous to the writer or someone else then for safety the teacher may have to share it with other adults. This is common child protection practice.
- it often helps to talk to someone outside the situation either another adult or another child.

Counselling

Sometimes worries can grow to a point where they are unmanageable. If possible, before this happens you can seek counselling for your child or your whole family.

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