Giftedness and Stress

Understanding what is causing stress in our gifted youth and how to help them to cope.
What does it mean to be gifted?
What does it TRULY mean???
What is stressing them out?

Oh god I have so much stuff to do. Why am not doing it? I'm going to regret not doing it now. Because then I'll have to do it later. And by then I'll have more stuff to do. Oh God.
Emotions are contagious!

- They spread like secondhand smoke due to mirror neurons
- Can impact people up to three degrees of separation from you within your social network
The Messages They Are Hearing

1. Be amazing at everything you do
2. Avoid new ventures, especially where you might fail
3. What you accomplish matters more than what you learn
4. Having lots of choices = Control over your life
5. You must find your life's passion by high school
6. Everyone is doing, being, and succeeding more than you

(From *Enough As She Is*, by Rachel Simmons)
Five Primary Traits of GT

- Asynchrony
- Intensity
- Sensitivity
- Perceptivity
- Perfectionism
Overexcitabilities
Intellectual OE
The Productivity Dilemma
Perfectionism

"Perfectionism is not the same thing as striving to be your best. Perfectionism is the belief that if we live perfect, look perfect, and act perfect, we can minimize or avoid the pain of blame, judgment, and shame.

It’s a shield. It’s a twenty-ton shield that we lug around thinking it will protect us when, in fact, it’s the thing that’s really preventing us from flight."

(Brown, Brene. The Gifts of Imperfection: Let go of who you Think You’re Supposed to be and Embrace who you are 2010)
And its very good friends...

Procrastination

Competition
Imaginational OE
The "Worst Case Scenario" Dilemma
Sensory OE

[Comic: Two characters are shown. The first character asks, "Do you know what I base my fashion on?" The second character responds, "What?" The first character then says, "Whether or not it itches." The second character responds with an exclamation mark.]

www.angrylittlegirls.com
The Sensory Overload Dilemma

"Like living in the world without skin..."

"Like every sound is coming through a megaphone..."

"Like being outside on the sunniest day without sunglasses..."
Psychomotor
OE
The Boredom Dilemma

“Boredom will always remain the greatest enemy of school disciplines.

...children are bored, not only when they don't happen to be interested in the subject or when the teacher doesn't make it interesting, but also when certain working conditions are out of focus with their basic needs

...boredom is closely related to frustration and that the effect of too much frustration is invariably irritability, withdrawal, rebellious opposition or aggressive rejection of the whole show.”

(Fritz Redl)
Emotional OE
The Empathy Dilemma
"Education is a social process. Education is growth. Education is not a preparation for life; education is life itself.

Education, therefore, is a process of living and not a preparation for future living."

(John Dewey)
The Existential Dilemma
"It takes up a lot of space in your brain..."
What about my future?
The Bass Line Dilemma

"The biggest problem growing up today is not actually stress; it's meaninglessness."

(Dr. Bill Damon, Director of Stanford Center on Adolescence)
Who am I?

What brings me the greatest joy?

What do I really care about?

What problems do I want to help solve?

How may I be of service?
resilience
(noun) re-sil-i-ence

"...the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, or significant ongoing stressors."

(American Psychological Association)
How is it learned and developed???

Role Modeling

How have the adults in your life modeled resiliency and stress management?

"How are you?"

Unraveling the myths of:

Exhaustion as a status symbol

Productivity as self-worth

Anxiety as a Lifestyle

© Sarah Andersen
"Stress isn't always harmful. Once you appreciate that going through stress makes you better at it, it can be easier to face each new challenge." (Kelly McGonigal)

"It's not stress that kills us...it's our reaction to it." (Hans Selye)
Vulnerability

MAYBE I DON'T HAVE TO BE SO TOUGH.

MAYBE I CAN BE VULNERABLE SOMETIMES.

NEVER AGAIN.
Shame

You never finished that MBA.
You're not good enough.
Your wife left you.
I know your dad really wasn't in Luxembourg, he was in singing up.
I know those things that happened to you growing up.
I know you don't think you're pretty enough or smart enough or talented enough or powerful enough.
I know your dad never paid attention, even when you made CFO.

Shame is that thing.
And I'm a kid who does and talks and is.
What do DUCKS have to do with this?
LIZARD BRAIN (REACTIVE) VS. WIZARD BRAIN (RECEPTIVE)
Self-Criticism vs. Self-Compassion

**Self-Criticism...**
- triggers our stress response
- decreases motivation
- impacts our relationships

**Self-Compassion**
- triggers our nurturing response
- increases motivation
- builds connection
Choice

Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.

Viktor Frankl
• Competitive with others
• Won't share knowledge
• Won't offer help to others
• Suspicious of others
• Strives for achievement
• Avoids risk and failure
• Seek validation and approval
The Lens of Abundance

- Collaborates with others
- Generous with others
- Shares knowledge
- Freely offers to help others
- Trusts and builds rapport
- Strives for growth and embraces risk
The Big Three River

The three primary human responses to stress and overwhelm are:

ANGER
ANXIETY
SADNESS
"An emotion is your body's reaction to your mind."

(Eckhart Tolle)
Don't believe everything you think!

1. What evidence do I have that this thought is true? What evidence do I have to the contrary?

2. Is this thought helping me or harming me? How would my life be different if I didn't have this thought?

3. What would I say to someone I care about who was having this thought?
Mindful Self-Compassion

Consider a recent challenge or disappointment:

1. How did you feel? Can you describe this *without being judgmental* of yourself?
2. How was your experience connected to the *larger human experience*?
3. What *words of comfort* would you offer someone you care about who was having a similar experience?
Scuba Safety Stop

A 3-5 minute stop made between 15-20 feet from the surface during the final ascent of a dive.

- Allow nitrogen release
- Pause and regain control
- Aware of surroundings
Stress Safety Stop

A 15–20 minute stop made whenever it feels it would be of benefit!

- Allow cortisol release
- Pause and regain control
- Aware of surroundings
"Play is the highest form of research." (Albert Einstein)

- Allows us to explore all aspects of ourselves
- Fosters empathy
- Helps us navigate complex social groups.
- Is at the core of innovation.

“It takes courage to say yes to rest and play in a culture where exhaustion is seen as a status symbol.”

-Brene Brown

OURYEAROUTDOORS.COM
What do you mean?!?!?!?
"Your brain at positive is 31% more productive than your brain at negative, neutral, or stressed."

(Shawn Achor, Harvard Psychologist)


