

AUSTIN BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CENTER
GARY YORKE, PH.D. & JANE YORKE, M.A.

One Hand On The Door

(Answers to questions patients like to ask as they are leaving, with one hand on the door!)

Determining The Most Appropriate Assessment

The most appropriate assessment for any patient is one that is tailored to the individual. It is poor practice to determine in advance what tests or battery of tests are required before sufficient data is gathered. At ABHC we obtain information from parents, teachers, and the patients before we initiate testing. After a clinical interview, and thorough review of the information gathered, a determination is made about what tests should be administered. *An assessment may include psycho-educational, psychological, emotional, and neuropsychological tests, in order for it to be considered a complete and appropriate assessment.* Our goal is to provide the client with a correct diagnosis and detailed recommendations for addressing their concerns.

Please feel free to call us with any questions. More information about our practice can be found at our website:
www.AustinBehavioral.info

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Teen Girls at Higher Risk for Depression

A recent study published in *Clinical Psychological Science* suggests adolescent girls may be more vulnerable to depression. While there is a general increase in the rates of depressive symptoms during adolescence, the increase appears to be higher for females. The authors of the study (Hamilton, Stange, Abramson, Alloy) suggest that girls have greater exposure to stressful interpersonal events, and this results in increased rumination, contributing to the risk for depression. The researchers emphasize that the link is not driven by reactivity to stress — girls are not any more reactive to the stressors that they experienced than were boys. “Simply put, if boys and girls had been exposed to the same number of stressors, both would have been likely to develop rumination and negative cognitive styles,” Hamilton explains.

The researchers examined data from 382 Caucasian and African American adolescents participating in an ongoing longitudinal study. The adolescents completed self-report measures evaluating cognitive vulnerabilities and depressive symptoms at an initial assessment, and then completed three follow-up assessments, each spaced about 7 months apart. As expected, teens who reported higher levels of interpersonal dependent stress showed higher levels of negative cognitive style and rumination at later assessments, even after the researchers took initial levels of the cognitive vulnerabilities, depressive symptoms, and sex into account. Girls tended to show more depressive symptoms at follow-up assessments than did boys — while boys’ symptoms seemed to decline from the initial assessment to follow-up, girls’ symptoms did not.

Adolescent Depression

Teenage depression isn’t just about being in a bad mood, or occasional episodes of sadness. Teen depression is far more serious and can impact every aspect of a teen’s life. Teen depression is associated with drug and alcohol abuse, self-loathing and self-harm (e.g. cutting), promiscuity, violence, and suicide.

Warning Signs of Depression

- **Problems at school.** Low energy and decreased concentration may lead to poor attendance, a drop in grades, or frustration with schoolwork.
- **Running away.** Some teens will try to cope with their negative feelings by leaving home.
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The Unique Needs of Gifted Children

Gifted and talented children often have unique needs. However, because these children are so bright it is often assumed that they’ll be fine without any special support. Typically, this is not true. The development of the gifted child is asynchronous. Their minds are often ahead of their physical development and their cognitive, social, and emotional skills develop unevenly. Early signs of giftedness include: excelling at memory activities, unusual proficiency on tasks that are complicated, learning new information or ways of doing things very quickly, easily perceiving hidden meaning, precocious development of a specific skill area such as reading or math, a high need for a variety of experiences, gravitating toward playmates that are especially creative or imaginative, advanced vocabulary and the ability to “play” with words, and as noted above, noticeable and uneven development in their cognitive abilities relative to their social and emotional development.

Giftedness is not the same as being “bright.” Each state is responsible for defining giftedness for educational purposes. In Texas a “Gifted and talented student” means a child or youth who performs at or shows the potential for performing at a remarkably high level of accomplishment when compared to others of the same age, experience, or environment and who:

- (1) exhibits high performance capability in an intellectual, creative, or artistic area;
- (2) possesses an unusual capacity for leadership; or
- (3) excels in a specific academic field.
(Texas Education Code 29.121)

It is worth noting that no two gifted children are alike. Therefore, there are few universal recommendations that will apply to all gifted children. However, with all gifted children the assumption should never be made that their giftedness will ensure that they’ll thrive. It is strongly recommended that parents who suspect their child is gifted pursue assessment with their local school district in order to determine if their child is truly in the 2-3% of children that will meet criteria for giftedness. Gifted children tend to thrive in an educational environment that provides an enriched curriculum and challenges them to be creative and curious.

Parents of gifted children should strive to provide opportunities for their child to interact with children the same age and children who are older. At times, a gifted child may find it easier to relate to an older child and may have more in
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One Hand On The Door Newsletter

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ON THE WEB AT WWW.AUSTINBEHAVIORAL.INFO

Teen Girls at Higher Risk for Depression

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- **Drug and alcohol abuse.** While many teens may experiment with drugs and alcohol, depressed teens are at risk for substance abuse.
- **Low self-esteem.** Negative thoughts may include “I’m ugly, a failure, unworthy of love or attention,” and feelings of shame and guilt.
- **Internet addiction.** Excessive computer use may signal a withdrawal from interpersonal relationships and contribute to feelings of depression. Excessive computer use may also be used as a distraction from negative feelings.
- **Reckless behavior.** High-risk behaviors include reckless driving, entering unsafe situations, drugging and drinking, and unsafe sex.
- **Violence.** Some depressed teens will become violent, especially if they have felt like victims in the past.

Warning Signs of Suicidality

- Talking or joking about committing suicide.
- Speaking positively about death or romanticizing dying (“If I died, people might love me more”).
- Writing stories and poems about death, dying, or suicide.
- Engaging in reckless behavior or having a lot of accidents resulting in injury.
- Giving away prized possessions.
- Saying goodbye to friends and family as if for the last time.
- Seeking out weapons, pills, or other ways to kill themselves.

The Unique Needs of Gifted Children

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common with the older child. Parents and teachers should avoid emphasizing academic tasks and learning by reading and pencil and paper tasks. Provide opportunities for the gifted child to learn by exploring and doing, such as attending concerts and museums. Do not assume that the gifted child is only interested in academic pursuits. Provide the child with opportunities to participate in a wide variety of social activities, physical activities, and creative activities.

Some children with giftedness ride an emotional rollercoaster and can be unduly sensitive to their environment and their peers perception of them. Emotional functioning should be monitored closely and the support of a counselor who understands giftedness should be sought if the parent or physician has any concerns. Other gifted children may be oblivious to their peers needs and my need help understanding that all children are unique and to be valued, and their giftedness doesn’t make them superior to their peers. Some gifted children may struggle with perfectionism, while others will struggle with finding the motivation and wherewithal to complete their daily work. Some gifted children may be very compliant, while others will routinely and ably challenge their parents and teachers.

Parents should reach out often and early should their child be observed struggling with any of these issues. Support can be obtained for the GT teacher, school counselor, other parents, as well as counselors in private practice. Gifted children are as susceptible as other children to emotional problems, but these problems may be exacerbated by the “differentness” they experience. Therefore, many gifted children will benefit from psychotherapy as they progress from childhood to adulthood.

www.myparentingpage.com and www.myspecial-ed-504page.com are two informational websites for parents and are maintained by Austin Behavioral Health Center.