

The Role of Anxiety in the Lives of Gifted Adults: Origins, Manifestations, and Amelioration

Gifted adults are more than the sum of their complex intellect and remarkable talents. They have inborn extraordinary cognitive, affective, physical and intuitive functioning, which is the substrate of advanced and accelerated functions in the brain, an extraordinary SELF, and a capacity for advanced development, all of which is enhanced or inhibited by their interface(s) in the environment, throughout their lives. There is often a gross lack of fit from the beginning of life with absent or inadequate opportunities to develop holistically, without injury. This poor fit can be the taproot of anxiety from earliest ages, yet it is every gifted person's birthright to live a fully actuated "switched-on" life, free from limiting mental health difficulties such as anxiety.

INTEGRAL PRACTICE FOR THE GIFTED™ Model: For gifted human beings, superior cognition flavors and shapes all perception and experience. Cognition should NEVER be studied alone as there are >30 other lines of development (i.e., emotions, gender, communicative capacity, spirituality, sexuality, kinesthetic, mathematical and morality) that interact with and influence cognition. Additionally, the gifted SELF is a highly distinctive entity, unique to each person, ubiquitous, self-determining, and wholly influential in development and personal experience. This sense of SELF is not-to-be-ignored imperative; an internal directive demanding attention and forcing one's compliance/ participation dictates as if one's very life depended on it. Early neglect & misappropriation of innate abilities/proclivities can cause inner developmental derailment (anxiety's fuel). (Jackson, 2010, 2021)



ANXIETY: Negative mood state accompanied bodily symptoms: increased heart rate, muscle tension or shallow and rapid breathing. Sense of unease, apprehension about the future, worried thoughts, and feelings of tension or fear. Understanding how high intelligence and anxiety are related is critical :

“The planning function of the nervous system, during evolution, culminated in appearance of ideas, values, & pleasures – unique manifestations man’s social living. Man, alone, can plan for distant future & can experience retrospective pleasures of achievement. Man, alone, can be happy. But man, alone can be worried & anxious . . . posture accompanies movement as a shadow. . . anxiety accompanies intellectual activity as its shadow the more we know of the nature of anxiety, the more we will know of the intellect.”

Liddell, 1949, p. 185

ANXIETY PHYSICAL MANIFESTATIONS: Dry or discomfort mouth; Heart palpitations; Sweating. Trembling and Shaking; Feelings of choking; Headaches; Nausea; Abdominal Distress (stomach and gut); Feeling faint; Sleeplessness; Muscular Tension.

ANXIETY PSYCHOLOGICAL MANIFESTATIONS: Intense fear or discomfort; Irritability; Restlessness; A sense of dread; Difficulty concentrating; Constantly feeling ‘on edge’ Avoidance of certain situations; Isolating oneself; Fear; Obsessive thoughts; Compulsive action feelings of depression/other types of general discomfort; Derealization (feeling what is happening is NOT real); Narrowing of perceptions; Self-absorption.

WE MUST WORK TOWARDS ACTIVATING AND INTEGRATING ALL ASPECTS OF SELF: “I have always defined myself by wholeness, by the need for consensus, by a sense of inter-relatedness. I knew I had to consciously and physically work towards wholeness integrating my various systems: the analytical, the philosophical, the academic, the emotional, my physical self.”