

## Problems and challenges of the gifted adolescent: School-related problems of the gifted adolescent

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**Abstract:** *Among non-gifted adolescents school-related problems might include school pressure, such as lack of learning motivation, concentration problems, lack of interest, or just laziness. The non-gifted might prefer to do fun things, such as spend time with friends rather than activities that have been chosen for them by responsible adults. Very often this is not the situation for gifted adolescents. Many of them actually like learning, love working hard in order to accomplish cognitive tasks, and wish to have more and more difficult subjects they can absorb themselves in. However, too often they cannot do it in their regular classes; many a time not even in their special gifted groups. Some of the most frequent school-related problems gifted adolescents are likely to cope with are acceleration of their studies, choosing a suitable learning track and make early decisions about academic studies, the difficulty of enduring boredom, negative attitude of peers, high expectations, or the pressure “not to neglect one’s giftedness”, school discipline and self-discipline problems, the difficulty to understand others, problems related to introversion, perfectionism, as well as impatience and intolerance.*

**Keywords:** Giftedness; gifted students; adolescents; school-related problems; social/emotional problems

### Introduction

In the previous study, *To Be Gifted Adolescent*, the issues that have an effect on adolescents, including those who have a greater or somewhat different influence of gifted adolescents than on non-gifted adolescents, were discussed (David, 2018). This study focuses on issues that are unique to gifted adolescents and are school-related. This article will be followed by another paper discussing social/emotional problems that are unique to the gifted adolescent.

There is some overlap between these two categories, namely, school-related- and social-emotional problems. However, while social and emotional problems appear quite frequently among the non-gifted because of school pressure, learning difficulties and struggling for success, such problems occur among the gifted quite frequently because of different reasons. This article will expand this theme, and offer potential explanations for it.

Another point of view that clears the connection between learning- and social-emotional problems is that in most cases any improvement in the adolescent's learning-conditions or situation leads to improvement in her or his social and emotional situation, and vice versa. Rogers (2002) concludes that not only acceleration (e.g. grouping, grade skipping) leads to academic, social and emotional gains for gifted students, but almost any form of grouping (e.g., withdrawal programs, cluster grouping, within-class grouping), intended to satisfy the needs of gifted adolescents.

*The main differences between school-related problems of the gifted and the non-gifted adolescent*

Among non-gifted adolescents school-related problems might include school pressure, such as lack of learning motivation, concentration problems, lack of interest, or just laziness. They might also prefer to do *fun things*, such as spend time with friends rather than activities that have been chosen for them by *responsible adults*, namely parents and educators. Very often this is not the situation for gifted adolescents. Many of them actually like learning, love working hard in order to accomplish cognitive tasks, and wish to have more and more difficult subjects they can absorb themselves in (David, 2017a). However, too often they cannot do it in their regular classes; many a time not even in their special gifted groups. Here is the list of the most frequent school-related problems such adolescents are likely to cope with.

*Acceleration of their studies*

Many gifted adolescents are ready to finish school, take the matriculation exams, in countries where these exams are the gateway for higher education, a year, two years or even more years before the end of formal school, for example, the *Study of Mathematically Precocious Youth* (SMPY): Benbow et. al., 2000; Benbow and Stanley, 1996; Lubinski, 2004; Lubinski and Benbow, 1994, 2000; Lubinski, Benbow et. al., 2001, Lubinski, Webb et. al., 2001; Lubinski and Humphreys, 1990, 1997. In many cases, the student is not prepared to take all the matriculation examinations at the same time, as he or she has been very advanced in a certain subject but not in others.

The need to accelerate the studies of gifted adolescents has been mentioned and discussed by Freeman (2001), Gross (2004), Holahan and Sears (1995), Hollingworth, 1990, Lubinski et. al., (2001); Moon et. al., (1994), and Terman (1959) as promoting high level, creative achievement. Furthermore, the Terman longitudinal studies have shown that while many of the accelerated students in the Terman sample became professional, highly creative adults, only a small minority among the underachievers in his study had their studies accelerated (Terman, 1925; Terman and Oden, 1947, 1959) and Holahan and Sears (1995).

Among the 320 students of the Lubinski, Webb et. al., (2001) study, who were all identified prior to age 13 and were studied during their adolescence and 10 years later, 96% had some kind of acceleration. More than half of them earned a PhD, many more continued their

studies in the most prestigious universities and achieved academic success according to every criterion.

Feldhusen (2005) compared the academic success of the *Termites* to the lesser achievements of the children from the Hollingworth project (Hollingworth, 1926, 1942). According to him,

While the children in the Hollingworth project had special instruction and curricula, many of Terman's students, however, seemed to have achieved high occupational levels and salaries without special education except for abundant opportunities for acceleration (p. 18).

Though not a proof, it should be noted that regarding *IQ*, the Hollingworth group was superior to that of Terman. Thus, it is quite likely that they should outperform the *Termites* academically. This was not the case, as has been shown. The main difference between these two groups was that while the *Termites* could accelerate their studies the Hollingworth students were held back and were not allowed to advance at their maximal preferable pace.

#### *Choosing a suitable learning track and making early decisions about academic studies*

The need to choose the best possible high school learning track is a problem common to most gifted adolescents. Sometimes this means moving to a far-away school and thus living in the school dormitory; sometimes the chosen school is just in another city and thus the gifted adolescent has to leave her or his friends and travel for a long time each morning and each afternoon; sometimes it includes very long hours of practicing, whether in a sport club or in a music conservatory, which hardly leaves time either for social events or meetings or for studying any other subject.

The need to make early decisions about academic studies is unique to high ability, high achieving adolescents. While among non-gifted students such a decision, namely, whether to start academic studies and in what area has to be taken not before the last year of high school or even at the end of the compulsory- social or military service, this is not the case for gifted adolescents. If they are ready for academic studies while still in high school they have to make a decision, such as which university or college to attend, their area of studies, or starting their academic track after leaving school or simultaneously, while still attending school. In many cases, this decision is premature, and may result in choosing the best higher education institute but may not be the right place for an adolescent, being too strict or too far from home, or choosing an institute where the level of studies is not good enough for the gifted youngster.

Gifted adolescents get involved, in many cases, in cognitive, musical, artistic, sport, or social issues that require a vast investment of time and energy. Thus, decisions such as concentrating in one single chosen area might cause neglecting or even leaving others. Making such decisions too early might put enormous pressure on the gifted adolescent. Studies have proven that the gifted adolescent is interested in many more extra-curricular activities than the non-gifted (Hong, and Milgram, 2008; Milgram, 2003; Milgram and Hong, 1999). While this need is common to the majority of gifted adolescents, it is even more

crucial for the versatile gifted (David, 2008). This young person has to choose between a more prestigious learning track and the one he or she likes better; between over-loading both time and energy in order to get the best possible grades and *taking it easy* regarding school tasks in order to be able to participate in a musical ensemble, between being a social leader – which is considered very important during adolescence (Crone and Dahl, 2012) and rejecting this idea as it is not to result in long-term gains, or between preparing art works for an exhibition or trying to break the national record in any sports type. Sometimes the choice is between a few academic activities – concentrating in school-related activities or starting university studies. All these dilemmas have no *correct* answers, while it is obvious that when choosing one possibility many others are excluded.

In Israel, where serving in the army for three years for boys and two for girls is obligatory, the gifted adolescent faces, many a time, a tough decision between joining a prestigious, interesting military track, and materializing her or his giftedness. It has already been mentioned that “Due to the mandatory service requirement, the Israeli army can hand-pick the best and brightest students to work in its high-tech operations” (Chaifetz, 2002, 389). However, the fact that joining such a military unit means giving up many other options open for the gifted adolescent has not yet been discussed in the professional literature. I have already met many adolescents – both boys and girls – who had faced this dilemma. The first time I can recall of such a case goes back to the year 2000, when a 17-year old girl told me she had been invited to take the exams for a very prestige computers’ military unit, known as an Israeli *High-Tech greenhouse* (Chaifetz, 2002; Hiltzik, 2000). The conflict such an adolescent faces is more complicated as it involves a potential for a substantial financial advantages:

Through the army, Israeli citizens can get technological training not only in how to fly jet fighters, but also as managers of multibillion-dollar research and procurement programs (Hiltzik, 2000).

So that it is not just a matter of “how to spend the next 3 years of my life” but also a question of having to choose, at a very young age, between a career that might result in a certain life style including high potential for wealth, and another that might be more intellectually satisfactory.

#### *The difficulty of enduring boredom*

During adolescence many gifted feel quite often that they *waste time* when sitting in a class where they *learn nothing*, or that they could have learnt in a much speedier pace either by themselves or in a more challenging class, that other, non-gifted students hold back their cognitive development, their process of acquiring knowledge and their advancement – especially in the areas where they excel. Unfortunately, too many gifted adolescents learn in regular classes where they are bored (Dai et. al., 2011; Park and Oliver, 2009; Preckel et. al., 2010) because of the non-sufficient knowledge of the teachers, the large variety of their peers and the slow learning pace.

### *Negative attitude of peers*

Negative feelings from peers is a feeling familiar to many gifted adolescents, and is tightly connected to feeling different from their peers both in the pace- and depth of learning and the different areas of interest (Cross et al., 1993; Freeman, 2001; Moon et al., 1997; Parker and Adkins, 1995). However, this feeling does not always reflect the actual situation, as the gifted adolescent can overcome these feelings and learn how to deal with them when they occur.

Gifted adolescents are, quite often, the target of jealousy or animosity (Manaster, et. al., 1994; Massé and Gagné, 2002; Sauder, 2009). However, Massé and Gagné (2002) found that the jealousy and envy gifted adolescents feel are not always as harmful as it is perceived by the gifted themselves. These scholars examined a sample of 689 French Canadian high school students who completed two questionnaires addressing both the envy they felt and the envy expressed toward them. The results were that students showed more envy toward their peers' social and financial successes than toward their academic achievements or intelligence. On the other hand, academic talent became the object most frequently reported characteristic non-gifted students envied.

### *High expectations, or the pressure “not to neglect one’s giftedness”.*

While many non-gifted adolescents are allowed, in many cases, to spend a great amount of time in non-cognitive, mainly social activities, the gifted adolescent is quite often under pressure – both from home and from school, to focus in learning rather than in non-cognitive issues, such as social connections, the body image/body changes, impulses and non-educational, even dangerous activities, etc. Such expectations might be unrealistic. In many cases, adolescents feel a dissonance between their own and their parents’ or teachers’ expectations. This dissonance is often much larger than parents and counselors might assume (Kerr et al., 1988).

### *School discipline and self-discipline problems*

A gifted adolescent might be able to reach academic success which is not typical to her or his age, skip one class or more, or start their academic studies while still in high school. If such a success is not based on steady, well-developed emotional maturation, beyond what is expected from a youngster her or his age, there is a risk of developing a false self (Winnicott, 1990). The adolescent who is under external pressures has to process the conflict between the others’ demands and expectations and her or his own. Being unsuccessful might cause depression, feeling invaluable and even desperate. This false message from parents or teachers might also cause the feeling that *I am smarter than everybody around me*, as a consequence this adolescent comes to questions such as *why do I have to obey adults who are less intelligent than me?*, *why do I have to accept society rules made for ‘ordinary’, ‘mediocre’ people – rather than to people like me?* Such thoughts lead, in many cases, to unsocial behavior, school problems, loss of parental authority or even delinquency.

In addition to school discipline problems that occur quite often among gifted adolescents who feel that school does not really contribute to their learning and thus they must not obey its

rules or adjust to its demands, another high-IQ related problem is lack of enough self-discipline needed for materializing the high potential of the gifted adolescent. Duckworth and Seligman (2005) have already shown that academic performance of adolescents can be better predicted by their self-discipline than by their intelligence quotient. Thus, while during childhood the gifted can be successful in school without putting too much effort; sometimes without any home-work doing or preparing for exam, this is not necessarily the case during adolescence. But the gifted adolescent, who has been used to succeed without learning, might be at risk for failing when self-discipline is needed. He or she might encounter serious difficulties when having to give up more "fun" activities than rehearsing school materials or preparing school assignments, and thus their lack of self-discipline can interfere with their learning achievements.

#### *The difficulty to understand others*

The gap between the high cognitive abilities and the age-matched emotional development quite often prevents the gifted adolescent from being able to understand that other people sometimes act emotionally rather than logically. This can result in perceiving others as stupid, which might harm the gifted adolescent not only socially but also academically because of "non-acceptable classroom behavior". Sometimes the difficulty gifted adolescents encounter is understanding the others' point of view (Shechtman and Silektor, 2012), which has similar results.

#### *Introversion*

While in the general population, the rate of introverts is esteemed to be between 25% (Gallagher, 1990) and 33% (Cain, 2013), it is esteemed to be about 50% among the gifted (Sak, 2004). This might have negative influence on teachers, counselors, and psychologists who tend to blame the gifted adolescent for *wishing to of keep to themselves*, being vain or even having anti-social tendencies, rather than on her- or his introversion and need for *time alone* (Zorman and David, 2000).

While educational self-concept is perceived in general as high among gifted adolescents, this is not exactly accurate. Plucker and Stocking (2001) found in their study of 131 adolescents participating in a summer program for academically talented students that:

The math achievement–math self-concept and verbal achievement–verbal self-concept parameters were positive, moderate in magnitude, and statistically significant, while math achievement–verbal self-concept and verbal achievement–math self-concept parameters were negative, statistically significant, and smaller than the math–math and verbal–verbal estimates (p. 540).

We can conclude that unlike non-gifted students, who tend to base their educational self-concept upon their success in school exams or praises from teachers and parents, gifted adolescents are at-risk for a low learning self-concept when they excel either in the verbal or the mathematical-logical domain. This has to do not only with the tendency of the gifted to

perfectionism but also with the ability of them to be aware of their own disadvantages, and compare their very high abilities in one domain to the comparatively less excellent abilities in others. My clinical experience has made me aware of the fact that many gifted adolescents strongly resist every trial to art-creating or even to prose-writing, declaring: *I am no good at it* simply because they are so much better in math or science. This needs further verification and analysis.

### *Perfectionism*

Striving for perfection has been a powerful engine for society since history exists. Unjustly, it has been blamed for causing a variety of mental negative conditions, such as psychosomatic pains, feelings of inferiority, decrease of self-esteem, unhealthy competition, jealousy and even depression (David, 2009b; Manaster et. al., 1994). However, Stoeber and Rambow (2007) found that among 121 grade 9 adolescents the wish to be perfect had a negative correlation with depressive symptoms. The findings show that striving for perfection in adolescent school students is also associated with positive characteristics and adaptive outcomes and thus may form part of a healthy pursuit of excellence.

Negative reactions to imperfection and perceived parental pressure to be perfect, however, are associated with negative characteristics and maladaptive outcomes and thus may undermine adolescents' motivation and well-being. Once the influence of negative reactions to imperfection is taken out perfectionism per se has no influence on the wellbeing of adolescents. In their study of 123 grade 9-12 adolescents, Accordino et. al., (2000) had similar results: perfectionism resulted in increase of students' personal standards and self-esteem and decrease in the depression level. It can thus be concluded that high standards do not necessarily result in mental tension, and in many cases it is just the opposite. Only when students experienced a discrepancy between their personal standards and actual performance, their depression levels increased and their self-esteem decreased.

Perfectionism is a characteristic of giftedness, and as such it might have a substantial influence on the adolescent (David, 2009b; Mofield, and Parker Peters, 2015; Mofield et. al., 2016; Speirs Neumeister, 2009). The aspiration towards high standards, the expectation to do everything, and to have perfect results is unrealistic or unreachable and might cause social and emotional problems. However, results are mixed regarding perfectionism among the gifted. For example, Chan (2007) states that in a sample of 315 Chinese gifted students, "focusing on the mean scores of positive and negative perfectionism, the findings suggested that students tended to endorse positive perfectionism more than negative perfectionism" (p. 87). Ablard and Parker (1997) conducted a study of 127 pairs of parents and their 6<sup>th</sup> grade gifted young adolescents and revealed that in contrary to the research assumption, that the parents would be more concerned about the children's achievement goals, which might cause perfectionism, the parents in this study reported that learning goals were more important for them, and external standards were not predominant. Children of performance goals parents were much more likely to become maladaptive perfectionists, namely, striving towards perfectionism while functioning less well as a result (Herman et al., 2013). Another

interesting study is that of Damian et. al., (2017), which examined 487 adolescents (aged 12–19 years, 54% female) using a cross-lagged longitudinal design with three time points spaced 4–5 months apart. While most other studies examined whether perfectionism resulted in higher achievements, this study showed that academic achievements predicted relative increases in both perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns.

### *Impatience and intolerance*

The gifted adolescent might be impatient when he or she tries to solve complicated problems – whether in school, homework or during extra-curricular activities; this is usually the result of one’s exaggerated belief in her or his abilities. In addition, the high intensity level common to many gifted adolescents (Daniels, 2009; Daniels and Piechowski, 2008; Daniels and Meckstroth, 2008; Piechowski, 2006), who in addition are not always aware that their high abilities reflect others’ less capability, are not advantageous socially. The combination of being able to think quickly (about the potential connection between intelligence and quickness see David, 2012) and very high cognitive abilities might be a catalyst to impatience to ambivalence and to unsolvable social situations.

### **Findings and discussion**

In this article, which has included, until this point, a survey of the literature dealing with the main school-related problems of gifted adolescent students, is supported by my own experience of working with gifted adolescents for over 20 year. Both the literature and my experience reveal a complicated picture which is somewhat different from the more schematic, one-dimensional one drawn by in most of the literature dealing with this subject, and goes as far as slaughtering holy cows in dealing with others. Only a minority of the unique problems of gifted adolescents at school have proven to be a result of characteristics connected only and directly to these students’ giftedness. Here is a summary of the findings, along with suggestions as to how to overcome the challenges these problems might cause.

General negative feelings of peers. The negative feelings, described mainly by parents of the gifted, do not always reflect the actual situation. The gifted adolescent can overcome these feelings and learn how to deal with them when they occur. For example: as humor and high intelligence are closely connected (see, for example, Bergen, 2009; Shade, 1991; Ziv and Gadish, 1990), the gifted adolescent can use it to reduce negative feelings from her or his peers. Another way is to suggest her or him that it is for their good to become the *crying shoulder* of their peers. This role, which is very useful for both genders though it is perceived as *feminine* might help the gifted adolescent for the long run: peers who have trust her or him with their secrets will be less prone to have such feelings, and if loathing towards the gifted boy or girl arises – there will be someone who will help the gifted adolescent to deal with it.

### *Jealousy or animosity*

Both jealousy and animosity towards the gifted certainly exist, but do not necessarily harm as much as it could have been assumed, which can be proven by the fact that the damage they



are capable of is not perceived as critical by the gifted themselves (Massé and Gagné, 2002). Parents think, quite frequently, that envy of other students is the main reason for the problems of their adolescent children but actually this is not always the case, and many a time – this is not the case at all. The first step in a counselling session of parents seeking help because “my son’s or daughter’s peer hate her or him because their feeling of envy or jealousy” will be to explain this truth; only after they accept it they can help their son or daughter to deal with it.

It should be noted, that the mathematically gifted do not necessarily feel *odd* or *not belonging* because of their academic area of interest, which might seem strange or even bizarre to the *ordinary* student, but rather the verbally gifted is at high risk to be an outcast due to her or his *high language*, namely, the use of *correct* language, with a vocabulary that seems too rich (David, 2013).

#### *Refusal to take part in social media*

According to Alvermann and Harrison (2016, 221), “Social media, among other technologies, now comprises the majority of an average adolescent’s day, as a recent survey reports, U.S. teenagers are spending an average of nine hours a day media multitasking”. Though such data causes a lot of concern among parents and educators, it has recently been shown that this fact is not necessarily a cause for *moral panic* (Sánchez-Moya and Cruz-Moya, 2015), neither is it a *proof* of the deterioration of verbal abilities (Gleason, 2016):

Of the roughly 1200 Tweets collected from these 5 participants, the over-whelming majority demonstrated a concern for writing clarity and functional grammar. Two participants described a ‘perfectionistic’ attention to composing tweets, which included behaviors like deleting tweets with grammatical errors. Participants noted they paid attention to ‘correct’ grammatical forms, including spelling, punctuation, and capitalization (p.43).

Thus, we can conclude that while refusal to connect to the class WhatsApp, for example, and thus be disconnected from all class events might be harmful, if a gifted adolescent chooses not to spend time reading boring messages and jokes which are not so funny – this decision should be respected.

#### *High expectations, or the pressure not to neglect one’s giftedness*

High expectations might be indeed a risk-factor for the gifted adolescent. However, for most gifted children and youths, the main problem is low- or even no- rather than high expectations. The history of giftedness in the US and elsewhere has proven that the true risk is low rather than low expectations from the ablest. More than 60 years ago Todd (1957) had already written about *The Failure of American Schools*; in fact, the movement for gifted education in the US started about this time not by parents or educators who felt that gifted students did not receive the education they needed, but rather because of the space race that started in 1955 (Link Roberts, 1999). During the entire 20<sup>th</sup> century scholars in the field of

giftedness published articles about the deterioration of American education in general, and its failure to meet the demands of gifted students in particular (Winner, 1996).

In addition, as Kerr (1997 [1985]) has already shown, the well-being of the gifted adult female as well as that of the male (Kerr and Cohn, 2001) depends a lot on materializing one's giftedness. While there is nothing wrong if a talented math student who chooses to become a musician and feels he or she has achieved highly in their area of choice, when the gifted adolescent makes such choices that would make it almost impossible to resume their education the mental cost they pay is high. I have come to the same conclusion during the two generations of gifted children and youths I have followed; I have also written about the phenomenon of gifted parents who have neglected their giftedness and regret doing that. In fact, one of the main reasons for participating in workshops for parents of gifted children has been *I do not want my son to be like me. At 40+ I have a nice clerical job, nothing like the promises I heard time and again: you can be whatever you wish to* (David, 2009a). This tendency, of not satisfying the needs of the gifted, continues in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Klein, 2011; Vail, 2001).

The report that demonstrates this deterioration in strict numbers is a US 2009 report (STATE of the States in Gifted Education National Policy and Practice Data 2008-2009). According to it:

13 states provided \$0 in state funds to support gifted education in 2008- 2009, another 5 states spent \$1 million or less. 11 states make a greater investment in gifted students by spending more than \$10 million in state funds. 32 states mandate some level of gifted education services but only 6 fully fund the mandate; 5 states with mandates are not funded.

The majority of gifted children are placed in the regular classroom setting where most teachers have little to no specialized training in gifted education. 41 states define giftedness, but 29 states do not require districts to follow the state definition. Only 11 states require districts to accept gifted identification decisions from other districts in the state. 10 states permit students to enter kindergarten earlier than the state cut-off age, but 13 states do not allow the practice; 21 leave the decision to districts. 14 states provide public residential high schools for math and science, 2 for the humanities, and 6 for the fine and performing arts. 17 states provide funds for summer advanced programs called *governor's schools*, and 16 states fund a virtual high school

Only 5 states require all teachers to receive pre-service training in gifted and talented education. General education teachers in 36 states are not required to have any training on the nature and needs of gifted and talented students at any point in their careers. 13 states require districts to have administrators for gifted education, yet only 4 states require them to have certification in gifted and talented education. Only 5 states require annual professional development for teachers in specialized gifted and talented programs.

A similar situation exists in Australia (Atkin, 2016), many Middle Eastern countries (David, 2017b) as well as in most of the countries that offers any gifted education for the more able (Pfeiffer et. al., 2017).

### *School discipline and self-discipline problems*

School discipline problems and self-discipline problems belong to two different categories. The first depends both on the school system rules and demands, as well as on the student her-or himself and the way these students deal with them. Self-discipline problems rely solely on the student, and learning how to handle this subject might be a useful tool for personality building; as such should be treated seriously and not just in order *to satisfy school demands or restrictions*.

School discipline problems are the most frequent of all school-related problems that parents are referred to me for counseling. In fact, many of these parents admit that the only reason they seek my help is the dissatisfaction of the education system regarding their gifted daughter or son. During the first telephone call (David, in press) *I see no harm in my child's behavior, but I am sick and tired of getting text-messages, telephone calls and invitations for meeting the school staff, so I must end the complaints of the teachers*.

The first step in helping a gifted adolescent in such a situation would be to explain her or him that their opinion about the teachers, the school rules, their peers and the learning material does not matter, and assure them they could talk about it with the therapist because indeed, the situation is not simple but acting out would not change it but rather escalate the problems. During the parents' instructing meetings the therapist must make the parents understand that there are only two possibilities: either their gifted adolescent learns how to obey to rules or they must find another place or her or him, such as home-schooling, a private school where there are hardly any social demands, no extra-curricular activities – if these are the main causes of their child's misbehavior, and no dress code – if the youngster complains about it. In countries where there is no obligatory education after the age of 15 or 16, there is also an option of leaving school, and in some cases this is the recommended way of action. But no matter what is the way the parents – along with their adolescent son or daughter choose – it must be decided after deep thinking and mutual discussions, and after such a decision had been made – it should be final.

As for self-discipline problems: such problems are a sub-group of self-regulation problems of the gifted, which have been widely discussed in the scientific literature (Ablard and Lipschultz, 1998; Housand, and Reis, 2008; Neber and Schommer-Aikins, 2002; Risemberg and Zimmerman, 1993; Stoeger and Ziegler, 2005; Tortop, 2015; Treffinger, 1975; Zimmerman and Martinez-Pons, 1990). The main conclusions of these studies are that gifted students have to self-regulate both their work and their lives not only in order to materialize their giftedness but also in order to achieve a high level of life satisfaction and maintain interpersonal relationships. Indeed, the compensation mechanism, which is highly developed among the gifted (David, 2011, 2014; Olenchak, 2009; Silverman, 2009; Wellisch and Brown, 2012) should not full either parents or educators. Because of the high cognitive level

of the gifted they are able, in many cases, to hide their self-regulation problems in general and self-discipline problems in particular for a long time, and when this problem is revealed it might already be too late to work on it. Thus, it is highly recommended that parents who notice problems of concentration, persistence – the child or adolescent gives up on aims and assignments too easily, ambition or motivation – even when this is noticed at a young age it should be treated. When such problems are found among adolescents they should be referred to counselling urgently.

### *The difficulty to understand others*

The difficulty to understand others is not typical to the gifted adolescent, neither is it unique to her or him. However, it is frequently heard that *the gifted finds it hard to understand others because they are so different*. In the best case scenario this is a prejudice; at worst it is a saying that might perceive the gifted adolescent as doomed to loneliness, solitude, always to be an outsider. This is as far from the truth as can be. The high verbal level of many of them enables them, in many cases, to communicate much better than the non-gifted, and to make friends easily – as friendships are based on talking, conversation, communication (Gilad, in press). These verbal capabilities should be used in helping the gifted adolescent make the effort of participating in conversations, taking a part in extra-curriculum activities with her or his friends and practicing her or his social abilities. *Understanding the other* is the basis not only to inter-personal connections, vital for everybody, but also to maintaining professional connections, and thus contributing to the professional, scientific, and creative gifted adolescent's future.

### *Introversion*

Introversion should not become a problem at all – but unfortunately many educators, as well as parents, contribute to its being one. There is a large disparity between the professional literature that describes introversion among the gifted as a typical characteristic, and complains I hear from parents who wish their gifted adolescent to be *more outgoing, friendly, more proud of her-or himself*. Especially in the last decade, when people externalize their lives not only in private circles but also in social media, the gifted adolescent is, many a time, very reluctant regarding activities that might expose him or her even to family and friends. The only advice I can give when the issue of introversion is *on the table* is *let you son or daughter be*. It is not just ok to be an introvert; it might be a huge advantage for an adolescent who prefers to maximize the use of her or his time and do only what they wish to.

### *Perfectionism*

We all know that perfectionism is very important for our civilization; we all admire the great inventors, scientists, composers, philosophers and all other geniuses that have given us so much due to their persistent efforts to perfect their creations. But when it comes to our children we tend to think in terms of borders and limitations, such as: Is he not working too hard? Does she not invest too much time learning? This has a lot to do with the parental tendency, based on many pseudo-psychology beliefs that values praising the child, building

her or his self-confidence by giving false compliments (Brummelman et. al., 2013; Joslin, 1994; McNeil and Hembree-Kigin, 2010). But as Brummelman et. al., (2014) have shown, such praises work the other way round: they lower the self-confidence of children with low self-esteem.

### *Impatience and intolerance*

As I have already mentioned, quite frequently people who think quickly also speak quickly (David, 2012). Thinking quickly, in addition to high intensity, the wish to achieve an optimal use of time and the intensive life regarding both intellectual and extra-curricular activities (see, for example, Hong, & Milgram, 2008, Milgram, 2003; Milgram, & Hong, 1999) require extra-effort from the gifted adolescent as well as instruction from her or his parents. It should be explained very clearly that living in our society requires certain obligations and rules. Enforcing these rules must start at a very early age, as the gifted child is sometimes capable to understand rules prior to age 2. If a 16-year old gifted boy refuses to sit down at the family table it means that at age 2 his parents did not clarify this subject by saying: “everybody sits together during meals”. It is much harder to fight against impatience and intolerance, such as to hearing the uncle’s old jokes and smile politely, at age 5 than at 12. I urge parents who have not been successful in imposing elementary rules necessary for living together until age 10 not to wait any longer and to seek counselling, as when the child becomes an adolescent this task becomes more difficult and complicated.

### **Summary**

This part of the study of gifted adolescents includes school-related problems: studying and acquiring knowledge issues that have a potential of interfering with the learning process, sometimes even preventing it, which might result in school drop-out; in most cases they *just* prevent the gifted adolescent from materializing her or his potential. As the first step for solving a problem is to recognize its existence, this article has summarized the major inhibitors that might be in the way of gifted learners during the fragile time of adolescence. The second part is dealing with the problems: I have suggested ways to do that, if not to eliminate them completely. I am fully aware of the fact that there is much more to do, but I hope that these recommendations, if not a complete “do and do not” instructions book, can be used at least of preliminary ideas for professionals and parents who deal with the mentioned problems on a daily basis.

The next part of this study will focus on the socio-emotional inhibitors of the gifted adolescent, and describe the techniques and strategies that can be used to minimize the emotional obstacles they might cause.

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