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Dr. Karen Arnstein

# Welcome

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# Dr. Karen Arnstein



Dr. Arnstein is a consultant, speaker, and author dedicated to helping teachers and school districts understand how to identify twice-exceptional learners. She is the Director of Technology and co-founder of [Sierra Gifted Educational Services](#) a non-profit dedicated to bringing enrichment opportunities and resources to gifted and twice-exceptional students. Dr. Arnstein teaches graduate courses in education to pre-service teachers at the University of Redlands. She and her family reside in Southern California and are discovering new challenges parenting a twice-exceptional (2e) teenager.

# Presentation Overview

Welcome and Introductions

Who is Dabrowski?

What is TPD?

Overexcitabilities (OEs) Explained

Final Q & A and Discussion

# Who is Dąbrowski?

Kazimierz Dąbrowski  
(1902-1980)

- Polish psychiatrist and psychologist
- focused on the emotional development of intellectually and artistically gifted youth

Proposed the theory of positive disintegration (TPD) to describe personality development

# What is TPD? (Theory of Positive Disintegration)

Process: where identity changes, breaks down, and positive inner growth reconstructs and develops personality at a higher level.



“Disintegration is the basis for developmental thrusts upward, the creation of new evolutionary dynamics, and the movement of the personality to a higher level” (Dąbrowski, 1964, p. 6).

- Disintegration:
  - nothing more than a loosening of current structures that appears as anxiety or emotional disharmony
- Three required conditions for TPD to occur:
  1. an endeavor to break off from the existing, uniform structure that the individual perceives as tiring or repetitious;
  2. disruption of the existing personality structure;
  3. clear grounding of the new value that adopts an appropriate change in the structure of the personality on a new level (Dąbrowski, 1964).

Do not fear disintegration - it is a positive process!



# Important Concepts

## 1. **Developmental potential** - seen through positive disintegration and includes:

- talents and abilities
- capacity for inner transformation
- intensity and sensitivity comprised of five OEs
  1. Psychomotor
  2. Sensual
  3. Intellectual
  4. Imaginational
  5. Emotional (Piechowski, 2013)

## 2. **Multilevelness** - prism of levels describing

- human emotions
- motivations
- values
- strivings
- behaviors (Piechowski, 2009)

# TPD, OEs and my Gifted Student

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- Developmental potential and OEs most overlap with characteristics of gifted children and adults (Daniels & Piechowski, 2009)
- Development seen as series of opposing tensions experienced within self (Daniels & Piechowski, 2009)
- Process of maturity through periods of psychological “disintegration” in response to internal or external conflict (Wiley, 2015)





# What are Overexcitabilities (OEs)?

An intense response to internal and external stimuli that create stronger, long lasting reactions

OEs in the gifted are more intense, sensitive, perceptive, persistent and energetic

Life is experienced in a more vivid, intense way

May have one, several, or all 5 OEs - each may have advantages and challenges

The brighter and more creative the child, the more likely his/her OEs will permeate and influence daily behaviors.

# 1. Psychomotor (OE)

Characterized by: Surplus of energy

- Heightened excitability of neuromuscular system and an “augmented capacity for being active and energetic (Piechowski, 1991, p. 287)
- Significant correlation with high intelligence (Ackerman, 1993)



## Characteristics of Psychomotor OE

- need for movement
- restlessness or "antsy"
- an augmented capacity for being active and energetic
- rapid speech
- marked excitement
- intense physical activity
- marked competitiveness
- compulsive talking and chattering
- impulsive actions
- nervous habits
- workaholism
- acting out



# Strategies to Modulate Psychomotor OE

Integrate	Teach	Try	Give	Use	Teach
Integrate intense, physical needs with activity	Teach effective ways of self-management (fidgets, squishy balls, movement breaks)	Try team or individual sports (martial arts, swimming)	Give children “airtime” at the dinner table	Children can use IQ (Ideas/Questions) sheets in class for jotting down interesting ideas and urgent questions to reduce blurting out	Teach relaxation and calming activities to use during the day and before bed

*Famous People with Psychomotor OE:*



# Q & A

Please type your questions  
into the chat!





## 2. Sensual (OE)

Characterized by:  
Enhanced sensory and aesthetic  
pleasure

Sensory aspects – seeing, hearing, tasting, touching,  
hearing - of everyday life may be more heightened

- Delight in beautiful objects, music, form, color, and balance
- Object to clothing tags, sock seams, flicker and buzz of fluorescent lights (Daniels & Piechowski, 2009, p. 10; Webb et al., 2016, p. 34)



# Characteristics of Sensual OE

- Heightened sense of seeing, smelling, tasting, touching, and hearing
- Sensitivities:
  - bright/flashing lights
  - shrill sounds
  - food textures
  - pungent smells and tastes
- Negative Manifestations:
  - overeating
  - sexual overindulgence
  - buying sprees
  - seeking the limelight

# Strategies to Modulate Sensory OE

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- Find creative ways to increase variety in food choices for picky eaters
- Cut tags out of clothing and avoid elastic at wrists and ankles
- Provide environments that limit offending stimuli and maximize comforting stimuli
- Attachments to blankets and stuffed animals may last longer
- Co-create a pleasing and comfortably aesthetic environment for work and living



# Q & A

Please type your questions  
into the chat!

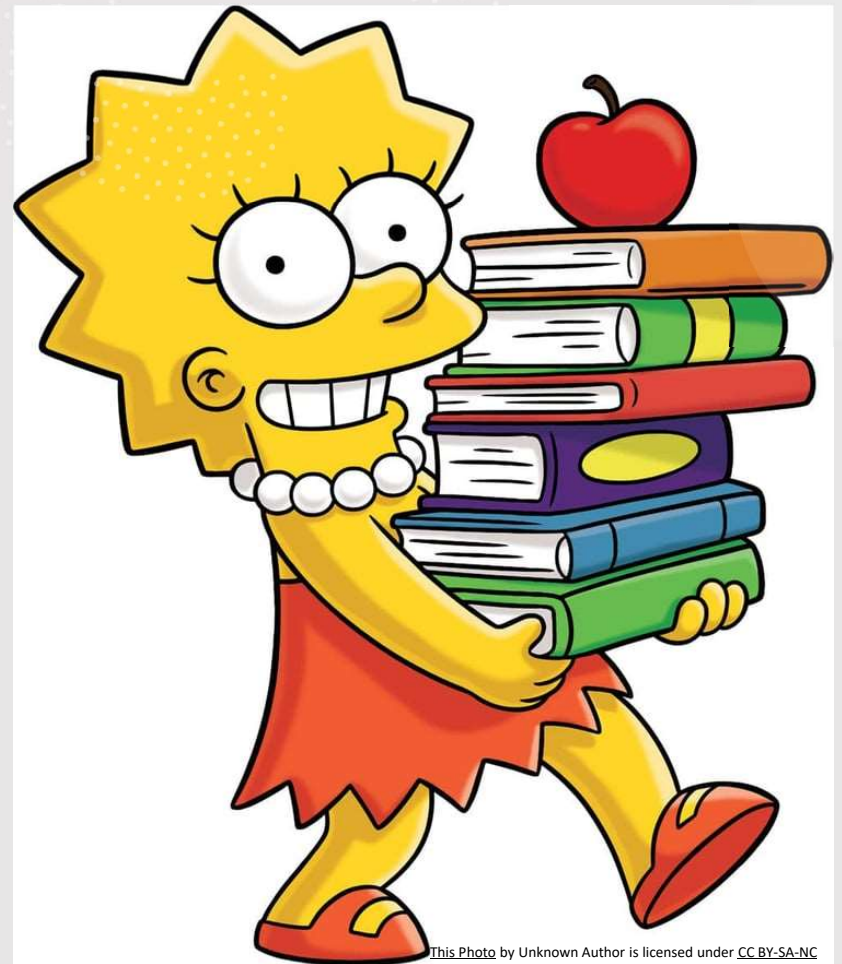


### 3. Intellectual (νε)

Characterized by:

Intensified mental activity

- Curiosity, concentration, avid reading, keen observation, detailed visual recall, forming new concepts, probing questions, problem solving, and reflective thought.
- Examples: love of theory, logic, moral thinking, conceptual and integrative thinking (Daniels & Piechowski, 2009, p. 10)

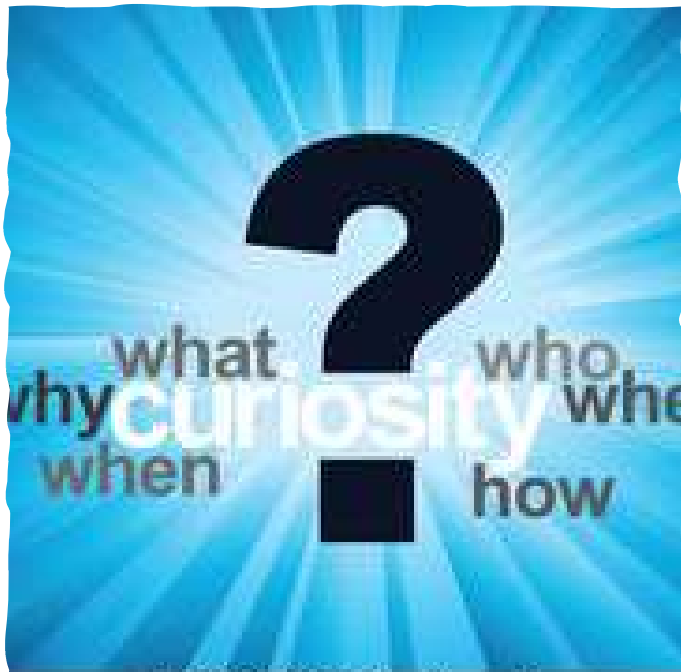


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# Intellectual OE Characteristics

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- Insatiable curiosity with endless “why” questions
- Concentration, sustained intellectual effort, avid reading, keen observation, detailed visual recall, detailed planning, wide and deep interests
- Ability to multi-task and multi-focus
- Both positive and negative perfectionism is a trait
- Search for truth and understanding, forming new concepts, tenacity in problem solving
- Thinking about thinking, love of theory and analysis, preoccupation with logic, moral thinking, introspection, conceptual and intuitive integration, independence of thought, sometimes critical thinking

# Strategies to Modulate Intellectual OE

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- Ration questions in classroom, dinnertime, or bedtime
- Acknowledge cognitive capabilities and provide resources for intellectual challenges
- Both positive and negative perfectionism is a trait
- Discuss mistakes as a necessary part of learning
- Acknowledge sustained effort
- Alter sleep patterns as necessary
- Allow them to develop their own interest-based projects
- Provide interaction with intellectual peers versus only same age peers
- Help them find answers to their own questions

# Q & A

Please type your questions  
into the chat!



## 4. Imaginational OE



<https://www.smore.com/dw8x3-overexcitabilities>

Characterized by: Low tolerance for boredom, rich imagination, daydreaming

- Fantasy play, dramatic perception, animistic thinking, use of metaphors (Webb et al., 2016, p. 31)
- Examples: Magical thinking, creation of private worlds, imaginary companions, fairy tales, and poetic or dramatic perception (Daniels & Piechowski, 2009, p. 10)



# Imaginational OE Characteristics

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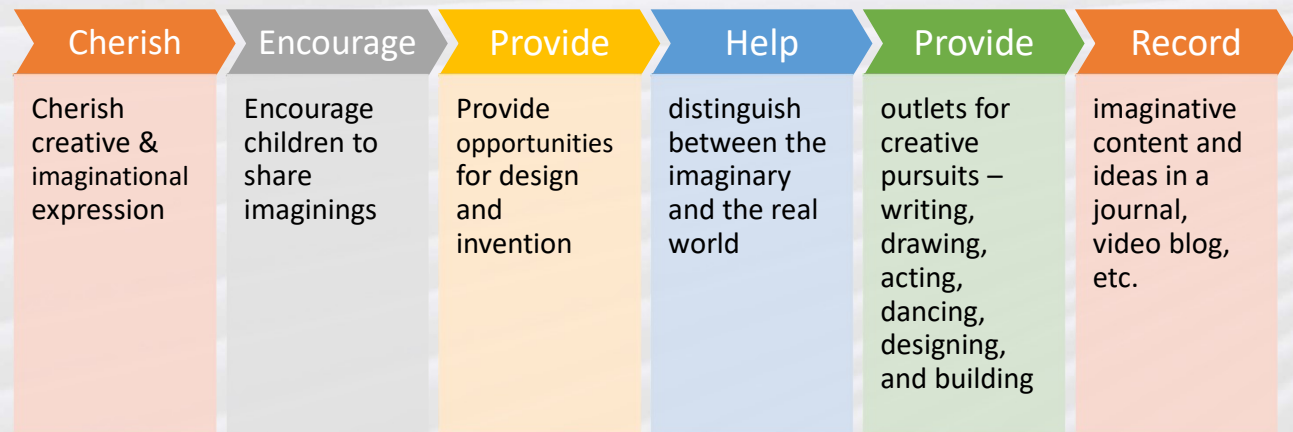
- Frequent use of image and metaphor, facility for invention and fantasy, detailed visualization, poetic and dramatic perception, magical thinking
- Capacity for living in a world of fantasy, magic and fairy tales, creation of private worlds, imaginary companions, dramatization
- Mixing truth and fiction, elaborate dreams, illusions
- Need novelty and variety - low tolerance for boredom



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# Strategies to Modulate Imaginational OE



# Q & A

Please type your questions  
into the chat!



## 5. Emotional (OE)

Characterized by:  
Extreme and complex emotions

- Strong emotional attachments to people, places, and things and have difficulty adjusting to new situations and environments (Webb et al., 2016, p. 31)
- Examples: Physical expression of emotion (flushing, sweaty palms, etc.), inhibition, enthusiasm, pride, shame, anxiety, guilt, concern with death, and loneliness (Dahjels & Piechowski, 2009, p. 11)



# Emotional OE Characteristics

Feelings: Both positive and negative, extremes of emotion, complex emotions and feelings, identification with others' feelings, awareness of a whole range of feelings

Physical Sensations: Tense stomach, sinking heart, blushing, flushing, pounding heart, or sweaty palms

Moods: Inhibition, shyness, enthusiasm, ecstasy, euphoria, pride, strong affective memory, shame, feelings of unreality, fears, anxieties, guilt, concern with death, depressive and suicidal moods

Relationships: Strong attachments, deep relationships, strong emotional ties, attachments to places and animals, difficulty adjusting to new environments, compassion, loneliness

Self: Strong feelings towards self expressed through inner dialogue and self-judgement

# Strategies to Modulate Emotional OE

- Encourage children to accept feelings and their intensity
- Teach children
  - share emotions and feelings with others in positive and productive ways, verbally through art, music, or journaling
  - be respectful of others' feelings or seeming lack thereof
  - to anticipate emotional experiences and rehearse responses
  - relaxation techniques
- Develop a vocabulary about levels of feelings
- Learn listening and responding skills ("I feel...")
- Use journaling to express feelings
- Model emotional temperature taking
- Find activities that provide opportunities for empathy and social concern





# Q & A

Please type your questions  
into the chat!



# Wrapping Up

## Developmental Potential

- Special abilities and talents
- Overexcitabilities
- Strong autonomous drive for individuality

## Overexcitabilities (OEs)

- Psychomotor
- Sensual
- Intellectual
- Imaginational
- Emotional

## The Big Three

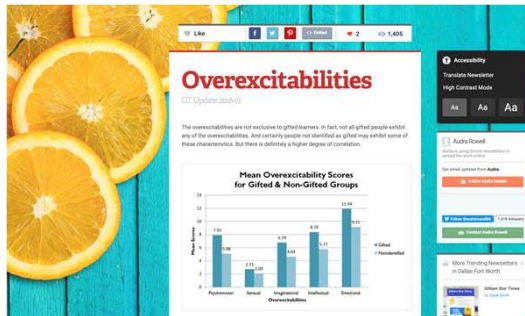
- Intellectual
- Imaginational
- Emotional

## Final Q & A and Discussion

- Unanswered questions? Please reach out to your school gifted resource teacher or guidance counselor.



[www.sierragifted.org](http://www.sierragifted.org)



[Overexcitabilities Newsletter](#)

# Resources

Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted

<https://www.sengifted.org/overexcitabilities>

National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC)

[https://www.nagc.org/#parents\\_home](https://www.nagc.org/#parents_home)

<https://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/resources-parents>

<https://www.nagc.org/search/node/overexcitabilities>

Sierra Gifted Educational Services

<https://sierragifted.org>

# Resources

## **Books:**

[Zones of Regulation](#) by Leah Kuypers

[On the Social and Emotional Lives of Gifted Children](#) by Tracy L. Cross

[Living With Intensity: Understanding the Sensitivity, Excitability, and the Emotional Development of Gifted Children, Adolescents, and Adults](#) by Daniels and Piechowski

[The Survival Guide for Gifted Kids: For Ages 10 & Under](#) by Judy Galbraith

[The Gifted Teen Survival Guide: Smart, Sharp, and Ready for \(Almost\) Anything](#) by Judy Galbraith

[A Parent's Guide to Gifted Children](#) by Webb, Gore, Amend, and DeVries

[The Gifted Kids Workbook: Mindfulness Skills to Help Children Reduce Stress, Balance Emotions, and Build Confidence](#) by Heather Boorman

[Emotional Intensity in Gifted Students: Helping Kids Cope with Explosive Feelings](#) by Christine Fonseca

[The Sensory Processing Diet: One Mom's Path of Creating Brain, Body and Nutritional Health for Children with SPD](#) by Chynna Laird

[The Out of Sync Child](#) by Carol Kranowitz

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# Even More Questions?

Please contact your school's gifted resource teacher or  
guidance counselor.

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