


# Coping with Emotional Intensity

Gifted Support Network – February 27, 2018

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## What is emotional intensity?

- How would you define intensity? 
- Gifted children ARE intense.
  - They are intense in the way they experience the world outside of themselves.
  - They are also intense in the way they experience their emotions.

## Giftedness = Intensity

- “[Gifted children’s] excitement is viewed as excessive, their high energy as hyperactivity, their persistence as nagging, their questioning as undermining authority, their imagination as not paying attention, their passion as being disruptive, their strong emotions and sensitivity as immaturity, their creativity and self-directedness as oppositional.” – Daniels & Piechowski, 2009

## Is emotional intensity bad?



## Positive manifestations of emotional intensity

- A greater ability for compassion
- Strong affective memory
- Identification with others' feelings (empathy)
- Capacity for strong attachments and deep relationships
- Powerful feeling of "good" emotions
- Awareness of a wide range of feelings



## Negative manifestations of emotional intensity

- Explosive outbursts
- Mood swings, depression, anxiety
- Inability to see outside their own emotions
- Highly somatic expressions of emotion
- Social phobias, withdrawal from the environment, loneliness
- Harsh self-judgment



## How can I help my child cope?

- Helping children to self-regulate their emotional intensity is one of the greatest things a parent, teacher, or counselor can do.

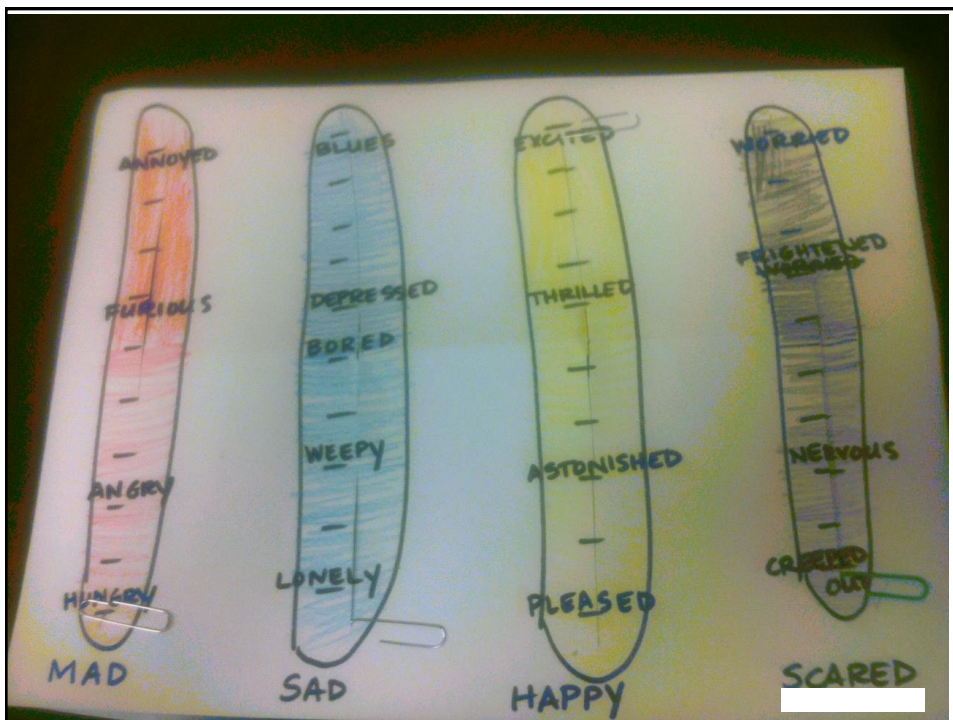
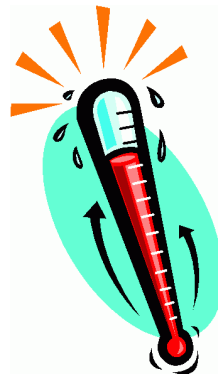


## Strategy #1: Model self-regulation.

- Allow your child to see you when you are struggling with your emotions.
- Explain how you are handling your emotions as you work through the situation.
- Point out both your physical and emotional responses to the situation.
- It's okay to be perfectly imperfect; that's how we learn

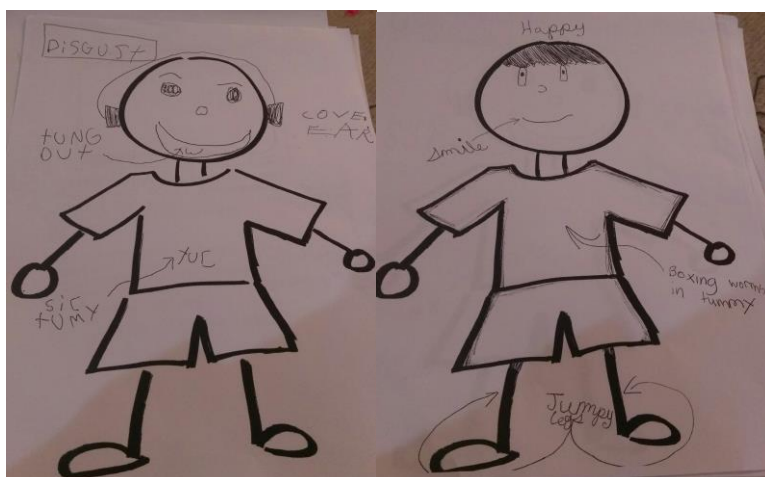
## Strategy #2: Check-in on Emotions

- On a scale of 1-10, check in with your child.
- A “10” signifies that she is in a great mood, feels relaxed, and happy.
- A “1” indicates major anxiety, stress, or an impending crisis.
- Make it a non-judgmental discussion about how your child feels at that time.



## Strategy #3: Identify Psychosomatic Signs of Dysregulation

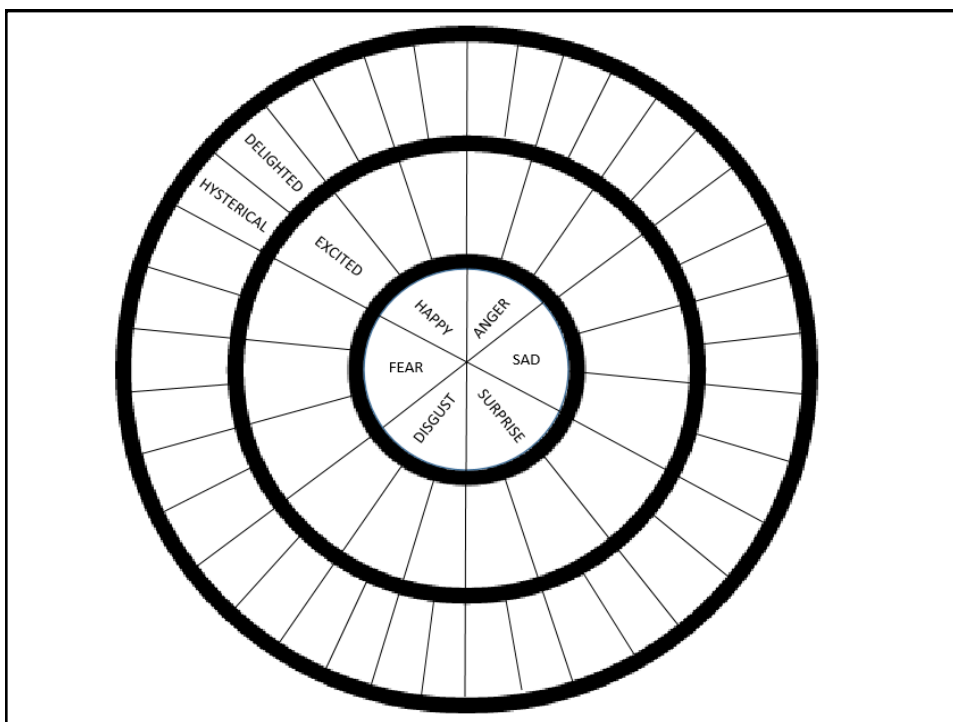
- Dysregulation is an emotional response that is poorly controlled.
- Can manifest in a variety of ways (outbursts, tantrums, threats, or elation).
- Dysregulation can manifest physically (psychosomatically) as well.
- Help your child identify how/where they feel their emotions.



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## Strategy #4: Build emotional literacy.

- Sometimes, one of the frustrations of a gifted child with emotional intensity is that her feelings are incredibly strong, yet she can't quite put her finger on how she is feeling.
- Using a journal, take some time to document different feelings as they occur.
- Find the perfect label for the feeling to distinguish it from others.



## Strategy #5: Search for the underlying cause of dysregulation.

- Perhaps a child's crisis generally occurs when he becomes frustrated with math homework or when a sibling wants to play with a favored toy.
- Discuss with your child ways to anticipate these triggers and find ways to preemptively diffuse the situations.

## Strategy #6: Scaffold goals for success.

- Work with your child to determine some realistic goals for behavior at home, at school, and in other settings.
- Be very specific when setting the goals in terms of the expectation, how long it should take to reach the goals, and how it will be determined if she has reached her goal.
- Talk about strategies to help her reach this goal.
- Document progress towards the goal in a journal.



**My Goal Chart**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

My Goals	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
1.							
2.							
3.							
4.							
5.							

**First** | **Then**

I will \_\_\_\_\_ | I will \_\_\_\_\_

I will \_\_\_\_\_ | I will \_\_\_\_\_

Cartoon Delfosa KE-651000

oo MY \_\_\_\_\_ CHART oo

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## Strategy #7: Problem solve collaboratively.

- Collaborative and Proactive Solutions (CPS) method (Ross Green)
- Challenging behaviors occur when expectations placed on a child exceed their capacity to adapt and respond
- Empathy, Define Adult Concerns, Invitation
- Do WITH the child, not TO them

## Philosophy Behind CPS

***“If kids could do well they would do well”***- If the kid had the skills to exhibit adaptive behavior, he wouldn't be exhibiting challenging behavior

**“Behind every challenge behavior is an **unsolved problem and a lagging skill**”**

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## Collaborative Problem Solving Process

### 3 ingredients to the process:

1. **Empathy Step-** This is where you gather information so as to clarify the student's concern or perspective on the unsolved problem
2. **Define the Problem Step-** Here, the teacher communicates their concerns or perspective on the unsolved problem.
3. **The Invitation Step-** Student and teacher brainstorm solutions to address the concerns

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## Strategy #8: Coach mindfulness.

- What is mindfulness?
- Why does it work?
- Quick strategies – coffee stirrers
- 5,4,3,2,1 grounding exercise


## Strategy #9: Build positive reframing skills

- Irrational versus Rational/Realistic
- Positivity= Accepting Oneself
- How to reframe difficult attributes
- Strengths based feedback
  - - "I like how you.....when you were feeling worried"
  - - "You tried your best and didn't give up. You are so determined"

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**IRRATIONAL VS RATIONAL THOUGHTS**  
SmartMatters.com

HOW AWFUL	THIS IS DISAPPOINTING
I CAN'T STAND IT	I DON'T LIKE IT, BUT I'LL DEAL
I'M STUPID!	WHAT I DID WAS STUPID
HE STINKS!	HE IS NOT PERFECT EITHER
THIS SHOULD NOT BE HAPPENING	THIS HAD TO HAPPEN, SINCE IT DID
I AM TO BE BLAMED	I AM AT FAULT, BUT NOT TO BE BLAMED
THINGS ALWAYS GO WRONG	SOMETIMES THINGS GO WRONG
THINGS NEVER WORK OUT	MORE OFTEN THAN I'D LIKE, THINGS DON'T WORK OUT
I SHOULD HAVE DONE BETTER	I WISH I DID BETTER, BUT I TRIED MY BEST
I AM A FAILURE	I AM A PERSON WHO SOMETIMES FAILS



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## Positive Affirmations for Kids

DEARCRISSEY.COM




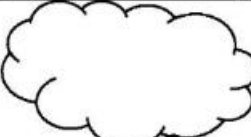




I am <b>smart</b> .	I am a <b>good friend</b> .
I am a great <b>listener</b> .	I am <b>loved</b> .
I am <b>unique</b> .	I am <b>compassionate</b> .
I show <b>empathy</b> to others.	I am <b>brave</b> .
I have a <b>strong</b> body.	I <b>like myself</b> the way I am.
I am <b>creative</b> .	I am <b>resilient</b> .
I <b>care</b> for others.	There is <b>no one</b> quite like me!

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## Positive Reframe

Negative frame	<i>Positive Reframe</i>
Bossy	<i>Good Director, Natural Leader</i>
Clingy	<i>Affectionate</i>
Compulsive	<i>Efficient, Attention to Detail</i>
Conceited	<i>Confident, Values Self</i>
Crabby	<i>Communicates Needs</i>
Dawdles	<i>Easy going, mindful</i>
Defiant	<i>Strong Beliefs, Courageous</i>
Demanding	<i>Assertive</i>
Dependant	<i>Connected</i>
Doodles	<i>Creative</i>
Dramatic	<i>Emotionally Aware, Expressive</i>

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"Off-The-Mark" Thought	→ → → → →	Realistic Reframe
 <p data-bbox="448 262 696 399">I got an answer wrong when the teacher called on me. Now everyone thinks I'm dumb.</p>		<p data-bbox="728 262 976 399">I am allowed to make mistakes like everyone else.</p> 
 <p data-bbox="448 478 696 615">My day is ruined because the other kids in my group wouldn't use my ideas.</p>		 
 <p data-bbox="448 693 696 831">I should be smart enough to be able to do this math test without showing my work.</p>		 

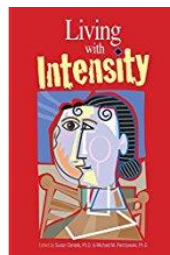
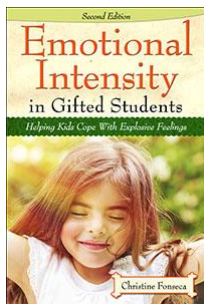
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## Strategy #10: Rome Wasn't Built in a Day

- Having an emotionally intense gifted child in your home or classroom can be a struggle, but providing the child the tools necessary to learn to handle the emotions she faces will pay off in the long run.
- All of these emotionally intense children have the potential to become compassionate, caring, driven adults who can make a difference in this world and what may cause pain and frustration now will become an asset to them in the future.

## Recommended Reading

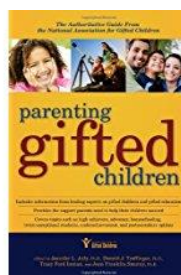
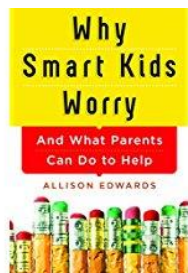
- Emotional Intensity in Gifted Students (Fonseca)



- Living with Intensity (Daniels and Piechowski)

## Recommended Reading

- Why Smart Kids Worry (Edwards)



- Parenting Gifted Children (Inman)

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