



# *Gifted Girls to Gifted Women*

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# *Introduction*

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- ★ In early childhood through the elementary school years, gifted boys and girls are equal in number.
- ★ In adolescence, gifted boys outnumber gifted girls.
- ★ In adulthood there are far more gifted men than gifted women.



# *Gifted Elementary Girls*

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- ★ Many gifted girls are superior physically, have more social knowledge, and are better adjusted than are average girls.
- ★ In their interests, gifted girls are more like gifted boys than they are like average girls.
- ★ Gifted girls have high career goals.



# *Gifted Elementary Girls*

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- ★ Gifted girls are more strongly influenced by their mothers than are gifted boys.
- ★ More highly gifted girls are not as likely to seem well adjusted.
- ★ Highly gifted girls are often loners without much need for recognition.
- ★ Highly gifted girls are often second born females.



# *Gifted Elementary Girls*

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- ★ Highly gifted girls aspire to careers having moderate rather than high status.
- ★ Highly gifted girls have high academic achievement.
- ★ Gifted girls at age 10 express wishes and needs for self-esteem.
- ★ Gifted girls are confident in their opinions and willing to argue for their point of view.



# *The Adolescent Gifted Girl*

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- ★ Gifted girls' IQ scores drop in adolescence, perhaps as girls begin to perceive the giftedness in females is undesirable.
- ★ Gifted girls are likely to continue to have higher academic achievement as measured by grade point average.
- ★ Gifted girls take less rigorous courses than gifted boys in high school.



# *The Adolescent Gifted Girl*

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- ★ Gifted girls maintain a high involvement in extracurricular and social activities.
- ★ Highly gifted girls often do not receive recognition for their achievements.
- ★ Highly gifted girls do very well academically in high school.
- ★ Highly gifted girls attend less prestigious colleges than highly gifted boys, a choice that leads to lower status careers.



## *The Adolescent Gifted Girl*

- ★ The age from twelve to fourteen years, when a strong shift in values occurs, is a critical time for gifted girls.
- ★ The change in values at this point is related to strong needs for love and belonging.
- ★ Adolescence may also bring a steep decline in self-esteem and confidence in opinions.
- ★ Gifted girls fear having to choose between career and marriage.





# *Gifted College Women*

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- ★ Gifted young women enter college with higher grades but less rigorous course preparation than gifted men.
- ★ Gifted young women’s self-esteem is at a low point upon entrance to college.
- ★ A powerful campus peer system supports a culture of romance, which rewards a woman’s romantic “achievements” while disregarding her intellectual ones.



# *Gifted Women*

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- ★ Gifted women's academic and vocational achievement, compared to that of gifted men, continues to decline, particularly during childbearing years.
- ★ Only a small group of gifted women in the past entered the higher professions; despite indications this is changing, a backlash exists against women of high aspirations.



# *Gifted Women*

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- ★ Gifted women engage in income-producing work are more satisfied with their lives than are those who are not.
- ★ Early marriage and childbirth are closely related to low achievement of career goals.
- ★ Marriage and childbirth affect the achievement of high potential women much more than they do that of high potential men.



# *Gifted Women*

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- ★ Gifted women who drop out of careers to marry and raise children may not catch up with their male peers for the rest of their working lives.
- ★ Age 40 may mark another critical change in lifestyle values for gifted women, as a point in time when esteem needs become highly important and the urge for self-actualization may be great. (transforming vs. overwhelmed)



# *What happens to those young gifted girls?*

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- ★ Many gifted girls don't capitalize on their giftedness. Their academic achievement and other talents falter, and their gifts may become obscured on the way to womanhood.
- ★ Research suggests that several factors converge to produce barriers to the achievement of gifted girls, causing the declining numbers of identifiable gifted girls as they grow up.



# *Barriers to Achievement*





# *Internal Barriers*

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- ★ The Horner Effect
- ★ The Cinderella Complex
- ★ The Imposter Phenomenon
- ★ The Self-Esteem Plunge





## *The Horner Effect*

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- ★ Matina Horner (1972) observed that women characteristically underachieved when competing against men.
- ★ Despite exceptional ability, women would perform decidedly below their skills, and curiously, would be unable to explain why.
- ★ The Horner effect was renamed the Fear of Success Syndrome



# *The Cinderella Complex*

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- ★ Colette Dowling (1981) observed herself and other women avoiding achievement.
- ★ The Cinderella Complex is a network of largely repressed attitudes and fears that detain women in a kind of half-light, retreating from the full use of their minds and creativity.
- ★ Like Cinderella, women today are still waiting for something external to transform their lives.



# *The Imposter Phenomenon*

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★ Pauline Clance and Suzanne Imes (1978) describe the phenomenon this way, “Women who experienced the imposter phenomenon maintained a strong belief that they were not intelligent; in fact, they were convinced that they had fooled everyone.”





# *Four Common Behaviors*

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- ★ For common behaviors of the imposter phenomenon:
  - Diligence: She works hard at her job in order to keep others from discovering she is an imposter.
  - Phony: Gave professors answered they wanted to hear rather than what she knew or believed.
  - Charm and perceptiveness: Seeks out a mentor from supervisors and pursues an intense relationship.
  - Lack of Self-Confidence : plays on the negative consequences of both the fear of success and the Cinderella Complex.





# *The Self Esteem Plunge*

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- ★ Many researchers have documented a gradual loss of self-esteem in girls as they progress through school.
- ★ Between grades 3 and 8 most gifted girls' self-concept declines significantly, and by adolescence many gifted girls suffer a marked lack of self-confidence.
- ★ Eighth grade gifted girls report more negative self-regard and self-confidence in behavior, intellectual and school status, and popularity, than non-gifted girls in the same grade level (Kline, 1991). Some gifted girls come to believe that competition in academics should be avoided in order to preserve relationships even if it means under-using their talents.



# *Internal Barriers*

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The following themes emerged:

- ★ perfectionism
- ★ shyness
- ★ lack of confidence
- ★ procrastination
- ★ burnout





# *Perfectionism*

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- ★ Many gifted women face perfectionism (Reis, 2002).
- ★ Perfectionists do not feel satisfaction because they never seem to do things well enough (Hamachek, 1978).
- ★ Healthy perfectionists are aware of their need for order. They understand that mistakes are a part of learning (Schuler, 1997).
- ★ Dysfunctional perfectionists' concern over mistakes result in a high state of anxiety, self-doubts, procrastination, and worry (Schuler, 1997).



# *Shyness*

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- ★ Shyness as an internal barrier, received mention by 10 out of 30 participants.
- ★ They mentioned shyness as an internal barrier in their developing years.



# *Procrastination*

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- ★ Procrastination was a barrier that persisted with these young women, perhaps as a result of a degree of perfectionism.





# *External Barriers*

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★ financial



★ others' expectations



★ programming limitations



## *Financial Barriers*

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- ★ Some young women experienced considerable financial difficulties.
- ★ More than one young woman faced financial challenges in paying for college expenses.





## *Other's Expectations*

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- ★ Expectations of others can be a powerfully motivating force.
- ★ However, when these expectations were perceived as stereotypes or gender roles, they became barriers.
- ★ The stated or unstated message of stereotypical ethnic or gender expectations was powerful and potentially destructive





# *Programming Limitations*

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- ★ The gifted young women perceived educational curricular programming as an external barrier, citing some gifted programs and high school science programs as a deficit in their education.



# *PEER PRESSURE*

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**Peer pressure - it's smart not to look too smart.**



# *Gifted Girls and relationships*

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- ★ As they move from girlhood into adolescence, many gifted girls often deny, camouflage, or abandon their talents and see disadvantages in being gifted.
- ★ Adolescent girls are faced with choosing between the competing goals of popularity and academic achievement, and social relations often take precedence over intellectual interests.



# *Gifted Girls and relationships*

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- ★ In a study with over 600 children, it was found that girls typically adapt to the ability level of their age-mates (Silverman, 1993).
- ★ Gifted girls in 3rd through 9th grade choose not to leave their friends to join advanced classes.
- ★ While boys generally don't associate with children less advanced than themselves, girls make an effort to blend in so that their own talents are inconspicuous.



# *Middle School Gifted Girls*

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- ★ In MS gifted girls discover that high achievement may cost them lack of acceptance by their peer group.
- ★ Girls' groups reward conformity and may ostracize the girl who is a high achiever. In a study of almost 500 students that examined how gifted students are viewed by their peers, gifted boys were found to be the most popular, gifted girls the least.
- ★ The girls were perceived as generally moody or sad, boys as funny and having a good sense of humor (Luftig, 1991).



# *GIFTED GIRLS IN MATH AND SCIENCE*





## *Course selection*

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- ★ Adolescent girls stop enrolling in gifted programs in grades 10, 11, and 12 (Read, 1991) and are at particular risk for academic underachievement in the areas of math and science.
- ★ Gifted girls do not estimate their abilities as highly as gifted boys; which perpetuates the notion that it's okay if girls do not do well in math and science; they can be excellent readers and writers and leave science and math to the boys.





# *CAREER*



## Career Choices for the Gifted Girl



# *College to career*

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- ★ College and career selections are affected by high school course selection, creating a downward spiral effect (Siegle & Reis, 1998).
- ★ Test results and course selection have important implications for performance on college entrance exams, programs for the gifted, and career selections.
- ★ It follows that if gifted girls abandon their math and science pursuits for more "socially acceptable" activities, they run the risk of limiting their options for career development as well as their personal satisfaction in the workplace.



# *Nurturing the Gifted Female*

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Mentoring



# *Mentoring Needs*

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★ Classroom mentoring: Kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grade



★ Active Mentoring: Middle and High School Students



★ Distance Mentoring: Middle and High School Students



# *Developing a Mentoring Experience*

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1. Identify a student in the classroom who has enrichment needs that are beyond the current available resources.
2. Do a strengths/needs assessment of the student, looking at academic areas of strength, self-regulation skills (e.g., organization and goal setting), and strong interests.



## *Mentoring cont.*

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3. Based on the assessment of strengths and needs, decide on the mentoring needs of your student.
4. Choose the type of mentoring that is appropriate.
5. Search out an appropriate mentor in your community or beyond:
  - Contact the professional to determine willingness
  - Develop goals and procedures for the experience





## *Mentoring cont.*

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6. Introduce the mentor to the student and provide them with an overview of the goals and procedures.
7. Monitor and modify the process as needed, asking for updates from the mentor and student.
8. At the completion of the mentorship, perform an evaluation in order to document the growth and learning of the student.





# *Develop Voice*

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- ★ Incorporating Personal Individual Experience
- ★ Nurturing thoughts to maturity through consensus
- ★ Collaborative Learning
- ★ Midwife Model of Education
- ★ A writers circle



# *Develop Resiliency*

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- ★ The ability to persevere in the face of physical, emotional or social obstacles such as:
  - Failures of families and/or schools to recognize her giftedness
  - Failures of schools to accommodate and her needs
  - Societal attitudes towards academic giftedness in girls and acceleration
  - Lack of understanding of her high sensitivity and overexciteabilities
  - Unchallenging and often hostile learning environments



# *Resiliency, Coping and Versatility*



<b>Coping Strategy</b>	<b>Coping Action</b>
Avoidance	Do something to avoid thinking about the problem.
Positive Reappraisal	Think about the problem to make it seem less stressful.
Religion/Spirituality	Use religious belief/spirituality to cope
Active Cognitive	Think about how to solve the problem
Active Behavioral	Do something to solve the problem
Social Support	Talk to someone about the problem
Versatile Coping	Use more than one strategy



# *Effective Versatile Coping*



<b>Active Cognitive</b>	<b>Thinking about the problem</b>
Cognitive Appaisal	Changing one's perspective
Social Support	Talking to friends and family
Active behavioral	Acting on the problem



# *Z-I-N Breathing: A Stress Break*

- ★ Help students practice this strategy for relieving stress and regaining focus during the day.
  - Z-I-N stands for Zero in Now
  - Take a deep breath, exhale slowly relax, head neck, shoulders and arms
  - Repeat, relax head neck, shoulders, arms and trunk
  - Repeat, relax head to toe. Concentrate on letting go of any remaining stress and affirm your ability to accomplish the task in front of you





# *Coping Skills Group*

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## ★ Counseling Group

- Learn how to handle stressful situations, share strategies with the rest of the group
- Counselor asks structured questions
- Counselor gives positive information
- Use the golden ribbon





# *Facets of Resilience*

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★ Ethic of caring

★ Self-accepting



★ Entelechy

★ Efficacy

★ Vitality





# *Autonomy and Affiliation*

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## ★ Autonomy

### ★ Autonomous Learner

- Self awareness of self as a learner
- Self-directed learner
- Manages resources
- Understands effort-success relationship
- Prefers independent problem solving





# *Autonomy and Affiliation*

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## ★ Self-Regulated Learning Skills

- Sets learning goals
- Organizes learning tasks
- Manages Time conscientiously
- Collects and records information competently
- Practices critical reading skills
- Efficiently prepares for exams
- Effectively plans, drafts and revises papers
- Evaluates work accurately
- Reflects on and improves skills above





# *Autonomy and Affiliation*

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## ★ Collaboration

### – Characteristics of Collaborative Classrooms

- Teachers model collaboration by inviting colleagues into the classroom for collaboration
- Teachers are collaborative role models, asking for ideas from students, involving them in group decision making
- Teachers use collaborative grouping
- Students collaborate in creating classroom rules
- Students apply self-regulated learning
- Students are engaged as of a learning community





# *Autonomy and Affiliation*

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- ★ Affiliation through supportive learning environments
  - Provide a open and welcoming setting
  - Encourage students to collaborate and connect with others
  - Have faculty and staff understand the unique needs of the gifted and respond appropriately
  - Affirm a clear learning ethic
  - Define a level of challenge within a framework of support
  - Emphasize personal growth



# *Self-Efficacy*

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## ★ Benefits of Individual Efficacy

- **Intellectual Efficacy:** The individual perceives herself as a learner who can master and apply information effectively.
- **Emotional Efficacy:** The individual believes herself capable of understanding and moderating her emotional responses to ensure her well-being.
- **Behavioral Efficacy:** The individual feels capable of acting in a manner consistent with who she is and her unique needs in a variety of contexts.





# *Self-Efficacy*

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## ★ Female Efficacy Behaviors

- Coping: An individual who believes herself to be more capable can form stronger coping skills.
- Stress: Stress management increases with feelings of capability and through more effective coping.
- Reaction to failure: Instead of blaming her ability, the individual who feels capable is more likely to reflect on what caused the mistake and learn from it.
- Motivation: Each success is a motivating factor for future endeavors.
- Career Choices: With continuing development of efficacy, awareness of one's abilities become more task-specific, which enhances career knowledge and choices.
- Life aspirations: Efficacy information enhances thinking, career expectations, and general well-being. This allows the individual to set goals that enhance one's personal growth.





# *Self-Efficacy*

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- ★ Efficacy and the learning environment
  - Acknowledge gifted student's abilities
  - Set challenging goals for their learning
  - Provide appropriate support as they pursue their goals





# *Self-Efficacy*

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- ★ Educational practices that support the development of self-efficacy:
  - The appropriate identification of gifted students.
  - A thorough understanding of the whole child
  - A willingness to respond to overexcitabilities
  - The promotion of self-regulated learning in the classroom
  - Use of connected teaching, collaborative learning and cluster grouping
  - Reflective reading about gifted girls, adolescents and women
  - Nurturing Autonomy



## *Agency: The destination*

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- ★ Agency for the successful woman signifies a sense of herself as a significant participant in a society that needs her gifts.
- ★ Agency is the destination





# *Agency: The Destination*

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## ★ Aspects of Agency in Females

- **Instrumentality:** The individual possesses specific personal skills that can be applied to individual and collective problem solving.
- **Interpersonal Ease:** The individual realizes her potential to impact her world.
- **Self-efficacious:** The individual has developed the positive attributes of efficacy.
- **Self-assertive:** With increased reflective and analytical skills gained from efficacy development, the individual has the strength to defend her ideas and actions.
- **Self-protective:** In order to be an effective agent in society, the individual is aware of and respects personal needs and limits.





# *Agency: The Distinction*

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## ★ Skills and Strategies

- Intentionality
- Forethought
- Self-Reactiveness
- Self-Reflectiveness





# *Intentionality*

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- ★ Setting a goal
- ★ Reflecting on the goal
- ★ Adjusting and refining the goal
- ★ Revising and/or setting a new goal





# *Best Practices Strategies for Promoting Student Agency*

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★ Intentional planning

★ Problem based learning

★ Authentic problem solving

★ Collaborating in classroom management

★ Creating a framework of standards

★ Teaching reflective practices





# *Self-Reactiveness*

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★ Self-monitoring



★ Self-guidance



★ Self-reactions



# *Self-Reflectiveness*

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- ★ Adept in metacognitive thinking
- ★ Able to assess themselves
- ★ Reflect on their motivations
- ★ Evaluate their own thinking



**Where do we go from here...**



# Resources

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★ American Association for the Gifted (AAG)

– [www.aagc.org](http://www.aagc.org)

★ National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC)

– [www.nagc.org](http://www.nagc.org)



★ Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted (SENG)

– [www.sengifted.org](http://www.sengifted.org)

★ The Association for the Gifted (TAG)

– [www.cectag.org](http://www.cectag.org)

★ The World Council of the Gifted

– [www.world-gifted.org](http://www.world-gifted.org)



★ New Mexico Association for the Gifted

– [www.nmgifted.org](http://www.nmgifted.org)



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★ Smart Girls (Revised Edition), A New Psychology of Girls, Women, and Giftedness Barbara A. Kerr, PHD



★ Smart Girls Two, A New Psychology of Girls, Women, and Giftedness Barbara A. Kerr, PHD



★ Nurturing the Gifted Female, A Guide for Educators and Parents, Joy L. Navan