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## The Mental Health Challenges of Gifted Teens

February 13, 2014 By Paradigm Malibu Leave a Comment



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There are some teens that are incredibly gifted intellectually, musically, or artistically. However, that gift might come with mental illnesses, such as depression, anxiety, social ineptness, and even psychosis.

### Gifted Teens

Typically, we want to think that those children, adolescents, and adults who are gifted lead very fulfilling and rewarding lives. Their mental prowess might lead to occupational and even financial success. However, having such capacity might inherently mean psychological challenges.

For instance, you might recall the film ***A Beautiful Mind***, which is the story of Professor John Nash played by Russell Crowe. This character suffered from schizophrenia, typically a mental illness that emerges in late adolescence. He experiences a myriad of highs and lows, beginning in graduate school at Princeton to winning a Nobel Prize for Economics in 1994.

### Diagnoses with High Intelligence

The **SENG** organization, ***Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted***, recognizes that there are unique difficulties to being talented. SENG supports gifted and talented individuals in living gratifying and meaningful lives despite their associated psychological or emotional impairments.

Other diagnoses commonly known as being accompanied by high levels of intelligence are those that lie on the Autism Spectrum, including Asperger's Syndrome and Autism. It is typical for a teen diagnosed with Asperger's to be very intelligent but suffer from social impairments. Typically, those with Asperger's have no filters and tend to say and do things that go beyond social norms. At the same time, their IQ scores are remarkable. And depending on their level of functioning, they are attending Advanced Placement classes and, in general, succeeding academically.

### SENG

According to SENG, there is research that indicates the tendency for gifted teens to be more prone to depression, given their differences from other children, which might contribute to unusual social and emotional challenges that other teens might not have. Gifted teens might be more sensitive, tend to be perfectionists, and have high levels of energy. These traits might contribute feeling so different that they cannot socially or emotionally connect with others. Which could lead to a sense of loneliness or isolation.

However, SENG also points out that teens who are gifted typically have the pattern of hiding their depression. Gifted teens are often very sensitive and can feel shame for not being able to identify the source of their feelings and for feeling like a failure socially and emotionally. During a depressive period, symptoms for gifted teens diagnosed with Depressive Disorder might experience emotional swings, unusual mental images, and spiraling thoughts. Furthermore, clinicians should be aware of the complex defense mechanisms associated with their high levels of intelligence and their perceived need to hide their depression.

### Resources for Gifted Teens

Sadly, in the recent book, ***Misdiagnosis and Dual Diagnoses of Gifted Children and Adults***, the authors claim that the brightest children are often being misdiagnosed. As a result, they receive inappropriate treatment. Despite this, there are a host of resources available to parents, caregivers, and clinicians who are treating gifted and talented adolescents. Some of these include:

- National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC)
- Davidson Institute
- Council for Exceptional Children/The Association for the Gifted
- Uniquely Gifted
- World Council for Gifted and Talented Children
- Hoagies Gifted

### Conclusion

Although one might not at first imagine that gifted teens would have mental health concerns, the presence of mental illnesses and high levels of intelligence might in fact be related. Despite their gifts and talents, the need to understand their associated complex inner life is becoming more and more evident.



Paradigm Malibu

Paradigm Malibu is an adolescent mental health and drug treatment center dedicated to identifying, understanding and properly treating the core issues that impact teens and their families.

Mental Health gifted teens teen mental health

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