

ANXIETY AND GIFTED KIDS

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ANXIETY AND GIFTED KIDS OVERVIEW

- Connections between giftedness and anxiety
- Manifestations of anxiety specific to gifted
- Adaptive anxiety
- Maladaptive anxiety



**CONNECTIONS
BETWEEN
GIFTEDNESS AND
ANXIETY**

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ANXIETY DEFINITIONS

Fear = emotional response to imminent threat

Anxiety = anticipation of future threat

Behavioral issues arise from efforts to avoid anxiety

ANXIETY RISK FACTORS

- **Early Temperament** - Behavioral inhibition
- **Early Environment** – Overly protective, hostile, neglect
- **Early Biological** – Elevated afternoon cortisol levels

(Essex, et al.) 2012)

GIFTEDNESS – COLUMBUS GROUP DEFINITION

“Giftedness is *asynchronous development* in which advanced cognitive abilities and heightened intensity combine to create inner experiences and awareness that are qualitatively different from the norm.”

(Columbus Group, 1999)

GIFTEDNESS AND ANXIETY

- Heightened intensity, sensitivity, awareness
- Internal asynchrony
- Environmental mismatch

HEIGHTENED INTENSITY, SENSITIVITY, AWARENESS

Dabrowski's Theory of Positive Disintegration

Overexcitabilities (OE's) – Super stimulatabilities

stimulus-response (stronger, longer reaction)

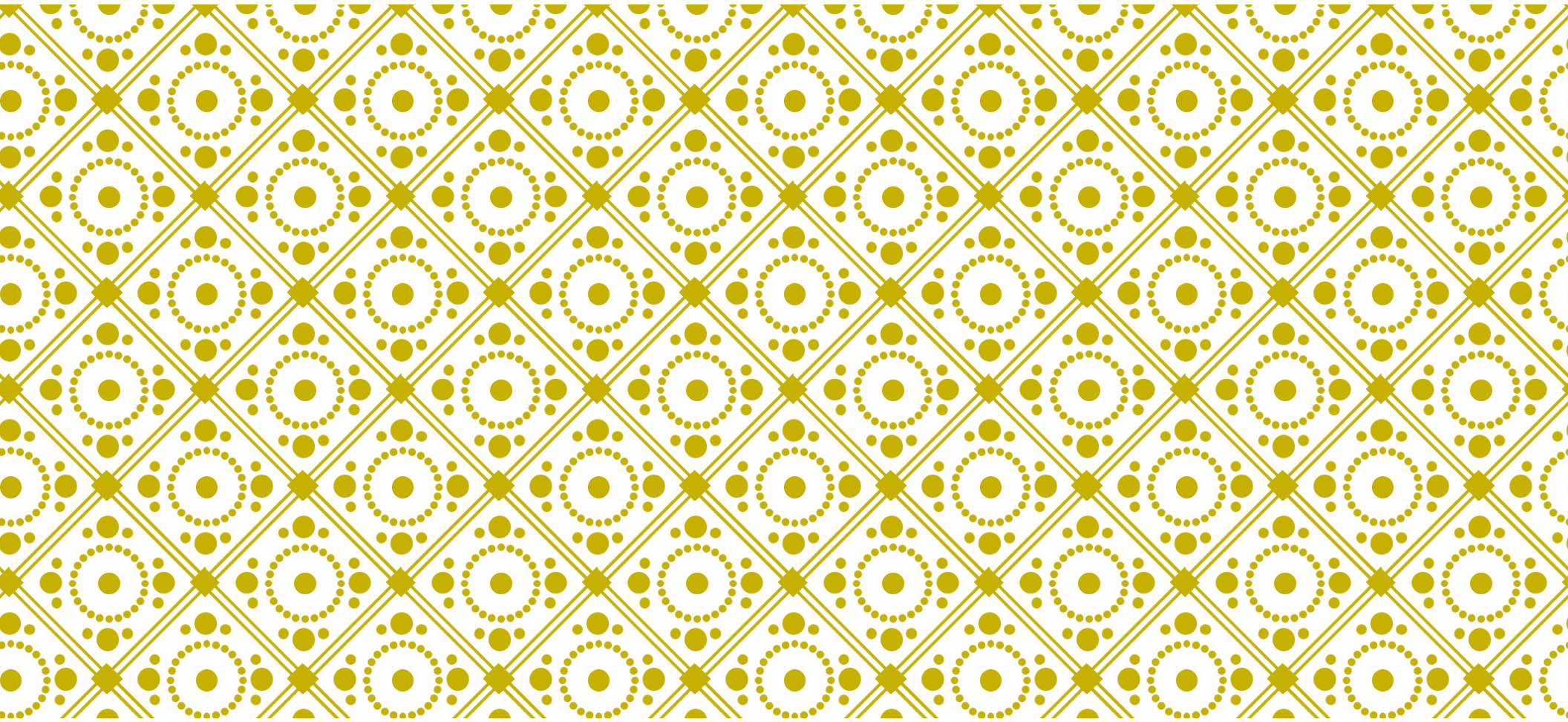
- Intellectual
- **Emotional**
- **Imaginational**
- Sensory
- Psychomotor

INTERNAL ASYNCHRONY

- **Information intake** may be at higher level than emotional processing
- **Mental models** may be at higher level than physical ability is able to execute
- **Spiritual processing** may be at more advanced level than experiential perspective

EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENTAL MISMATCH

- **Age peers** do not understand what I am saying
- **Mental peers** discount me
- **Adults** expect behavior to match mental age
- **Adults** discount me



MANIFESTATIONS OF ANXIETY IN GIFTED

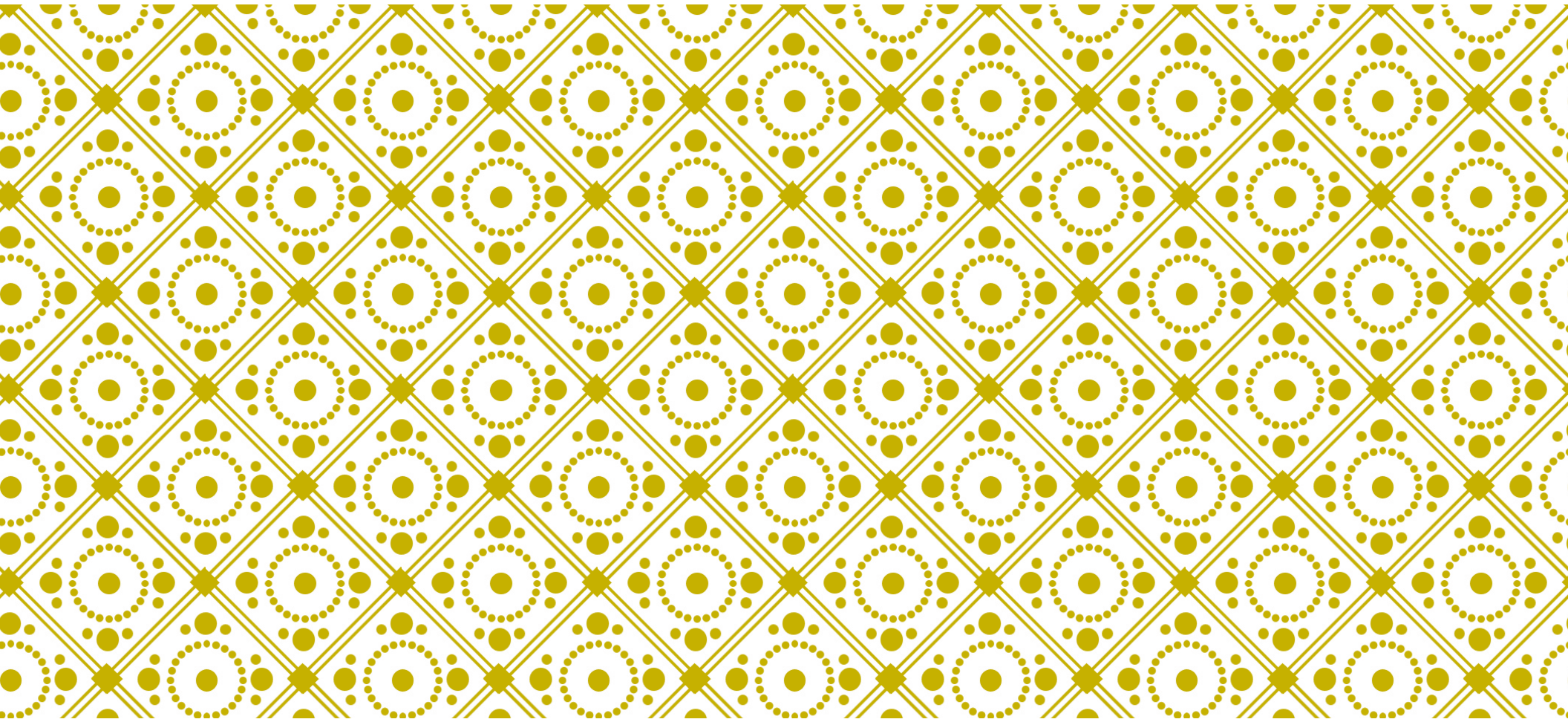
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MANIFESTATIONS OF ANXIETY IN GIFTED KIDS

- **Perfectionism**
 - Symptom vs trait
 - Execution Gap
 - “I can’t fail, but I don’t know how to succeed”
- **Isolation**
 - Managing Information
 - “I can’t let anyone know I’m struggling”
 - Alternative Reality
 - “Everything is okay (as long as I don’t think about it)”

MANIFESTATIONS OF ANXIETY IN QUIET KIDS

- **“Precocious” Talk**
 - Developmentally Inappropriate Concerns
 - “How much do we pay for our house?”
 - Worries about wider world
 - “Why do bad things happen to good people?”
- **Dysregulation, Overload, and Shutdown**
 - In response to execution gap
 - “There’s too much, I can’t deal with this!”
 - “Everyone’s in my face, leave me alone!”



ADAPTIVE ANXIETY

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ADAPTIVE ANXIETY

- Stress
- Worry
- Motivation

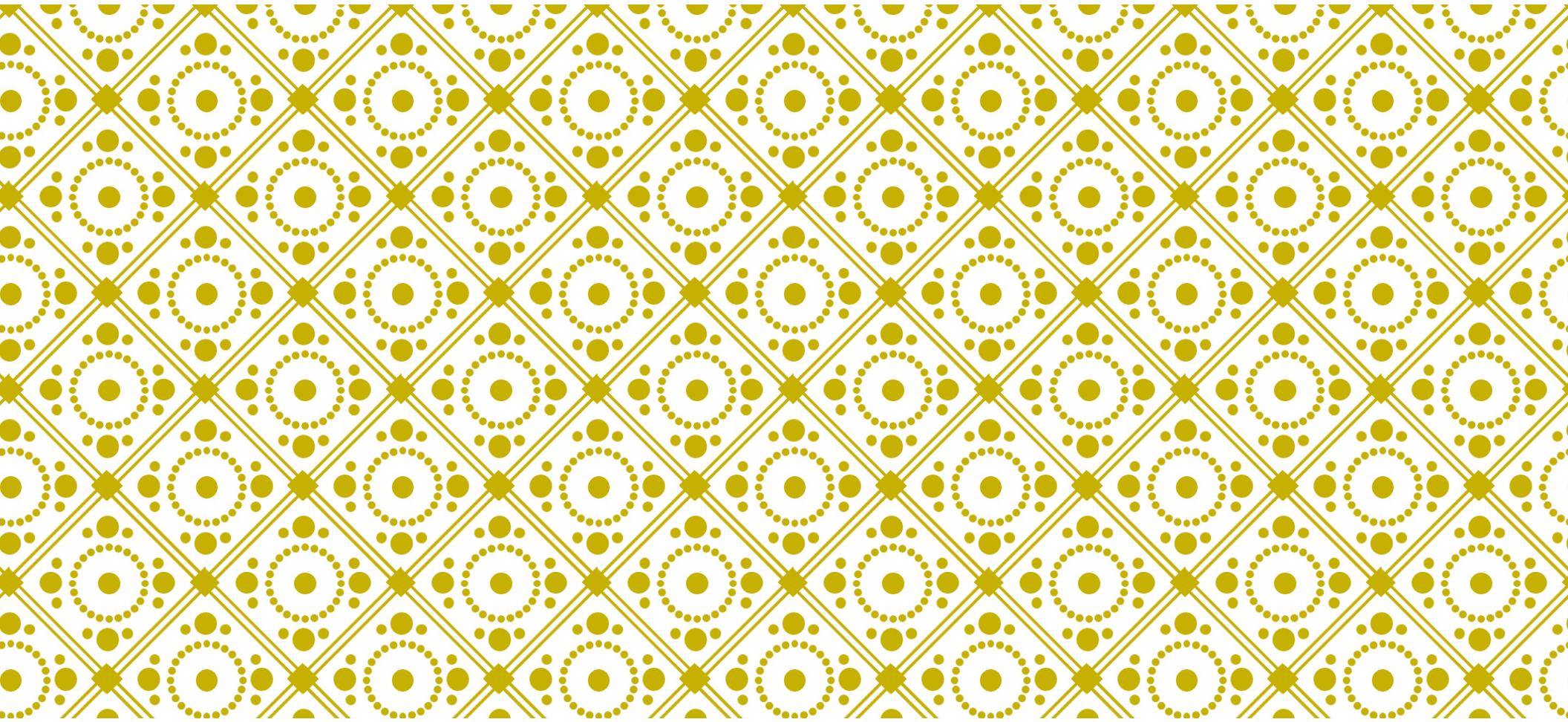
• Does the anxiety hinder the child's ability to address the motivating factor, or does it spur production?

KEEPING ANXIETY ADAPTIVE

- Zone of Proximal Development
- Honoring Asynchrony
- Regulating Techniques (Parent first, joined by child)
 - Breathing
 - Progressive Muscle Relaxation
 - Safe Space

KEEPING ANXIETY ADAPTIVE

- Worry Time
- Journaling
- Accurate Listening
 - Listen without intent to problem solve
 - Help child understand you hear them accurately
 - No judgment
- Praise actions not traits



ALADAPTIVE NXIETY

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WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT DEALING WITH ANXIETY

- Most common mental health issue in the U.S.
- Young children who are more shy, anxious, or worried than typical have strong predictability of going on to develop an anxiety disorder
- 25% of 18 year olds will have experienced an anxiety disorder sometime in their teen years; and 6% will have experienced a severe anxiety disorder.

(National Institute Mental Health)

PROS AND CONS OF DIAGNOSES

Pros:

- Shorthand
- Insurance Coverage
- Body of Research

Cons:

- Boxed in
- Military or Security applications
- Stigma

ADJUSTMENT DISORDER WITH ANXIETY

- An emotional or behavioral symptom in response to a stressor.
- Marked distress out of proportion to the stressor
- Significant impairment in social, academic, or other functioning.
- Ends within 6 months after removal of stressor.

ANXIETY DISORDERS

- Typically lasting 6 months or more
- Excessive - anxiety exists on a continuum
- Disorder-specific scales to assess

GENERALIZED ANXIETY DISORDER

- Excessive anxiety and worry occurring more days than not about a number of different activities.
- Difficult to control worry
- Causes significant impairment in important areas of functioning (social, academic)

SOCIAL ANXIETY DISORDER

- Consistently marked fear or anxiety about one or more social situations with peers such as having conversations, or meeting new people, or being observed while performing tasks.
- Fear of being negatively evaluated by others.
- The social situations are avoided or endured with intense distress

SEPARATION ANXIETY DISORDER

- Excessive, persistent distress when experiencing or anticipating separation from home or major attachment figures.
- Often reluctance to go out or be away from major attachment figure.

OTHER ANXIETY DISORDERS

- Selective Mutism
- Specific Phobia
- Panic Disorder

SELF-EDUCATION RESOURCES

HOAGIES GIFTED

http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/social_emotional.htm

SENG

<http://sengifted.org/resources/resource-library/>

DAVIDSON

[http://www.davidsongifted.org/Search-Results?
Search=anxiety](http://www.davidsongifted.org/Search-Results?Search=anxiety)

SEEK OUTSIDE HELP

- When you desire tools that will lead to a richer life
- When the anxiety is impacting the child's functionality
- When the anxiety is impacting the family's functionality

HELP WITH MALADAPTIVE ANXIETY

- Medication needs: see a psychiatrist
- IQ or other testing needs: see a psychologist
- Therapy needs: counselor or psychologist

FIND PROVIDERS EXPERIENCED WITH GIFTED

- Therapeutic alliance
- Misdiagnosis of gifted
- Wellness conceptualization

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

You can access a copy of this PowerPoint at:

sites.google.com/site/giftedchicago

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