

APRIL 25, 2017

SOCIAL CHALLENGES OF KIDS WITH LEARNING PROBLEMS

Learning problems can affect not just school but communicating and connecting with other kids.

By Caroline Miller

When we think of children with learning challenges, we think of difficulty with reading or math, with being organized, with paying attention and staying focused in school. But many students with learning and attention disorders also have social and communication problems.



They have trouble connecting with other kids, making friends and understanding what's expected of them in social situations.

Some of them miss social cues, and misinterpret body language and tone of voice. Kids with learning disabilities may talk too much, or at the wrong time, or say things that are inappropriate. Some are stiff in conversation, have trouble expressing themselves and miss the point of a lot of humor. They don't "get" things that seem to come effortlessly to other kids. They may have trouble understanding what's happening in a group, and finding a way of fitting in.

For children and teenagers, being "just a little off" in their social behavior can easily trigger rejection by their hyperaware peers, and make them targets of teasing and bullying. Sometimes young children with social awkwardness or deficits are misdiagnosed with autism, because these behaviors are one component of an autism diagnosis. But it's important to recognize that these behaviors occur in a lot of kids who aren't on the spectrum, too. [CONTINUE READING](#)



STARTING OVER WITH A NEW FOSTER CHILD

By Meghan Moravcik Walbert

We stand in the bedroom together, side by side, clothes and toys piled up around us and empty boxes tossed into the hallway.

"So, tell me," I say. "What do you want to keep on the walls, and what should come down?"

The colorful train decal on the wall of this bedroom looks babyish now compared to the basketball posters this 9-year-old boy brought with him today. So does the framed alphabet print and the stack of board books. The stuffed animals. Even the white bookshelf and small, matching dresser I picked out back when my husband and I were first licensed as foster parents two years ago. Back when the age of children we were willing and able to accept was capped at 5 years old. [CONTINUE READING](#)

SON GETS INTENSELY ANGRY IN SECONDS, THEN FEELS BAD ABOUT IT LATER

By Meghan Leahy

Q: My eldest son is turning 7 in a few months, and I need advice on how to help him deal with anger, especially in the heat of the moment. He is well behaved at school, has many friends, gets along with just about everyone, is typically happy and good-natured, has been identified as gifted at school, and feels emotions intensely. When he's mad or hurt or disappointed, he goes from zero to 10 in mere seconds. He then often lashes out physically. If you send him (carry him) to his room to cool off, his first instinct is to trash his room. Eventually, he calms down on his own by reading or playing with Legos, whereupon he is always contrite and says he knows it's not okay to react that way. We talk about better ways to cool off. But it always repeats. I have tried staying near him when he's upset, but it seems to enrage him more. Any advice on how to deal with this is appreciated, especially if it happens in public.

A: You have my full empathy here. You are raising one intense little guy, and it sounds like it can be tough. Let's try to understand your son so that we can help him.

You gave me two important bits of information in your letter: Your son has been identified as gifted, and he feels emotions intensely. I am going to assume that you have read up on gifted children and sensitive children and how they interact in the world, but if you have not, please avail yourself of some books. I suggest Dan Siegel's, especially "The Whole-Brain Child," to help you understand what is happening in his mind, as well as "The Highly Sensitive Child," by Elaine Aron, and any of the classes at the Neufeld Institute (which can be taken online and at your own pace). A common theme you will find is that gifted children are equally intelligent and intense. This intensity is due to how fast the brain works and how it gets too much sensory information, which then leads to a slowing of maturity. Why? When the brain is this inundated with sensory information, it is busy sorting and filtering and has less time for growing. Does this mean that your son will not mature? No! It just means it may take a little longer.

So why is he so violent, and why does it escalate so quickly? You can imagine that as your son works hard to stay on task all day, his brain is slowly becoming overloaded. His prefrontal cortex, which is right on the brink of maturity, is working overtime to focus on the teacher, stay patient with his fellow students, keep his body still and follow directions. His gifted brain may be trying to take him down many paths during the day, so it takes him even more energy to focus and be good in class. By the time you see him after school? He is kaput. Every ounce of his good intentions has been spent, and when his systems cannot handle any more, guess what happens? Eruptions of frustration that manifest in violence. [CONTINUE READING](#)

UPCOMING CLASSES

ANKENY

Saturday, May 6, 2017
(9am-4:30pm)

Integrative Parenting: Strategies for Raising Children Affected by Attachment Trauma
(Renaë Jones, MS, LMHC)

BURLINGTON

Saturday, May 6, 2017
(9am-4:30pm)

What Are You Trying to Tell Me? Responding Effectively to Troubling Behaviors
(Lois Smidt & Krista McCalley)

CEDAR RAPIDS

Saturday, May 6, 2017
(9am-12:15pm)

The ABC's of Early Childhood Connections: Nurturing Social & Emotional Development in Infants & Toddlers
(Gwen Babberl, LMHC, CADC)

IOWA CITY

Saturday, May 6, 2017
(9am-12:15pm)

Mandatory Child Abuse Reporter Training

IOWA CITY

Saturday, May 6, 2017
(1:15pm-5:30pm)

CPR & First Aid - REGISTER HERE

TO REGISTER FOR A CLASS,
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