

Gifted Student With ADHD

Since the incidence of ADHD is much higher than other disabling conditions, it is one that will be encountered more often in our search for the “twice exceptional” student. A student could be diagnosed with ADHD when in fact he/she is gifted and reacting to an inappropriate curriculum (Webb & Latimer, 1993). The key to differentiating between the two is by looking at the frequency of the “acting out” behaviors. If the acting out is specific to certain situations, the student’s behavior is more likely related to giftedness. If the behavior is consistent across all situations, the student’s behavior is more likely related to ADHD. However, the two are not mutually exclusive. In other words, a student could be BOTH gifted and have ADHD. The following lists highlight the similarities between giftedness and ADHD.

Characteristic of Gifted Students Who Are Bored

- Poor attention and daydreaming when bored
- Low tolerance for persistence on tasks that seem irrelevant
- Begin many projects, see few to completion
- Development of judgment lags behind intellectual growth
- Intensity may lead to power struggles with authorities
- High activity level; may need less sleep
- Difficulty restraining desire to talk; may be disruptive
- Question rules, customs, and traditions
- Lose work, forget homework, are disorganized
- May appear careless
- Highly sensitive to criticism
- Do not exhibit problem behaviors in all situations
- More consistent levels of performance at a fairly consistent pace

(Cline, 1999; Webb & Latimer, 1993)

Characteristics of a Student with ADHD

- Poorly sustained attention
- Diminished persistence on tasks not having immediate consequences
- Often shift from one uncompleted activity to another
- Impulsivity, poor delay of gratification
- Impaired adherence to commands to regulate or inhibit behavior in social contexts
- More active, restless than other students
- Often talk excessively
- Often interrupt or intrude on others (e.g., butt into games)
- Difficulty adhering to rules and regulations
- Often lose things necessary for tasks or activities at home or school
- May appear inattentive to details
- Highly sensitive to criticism
- Problem behaviors exist in all settings, but in some are more severe
- Variability in task performance and time used to accomplish tasks

(Barkley, 1990; Cline, 1999; Webb & Latimer, 1993)

How To Tell the Difference between ADHD and Boredom?

Asking some key questions and then testing out your theory may help solve the dilemma.

- Could the behaviors be responses to inappropriate placement, insufficient challenge, or lack of intellectual peers?
- Is the student able to concentrate when interested in the activity?
- Have any curricular modifications been made in an attempt to change inappropriate behaviors?
- Has the student been interviewed?
- What are his/her feelings about the behaviors?
- Does the student feel out of control?
- Do the parents perceive the student as being out of control?
- Do the behaviors occur at certain times of the day, during certain activities, with certain teachers or in certain environments?
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