

New Mexico Association for the Gifted Spotlight on Social Emotional Needs During Covid-19 May 2020

Gifted/2e Homeschooling and COVID-19: Curiosity, Creativity, and Concerns

Sponsored by SENG (Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted), a nonprofit network of people who guide gifted, talented, and twice-exceptional individuals to reach their goals intellectually, physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually.

Presented by Joanne Foster, Ed.D., a parent, teacher, gifted and special education expert, educational consultant, and multiple award-winning author. This information is a synopsis of a SENG webinar (SENGinar) she presented in April.

The top priorities during these uncertain times include: encouraging children's enthusiasm for learning in whatever form it takes, which may be different than structured academics. Encourage self-love and understanding for everyone. Be open to change as you respond to children's wide variety of feelings, as well as your own.

Social and Emotional Responses

Make sure your own responses and fears are controlled, while paying attention to signs of undue stresses on your children by encouraging them to express their feelings. Different ages may want to talk at different times; be available whenever they're ready to chat.

Limit and control kids' exposure to news. When they ask questions, give short, to-the-point answers to avoid confusing them. Better yet, collaborate on finding the answers. This is a time of instability, and turning to what they already know and can do may lead to feelings of joy.

Emphasize "You are enough, and you always have been," while giving kids physical, emotional, and spiritual support. Listen and observe them, and be available for support when they need it.

This is an opportunity to have more time to problem-solve together, supporting both their social and emotional needs.

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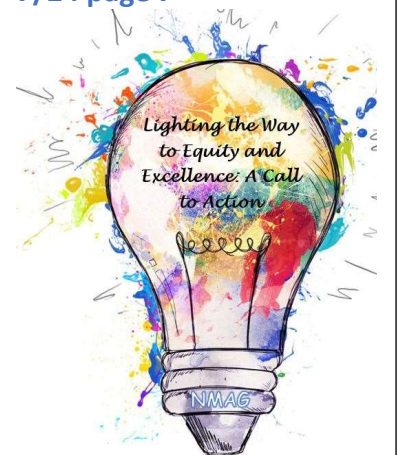
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Gifted and 2e Homeschooling Continued

View This Time as a Reset Button

Give kids permission to do what they love and opportunities to make choices, which is often not realistic in school. Encourage their play and play together.

Take the approach of encouraging them to “Go be awesome in the rain!”

Emphasize coping with stressors together. Connect with quiet moments together in your home or in safe outdoors conditions. Emphasize the positivity of having extra time together and celebrate that you are helping society, as well as learning about healthcare and other careers that continue to help others.

This is a good time to learn together about and practice effective hygiene methods, especially for young children, and to keep those practices forever. Encourage kids to help everyone in their family, if only it's by washing their hands.

It's a great teachable moment for everyone to know there are many things in life that none of us can control, but we can control how we treat each other: be gentle, thoughtful, and respectful.

Anxiety and Depression

The Anxiety and Depression Association of America is addressing concerns brought on by COVID-19 and the many changes required in our lives every day at <https://adaa.org/>.

Emphasize to traumatized kids that the unknown and uncertainty can be okay. Focus on the present and how they are safe now. This, too, shall pass. Your friends will still be there for you. Help them keep in contact with people they know and trust as they request it.

All of us are feeling a lack of control and wondering what we can do to regain a comfortable feeling. Ask kids to draw a picture of their feelings. Again, help them realize that many things are out of all of our control, and we can accept what we can't control. Remind them that the whole world is full of scientists and helpful people who are working together to

bring the current crisis to an end. People are making progress toward finding solutions.

Seek professional help if you think they need it. Many therapists are offering electronic sessions.

Emphasizing Creativity

A good website is <https://www.creativitypost.com/>, including “How Creativity Can Stop Contagion.”

Creativity, for some kids, requires effort but can be rewarding. It may require parents to stretch ourselves. Help them realize they can achieve whatever they dream about or imagine. Who are we to predict what the future can bring?

Creativity can be fostered by helping kids analyze their ideas to the best of their ability and encouraging them to surmount obstacles. Let them take sensible risks. Also, help them tolerate ambiguity, which may not come to them naturally but is a helpful life tool. Let them discover what they are passion about and pursue their ideas. It fosters independence and optimism.

Encourage kids to believe in themselves and the creativity, sometimes “way out their” ideas they can come up with. Collaborate, comfort, communicate with consistency to encourage them.

When to Be Concerned, and How to Handle it

Be concerned if you notice irregular sleeping or eating habits that can't be explained by their age or preferences or exhaustion at all times. Listen to them carefully and ask what they are thinking and experiencing. Take deep, steady breaths together as you talk. With older children, share your own fears and vulnerabilities and how you are dealing with them.

Let them have fun! Send them outside! Then allow time for rest, relaxation, and reflection. Find answers to problems together. As parents of younger children, be like ducks – calm on the outside and paddling like mad underneath.

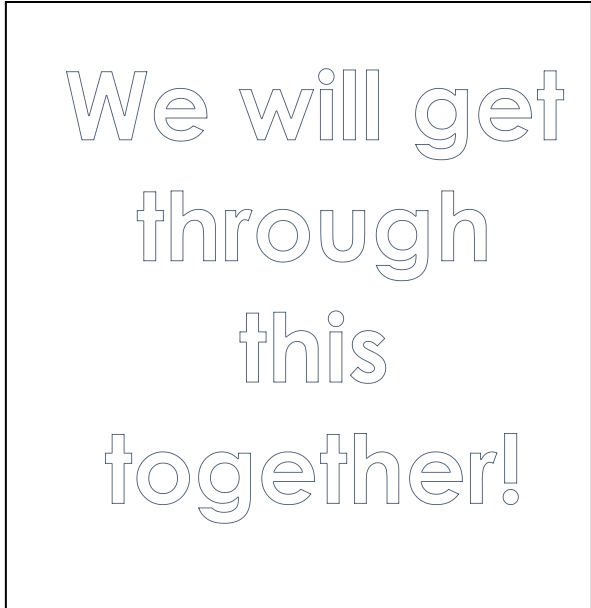
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Acknowledge that everyone has disparate feeling about this situation, both favorable and unfavorable, even scary. Be patient. Quietly listen to them when they want to vent. Encourage them to remember somewhat similar situations in the past and how they handled them successfully.

In conclusion

We will get through this together. Emphasize self-love for everyone; connectivity with others in whatever ways possible; curiosity and creativity; play, play, play, or do whatever you enjoy together -often. Academics may take on a whole new approach during this time when emphasizing social and emotional needs is more important.



Smart but Scattered: How to Help Organize Your Gifted Child, May 4



Lori Comallie-Caplan

It is not uncommon for gifted students to struggle with organization. Although they may find schoolwork easy, they often work through their assignments so quickly that they become forgetful. Science tells us that gifted brains are hyper-sensitive, meaning they store information faster, recall facts easier, and are also distracted easily.

The problem is compounded because the students often don't need any of these skills in their early school years — the work in typical mixed-ability schools is so easy for them that it takes nearly no time, effort, or even looking at the instructions at the top of a worksheet for them to complete work successfully.

So, when their peers are learning all of these things alongside their elementary spelling and arithmetic homework, the gifted child is instead rewarded with academic success without developing these skills at all. This webinar will give parents some assistance in teaching their children these very needed skills.

Please register for this webinar at: <https://forms.gle/GFFqZfDiSNoVHcrn6> . You will receive a link to log on to the webinar on May 4, 2020

Presenter: Lori Comallie-Caplan, Counselor and Evaluator of the Gifted
President of NMAG

Bright, Quirky & Coping: Gifted and 2e Living and Learning at Home During the Pandemic

Bright & Quirky's goal, available at (<https://brightandquirky.com/>), is "to help your bright children thrive even with learning, social, emotional, or behavioral challenges." A recent webinar featured panelists who are coaches in their IdeaLab parent community, plus a homeschooling parent.

The 4 panel members and the moderator summed up their best advice – “thoughts from their hearts” – in this unusual, challenging, weird, unpredictable time.

- Remind yourself and your family that this is temporary. We will survive this together. Take care of the necessary basics and good, positive connections every day.
- The primary goal of the world right now is to reduce transmission of the virus. Everything else is secondary. Discuss as a family what is best for maintaining your quality of life.
- Keep peace and progress as primary, although progress is different for everyone. For some of us, progress may be developing empathy in our children, or making good connections together.
- When things fall apart, something new and wonderful can grow from the pieces. Ask: What do we really want out of life? How can we recreate our lives to be more in tune with what is valuable to us?
- Many problems can be solved collaboratively. View your kids as having wisdom. Talk through things together. How do we want to solve this? It's important that everyone contributes and feels heard.

Self-care

Other pearls of wisdom for making the best of the current time of challenges and not knowing were calming, soothing, and realistic. Once of the main goals for adults can be to find their own methods for self-care, calming and grace. “We must take care of ourselves first.”

It could be, said one panelist, that nothing is going to get done, and that's okay. Cook simple foods. Keep the days very simple. It's all okay, even academics. No student is going to flunk this year, and our kids are bright enough that they can catch up next year. Remember, every family is going through the same emotional and academic challenges. Go ahead and just sit outside, draw, watch sunsets.

They probably know what's happening around the world

Gifted and 2e kids may be much more aware of the turmoil in the world that we think, as they can go online and find lots of information, correct and incorrect, and opinions there. Check in with them often to find out how they're feeling. Spend quiet moments together, too. Explain that staying together and by ourselves is an act of love and kindness. Love the people we're sheltering with, and do lovely little kindnesses for each other.

Academically, consider it as a time when your children are ill. Ask teachers and therapists to provide 5-minute activities. For many 2e kids, school itself and the pace of life required produce anxiety. Use this time as a reset to lower that anxiety. Some kids with a high sense of justice and fairness may be so overwhelmed by the chaos and pain that they are not emotionally capable of learning new material.

On working full-times and schooling full-time at the same time

Consider doing things together in blocks of time when you're available, not using schedules. Allow for flexibility. Be present when they start assigned work or activities, then let them take over. It's okay for them to ease into the day according to their own needs. You're spinning many plates and doing many things at the same time, so lower your expectations for their independent work. Let them explore their own, self-designated interest areas. That will help them gain a feeling of independence and self-care. *Continued on page 5*

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How to make your home a safe haven

Don't turn on the news! Monitor your own conversations. Your children will listen to both. Figure out what everyone's biorhythms are and make adjustment according to them.

Kids may actually, on their own, figure out the screens "are not all that" and may get bored with them. Many of them will actively seek intellectual input.

Tips on homeschooling

At the end of each day, figure out what worked that day and discuss it. Always end each day with what went well. Choose an academic skill to focus on, or pick what they're interested in learning or improving. Review of learned material can also help. A Language Arts activity could be building things from Legos, telling stories based around them, then filming it (or without the filming). Siblings can work together on this. One 17-year-old found that turning to his old Legos was his most comforting activity. Look for online classes on topics they're interested in.

Remember that their classmates and families are also struggling through this.

And be aware that some kids will not want to return to the normal school routine. If it's realistic for you and your family, consider a hybrid model starting fall 2020, where they go to school part-time and are homeschooled part-time depending on when they want to be with their peers or the subjects where they may learn best in a formal environment.

Triage – what are the priorities?

Take care of everyone's mental and emotional states first. Schooling can come later. For 2e kids, the social/emotional piece can be more important than academics. They will learn what they need to learn when they're intrinsically motivated. Let them take this time to do a deep dive into something that fascinates them. This is new for teachers, too. They don't know how much homeschooling, homework, or activities is realistic for each family.

When kids have meltdowns, explain that we're all feeling stressed and unsure. Help them identify what their stressors are. Brainstorm together: What helps you feel better when you're feeling stressed? Work on emotional intelligence during this unusual "found time" together.

Encouragement

Remind them that they have amazing talents and gifts. Let's explore them without being production oriented. Keep things simple. When a panelist's child was told to list her 10 favorite songs, she had a meltdown because it was too much. Support what they want to do, and if they don't want to do anything, that's fine. Many kids need to take their own time to process the world trauma.

A panelist said, "What a time this is for an explosion in creativity!" Play is important and, conversely, it's okay for kids to feel bored. Enjoy hearing their thought processes as they create. The most valuable outcome of the current challenges may be that they family is forming, together, connections and safety. This may be the "silver lining."

Meeting their (and our) emotional needs

Some gifted and 2e kids are just barely coping with the day-to-day confusion and pressure (which may be totally internal). One idea – make a worry box for them to put their fears into. Discuss those worries together to dispel each one, as appropriate.

Everyone in the family will benefit from a comfort kit, starting with the adults. Ask kids, "What brings you a sense of safety and comfort? Video games may be teen-agers' appealing comfort as they express their independence. Allow a certain amount of gaming but ask them to join the family for meals and one other activity where you can all connect around.

Take baby steps. You may need to protect yourself first. Collaborate with your kids on what works for each one and what doesn't work. *Continued on page 6*

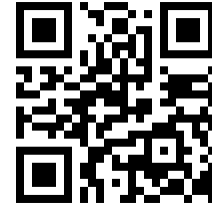
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General needs

Blocks of (flexible) time should include exercise. Ask your kids when the best time is for them and be ready to change it each day. Teens may way to connect with their “second family,” which may be their friends. Virtual connections are very important for teen-agers. Older kids may understand this is not our first pandemic. We have learned a lot about pandemics, and we’re applying that knowledge. So, the overarching message: Relax. We’re all in this together. It will end, and there may be some beautiful insights and learning to be gained for all of us. If not, accept that, too.



**New Mexico Association
for the Gifted**
Join us at <http://www.nmgifted.org/>



**We welcome your input,
membership and participation as a
gifted/2e parent, teacher,
administrator, and for yourself.**

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CREATING MORE ADVOCATES THROUGH PANGS

Pangs are defined as sudden feelings of mental or emotional distress or longing. This describes what it feels like as a parent of a gifted student when they are not receiving appropriate and equitable services. A new initiative for New Mexico Association for the Gifted is the creation of the Parent Advocacy Network for Gifted Students or PANGS. This is a free service for parents to assist them with information to appropriately advocate for excellence and equity of service for their gifted child/ren. We will be offering Facebook Live events, webinars, conference sessions and email blasts to keep the parents of our gifted up to date about advocating for their gifted child. You do not have to be a member of NMAG to join PANGS. Follow this link <https://forms.gle/EiRK18joU7QBp1Rq9> or scan the QR code to join. Please share this information with other parents of gifted children.





15TH ANNUAL FALL INSTITUTE

**Lighting the Way to Equity and Excellence:
A Call to Action**

OCTOBER 16-17, 2020

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

NMAG is now accepting proposals through July 24 at:

<https://forms.gle/ubjhxcsxRzUccCok8>

There will be three strands:

Excellence in Advocacy

Supporting the Development of Underserved Populations

Supporting the Social Emotional Development of the Gifted

Preference will be given to proposals that align with the theme and/or strand.

Institute Information

The Institute will be held at Institute of American Indian Arts, 83 Avan Nu Po Road, Santa Fe, NM 87508

Keynote Speakers: Shelagh Gallagher and Geoffrey Moon

Conference Hotel: Courtyard by Marriott 3347 Cerrillos Rd., Santa Fe, NM 87507 (505) 473-2800

Conference Rate: \$119 per night for reservations before September 23, 2020

