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Authors: Greenspon, Thomas S.

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THE SELF EXPERIENCE OF THE GIFTED PERSON: THEORY AND DEFINITIONS

Recent articles on the gifted self are characterized by theoretical confusion and lack of definitional clarity. This article, anchored in current self psychology theory, defines the self experience as the person's subjective experience of organization and meaning, the maintenance of which is crucial to normal functioning. Interactions with others are a formative part of the self experience. Traits of giftedness, and the reactions of others to these, contribute to the gifted self experience. Social and emotional problems of giftedness, such as those that arise with asynchronous development and perfectionism, are based on a compromised sense of cohesion and unity of the self experience.

There is a growing interest in the self of the gifted individual; recently, the Roeper Review (Lind & Roeper, 1998) devoted a special issue to the topic and a conference was held which focused on the subject[1]. As a result, much needed attention is being paid to the inner life of the gifted individual. Annemarie Roeper has long advocated this attention to the whole person in addressing the needs of the gifted (Roeper, 1995, 1996).

There are several problems with some of the articles in the special issue of Roeper Review, especially where self theory is concerned. First, although the self is discussed at some length by several authors, the theoretical context for defining the self, if any definition is presented at all, is too briefly examined to establish the self as a useful concept in understanding the psychology of giftedness (e.g., Falk & Miller, 1998; Maxwell, 1998; Mahoney, 1998). Piechowski (1998) refers informally to the gifted self, but neither he nor Dabrowski, whose work he reflects, have a

concept of self as part of their theory.

Secondly, in some cases, different theoretical systems are confused and combined with one another in ways that obscure their usefulness. Neihart, for example, confuses Kohutian self psychology with object relations theory (Neihart, 1998a). Although these two theories stress the importance of relationships in forming the self, one (object relations) is an experience-distant view of the self from outside, as an object, while the other explores the subjective world of the self. Moreover, introjection as a way of forming the self is a classical analytic concept, not one used by self psychologists.

Thirdly, in the absence of theoretical clarity, the concept of self is used in a vernacular sense, leading to some confusion as to its meaning (e.g., Daniels, 1998; Fiedler, 1998; Landau, 1998; Mahoney, 1998; Silverman, 1998). Silverman, for example, refers to the self both as an experiencer of feelings and as an agent of action. It is unclear from her discussion why one would use the term "gifted self", and not simply "gifted person", which is less confusing and does not substantially alter the meaning of her article.

Finally, there is no clearly stated reason, in any of the articles, why the concept of self is relevant to understanding or counseling the gifted. Concepts such as "self efficacy" (Maxwell, 1998) and "self denial" (Fiedler, 1998) may be useful but are not based on any particular theoretical concept of self or of giftedness. Those articles which describe a view of the developing self (e.g., Falk & Miller, 1998; Landau, 1998; Maxwell, 1998; Neihart, 1998a) are clearly examining concepts that apply to all human development, not just to gifted individuals. In fact, this is necessary for any reasonable discussion of the self. Instead of referring to a gifted self, it is more useful to examine the effects of giftedness on the self experience of an individual, especially for purposes of counseling and therapy.

Greenspon, (1998), in the same special issue of the Roeper Review, examined the role of the concept of self in understanding and helping gifted individuals. In this article, the author suggests a particular concept of self, based in well-developed theory, related to human development in general and relevant to gifted development in specific ways. The author's clinical experience leads to the choice of self psychology for this task, especially in its later formulations of intersubjectivity theory and motivational systems theory, although no claim to absolute truth is implied. Practical applications are beyond the scope of this article; only theoretical issues are examined.

A Vignette

Consider the following dialog between a gifted high school student and his counselor:

Counselor: I understand you haven't been handing in your math homework; your parents asked you to see me in case I can help with the problem. Do you see it as a problem?

Student: Yeah, actually.

C: So, what do you think is going on?

S: I don't know, I just don't seem to want to do the assignments.

C: And you feel bad about that?

S: Yes.

C: I see you have always done well in math before. Do you like math?

S: Yes, I really do. I've always been able to sail through the work and make very high grades.

C: You can't do that this year?

S: No, the ideas are too complicated.

C: So, how does that feel to you?

S: Its depressing.

C: Depressing?

S: Yeah, I'm the gifted student -- I'm supposed to be able to figure things out in a flash.

C: And when you can't? ...

S: Maybe I'm not that smart after all.

C: So the fact that math is more challenging this year has made you think you aren't so bright. It has shaken your view of yourself.

S: Yeah -- that's depressing.

The student has been for sent help because he hasn't been handing in homework. In this interchange, the counselor first establishes that the student does want help, and then determines through empathic listening that the student's experience of himself has suffered a change. How might this scenario set the stage for a specific approach to helping this student? The answer is based on certain theoretical assumptions. First, behavior beyond basic reflexes is determined by a person's understanding of a situation; that is, how the person's experience is organized. Second, this understanding -- the meaning the person gives to events -- is biased by past experiences. Third, the organizing of experience is a universal human phenomenon, although exactly how experience is organized differs from person to person. Giftedness potentially contributes certain elements to the organization of experience.

It is the organizing of experience that underlies the concept of the self. Before continuing with the vignette, a definition of the self is offered.

Defining the Self

There are many ways to define the concept of the self. It can be referred to as an object, as in the "me" self of William James (Fast, 1998). The symbolic interactionist view described by Falk & Miller (1998) is an example of this. Various self-images, gleaned from other people's responses to oneself, are processed together to produce the reflexive self. This particular theory does have the advantage of taking into account the role of others in the development of the self concept. The object relations notion of the true and false self (Winnicott, 1965) is another example. The true self is seen as an object with properties of agency; that is, it does things that influence the person's behavior. The false self may mask the true self and hide it, resulting in an impairment of a person's authenticity.

Although concepts such as the true and false self have great value as metaphors for understanding human behavior, they suffer from a potential logical/philosophical problem of reification, or being used as though they refer to an actual object. If the self is an actual object, even a conceptual one, what motivates it to act as it does? If there are a false self and a true self, how do the two interact? For instance, why would the false self not be considered as an aspect of one's true self, established to give a certain outward appearance? For many the false self is perceived as negative, in that it hides the true self (Miller, 1983, 1984, 1997; Winnicott, 1965). In psychoanalytic theory, however, the false self also protects the true self from its vulnerability to emotional pain (Slavin, 1997). One is free to theorize about the nature of the self with such concepts, since they are experience-distant; that is, they do not describe something that is actually experienced by anyone. As illustrated below, the terms self and person are largely indistinguishable when used in this way.

Other definitions of the self focus on the subjective aspects of an experiencer -- James's "I" self. In some cases, it is the objectified self that does the experiencing. Silverman, for example, describes a Self (which she capitalizes) which finds that "... life can be lonely and complicated." (1998,p. 205). Although a subjective experience is being described, the self doing the experiencing is still an object being observed. In some cases, the self is described both as an experiencer and as an agent. For example, Silverman describes the self as an entity inside the child, with properties of agency: "[the Self] ... struggles to find a place ...", or "... will be able to honor its uniqueness." (1998,p. 205), as well as capacities for experiencing: "[the Self is] ... besieged by emotionally charged cognitions." (1998,p. 205). The problems with this formulation become acute when there are statements such as, "Trying to fit in at the expense of the Self leads many gifted people to feel like aliens from a different planet ..."(1998,p. 205). In this statement, it is as if there is a person inside the person that suffers as a result of what the outer person does. If the point is that gifted people try to fit in and feel like aliens, the concept of the Self becomes redundant.

The confusion between self-as-experiencer and self-as-agent is a common one in discussions of the self, even among psychoanalytic self psychologists. This article follows the lead of Robert Stolorow, a contemporary self psychologist, in distinguishing between the terms "self" and

"person". Here is what Stolorow says:

Some of the theoretical difficulties that follow from a failure to distinguish between the self-as-structure and the person-as-agent can be illustrated by the following sentence, typical of many that appear in the literature of self psychology: "The fragmented self strives to restore its cohesion." Here, the term self has two distinctly different referents: (1) on the one hand, an organization of experience (called the self) has undergone fragmentation, and (2) an existential agent (unfortunately also called the self) is performing actions to restore cohesion to that organization of experience. This creates a theoretical conundrum. Clearly, it is not the pieces of something (fragments of a self) that strive toward a goal (restoration). More importantly, the second usage of self as an existential entity transforms the personal, agentic 'I' into a reified "it", not unlike the id, ego, and superego of classical theory. This problem can be minimized if we restrict the concept of self to describe organizations of experience and use the term person ... to refer to the existential agent who initiates actions. With this distinction in mind, our illustrative sentence can be reworded as: "The person whose self experience is becoming fragmented strives to restore his sense of self cohesion." (Stolorow, Brandchaft & Atwood, 1987, pp. 18-19).

It is notable that, for many of the Roeper Review articles in the special issue on the self, the phrase "gifted person" could be substituted for the term "self", and the article would have the same meaning overall, since what is being described is the inner motivation of the gifted individual. The focus would continue to be on gifted people and how they cope with various problems they encounter because of their giftedness. In these articles, it is not the subjective self experience which is described, but rather a concept of the self viewed from the outside.

The definition of self suggested in this article refers to the experienced world of the (gifted) person. Two basic principles underlie this view. First, human perception is constructive. That is, whatever the reality of the universe, the experience of it is an internal construction based on the way the brain functions. Second, the actual experience a particular person has is shaped by a history of encounters with people and objects in the world. Reality for any one person is based on a biased set of assumptions involving the meaning ascribed to what is perceived. In the case vignette, the student assumes he is no longer gifted, presumably because of something he has learned earlier about himself and about intelligence. The counselor may disagree with this, but it is the student's reality based on the meanings he has given to the fact that his work is now more challenging. Furthermore, the student is depressed. Not only does he believe he is no longer gifted, but there is a suggestion that his evaluation of himself as a person has suffered.

Reference is made here to a self experience, rather than to a self. The self experience is the experience of organization and meaning in the world (Lee&Martin, 1991; Stern, 1985; Stolorow, et.al., 1987). It is both cognitive and affective. It is in evidence when one experiences oneself as a person having a set of feelings and judgments and looking out on a world of people and objects. Daniel Stern (1985) examined the development of these and other properties of the self experience from earliest infancy in a now-classic psychological study of the infant. The self experience has certain properties, such as coherence, continuity, and affect. Coherence refers

to the level of overall organization and meaningfulness in the world as perceived. Continuity refers to the fact that one appears to be the same person as time goes on, despite many new experiences. Affect has to do with largely non-verbal, emotional and evaluative elements of experience. Alterations in these and other aspects of the self experience underlie problems in mental health. This latter point is central to the contributions made by Kohut (1959,1971,1977,1982; Lee&Martin, 1991; Stolorow, et.al., 1987; Wolf, 1988) and other self psychologists to the understanding of human psychology. A fundamental aspect of human motivation is the development, maintenance, and restoration of the experience of organization (Lichtenberg, Lachmann & Fosshage, 1992; Stolorow, et.al., 1987).

Speaking about a self experience allows issues of whether a self exists, and whether it is an experiencer or an agent or both, to be avoided. It could be said that the self of the student in the vignette struggles with the problem of having assignments that are more difficult. Perhaps in time, he will develop a false self -- a facade of bravado or defiance -- to hide his pain and loss of self esteem. While this formulation is useful as a metaphor to describe his inner world, the view expressed here is at once more explanatory and more germane to providing help for the student. The problem is ultimately not about a struggle of the self or a clash of selves, but about the diminished coherence of the student's self experience. The meanings this young man has been ascribing to his world have been brought into question. The resulting confusion and potential fragmentation, in self psychological terms, underlie what he refers to as feeling depressed, and must be addressed if he is to be helped.

Central to this theoretical outlook is the importance of maintaining a sense of organization of experience. Through much of normal life, the impression of living in a mostly predictable world of people and objects is maintained. The absence of such an experience of organization is what gives a bizarre quality to dreams, makes horror shows frightening, and makes thought disorders such as schizophrenia terrifying. It is possible to have alternate senses of organization at different times; the extreme of this exists in multiple personality disorders, now called dissociative identity disorders to highlight the problems with coherent identity. The particular ongoing, stable way in which the world seems to be organized for any one person is referred to as an unconscious, invariant organizing principle (Lee&Martin, 1991; Stolorow, et.al., 1987; Stolorow, Atwood & Brandchaft, 1994). For the student in the vignette, a significant part of this organizing principle seems to have been that he is bright and capable of doing intellectual work without difficulty. Discovering this organizing principle is a significant part of both understanding and helping him.

The Role of Others in Development of the Self Experience

In the vignette, something is about to happen between the student and the counselor: the student is asked to describe his reality, and the counselor begins to form her impression of this reality. The counselor's self experience is involved in this transaction. What is her experience of the student's experience? Neither has access to some objective reality here, and the counselor's organizing experience is not necessarily more correct than the student's, although

she may have more information than he does. What she sees is a gifted student finally being challenged at an appropriate level in school. If she empathizes with his possible feelings of insecurity and loss of face, and then describes her reality to him without judgment, he may be able to begin a shift to a new organizing experience that involves less self-judgment.

In general, the development of the self experience, starting at least at birth (Stern, 1985), is deeply rooted in transactions with others. The reactions of adult caregivers to an infant's affective states and behaviors underlie the meanings the infant gives to an experience. The hyperanxious response of a parent to the infant's cries of distress, for example, makes it difficult for the infant to downregulate its own anxiety (Stern, 1985); this in turn may engender an experience of the world as frightening and of one-self as potentially out of control. Self psychology refers to the role one person plays in the development of another's self experience as a self object function (Bacal, 1997; Lee & Martin, 1991; Stolorow, et.al., 1987; Wolf, 1988). The role played by essential others (Galatzer-Levy & Cohler, 1993) in this regard can substantially determine one's self view, as may be about to happen in the vignette. The counselor's attunement to the student's affective state -- his feelings -- can increase his sense of cohesion, continuity, and self esteem. The meanings ascribed to experience are truly intersubjective; that is, they arise out of the interface between two or more people's subjective worlds (Orange, Atwood, & Stolorow, 1997; Stolorow, et.al., 1987; Stolorow, et. al., 1994). The meaning of being gifted varies from gifted person to gifted person, depending in part on what the response has been from surrounding caregivers who each ascribe their own meanings to it.

Gifted Self Experience

The self experience of any person depends largely on two intermingled factors: what the person is capable of doing, and how this seems to be evaluated by others. In the vignette, the student worries about his difficulties, and although he feels negatively about this, the counselor may evaluate the same difficulties in a much more supportive and affirming way. The student seems to feel he has stopped being gifted; the counselor thinks he is a gifted student who has encountered difficult problems. If the student takes this more affirming evaluation in, perhaps his behavior will change. According to the theory presented here, this will not only be because the student feels accepted by the counselor. The counselor's affirmation helps to restore the sense of coherence to the student's self experience, and he feels restored to acceptability as the person he once was.

The term gifted self denotes a metaphoric construct with all the problems noted above, even though it is useful in some ways. The self experience of the gifted person, on the other hand, refers to the experienced world of a person who is gifted. This is different from the self experience of non-gifted people because of what giftedness entails in terms of capabilities and reactions from others. All of the qualities that define giftedness, such as high intelligence, broadness and depth of thought, multi potentiality, divergent thinking, and profound emotional sensitivity contribute to a particular self experience. Others may react to the gifted person's expression of these qualities with pride, acceptance, and support, or with jealousy, meanness

and rejection. Combinations of these and other related qualities and social reactions contribute to a variety of gifted self experiences. For example, the child who is a talented mathematician will have a strong sense of agency, based on her ability to do math well. If others around her prize and affirm this, her self esteem and sense of self cohesion will be high. If she is instead ridiculed or ignored, the opposite will be true.

The vignette potentially illustrates how two important aspects of a gifted person's self experience may affect feelings and behavior. The student's sense of agency, his sense of being an independent center of will, might be affected. What he previously thought he could rely on himself to do, he can no longer do. Furthermore, his sense of continuity might be affected. There could be a disturbing difference between who he feels he is now, and who he was before. His way of describing his fate to himself, and his way of restoring some meaning to his experience, is to conclude that he is no longer as gifted as before. He feels depressed as a result.

It is not uncommon for parents or counselors to discover that a gifted student has stopped performing well in school because he or she does not want to be disliked by classmates or be set apart from them in any way (Galbraith, 1996; Gross, 1989). The self experience of such a student involves knowledge of capabilities, and knowledge that expression of these capabilities is not well-received by others. The decision to be liked and accepted by others then entails suppressing the expression of the capabilities; seeing oneself as liked by others is incompatible, in this case, with seeing oneself as openly smart. If this results in emotional difficulties for the student, it is because of the threat to the coherence and vitality of the self experience that results from suppression or disavowal of a part of that experience.

The student in the vignette is one example of a large number problems faced by gifted students. Two other issues currently receiving attention in the gifted literature are asynchrony and perfectionism. These will now be discussed from the point of view of the theory under discussion here.

Asynchrony

Morelock (1996), attempting to define giftedness taking psychological and emotional factors into account, describes the work of the Columbus Group:

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 ... The uniqueness of the gifted renders them particularly vulnerable and requires modifications in parenting, teaching and counseling in order for them to develop optimally. (p. 4).

The concept of asynchrony has been examined extensively, most notably by Silverman (1997,1998), who stresses the emotional vulnerability of gifted children as a result. For example, when there is a lack of synchronization between mental and chronological age, children find themselves in situations where they can intellectually process information at a more advanced

level than their age mates, and this difference can lead to difficulties with social relations and self esteem if classmates react negatively.

What is the nature of the vulnerability that might go with asynchronous development? Certainly, children will typically try to fit in with others and be accepted. Failure to do so leads to feelings of isolation and self-doubt, and, in severe cases, hopelessness. In one article, Silverman (1998) describes the problem in terms of "... loss of Self. A vulnerable Self, besieged by emotionally charged cognitions, struggles to find a place in the world ..." (p. 205). She asks, "What does the realization that one is not normal do to the Self? Much depends on the environment in which the Self must function." (p. 205). This formulation, which objectifies the self, raises questions about how the Self experiences things and makes decisions; the distinction between Self and person is lost. By contrast, the view being suggested in this article refers to a gifted person with a more or less coherent self experience.

If a result of asynchronous development is that the gifted child feels abnormal in his or her social environment, the basic problem is a diminished sense of unity or cohesion of the self experience. A frequent observation in therapy is the anxiety, anger, sadness, and loneliness --and sometimes identity confusion -- of the child who sits in class with age mates, having long since mastered the work being assigned, and having no one to complain to. The self experience becomes marked by lack of cohesiveness and continuity and, if the child's work suffers, by a disrupted sense of agency as well. Attempts by a child to reestablish the subjective sense of organization can lead to many kinds of behavior. On the positive side, one could advocate for oneself and promote a dialog leading to change in one's classroom experience, thus reestablishing a cohesion based on affirmation of one's giftedness. Or one could become a troublemaker, thus cementing a negative identity. In either case, the child's identity is more unified and the sense of self cohesion greater.

What is vulnerable, then, in children characterized by asynchronous development, is not an entity called a self, but rather the sense of organization and cohesion experienced by the gifted person. Indeed, this is a serious vulnerability, since one's entire being depends upon a sense of organization in the world. In order to fit in with others and feel acceptable to one's group, it can be said that individuals will devise, consciously or unconsciously, a persona to which others respond favorably. This false self would be a unified, coherent image to put forth. Others will not see the face behind the mask, which it is felt they would reject. In the terms presented here, however, the problem is not that two selves battle for control, or that one self overshadows and weakens another. It is rather that one's self experience -- one's subjective experience of organization -- is compromised. The sense of self coherence and continuity is weakened; questions arise about one's identity, as well as one's self worth.

Perfectionism

Miriam Adderholdt-Elliott (1987) entitles her book, *Perfectionism: What's bad about being too good?* Of course, for many people the wish to excel is part of the joy of challenging themselves to find out more, perform better, or do something the correct way. Some gifted children feel

driven by seemingly insatiable curiosity, and such zeal is to be treasured rather than stifled in any way. Clearly, many gifted people have it within themselves to actually do some things perfectly, and their attempts to do this should be honored. This does not lead, however, to a concept of "positive perfectionism" (Schuler, 1998) or "normal" or "healthy" perfectionism (Hamachek, 1978; Parker, 1997); perfectionism does not refer to striving to reach a particular goal or to striving for excellence in general. It refers, in psychological terms, to the organizing principle that unless one is perfect, one is worthless as a person (Greenspon, 1999). It manifests itself in the fear that one can never be good enough. The problem of perfectionism is not in being overworked, nor is it in the social relations that may develop with those around the perfectionist who might feel put off by all the energy. As important as these issues are, the fundamental problem for the perfectionist is that he or she can never feel good enough to be acceptable as a person. Pressing oneself to do better is healthy; feeling that one must be either perfect or worthless is not. The fact that gifted children do not seem to be at greater risk for being perfectionists (Neihart, 1998b) indicates that something more than the ability to do well underlies perfectionism.

Perfectionism arises in an interpersonal context. For example, a child who is constantly criticized for what is not done correctly, yet is never acknowledged for what is done well, can easily conclude that she can never be good enough. Ultimately, her sense of agency can be affected and she may feel she cannot perform well enough. In another case, a child may discover that the one time people seem pleased is when he actually has done something perfectly or close to it. Lack of perfection then becomes associated with rejection and with a loss of worthiness as a person.

Two different kinds of behavioral manifestations might occur as a result of perfectionism. One might intensify efforts to achieve perfection, in which case what is observed is an anxious pressure to do better. Failing perfection, the angrily crumpled homework sheet is symbolic of the crumpled self experience. Alternatively, one might give up and stop working, either because one is genuinely despairing, or because one seeks soothing in the grandiose fantasy that, should one have chosen to try hard, one could indeed have achieved perfection.

There is a distinctive difference between discouragement over not having reached a goal and despairing over the impossibility of ever reaching a goal in a way that will make one acceptable. The latter, for which the term perfectionism is used here, can be understood by its profound influence on the self experience. The etiology of perfectionism is intersubjective; to comprehend it, one must understand the subjective experience the perfectionist has of other people, as well as the expectations essential others have of the perfectionist. For the perfectionist, the self object experience -- that experience of other people that contributes to one's sense of self -- includes a conditionality. If one acts to please an essential other (by doing something perfectly), then one will be acceptable. Clinically, a level of anxiety is sometimes noted with perfectionism (Hamachek, 1978; Pracht, 1984), based on the feeling that one is constantly on trial. There is no serenity, and as a result, the very cohesiveness of the self experience is at risk. At one moment

knowing that he has the capability of doing something exceptionally well, and at another moment fearing that he cannot, the perfectionist's sense of continuity, of being the same person from moment to moment, is compromised.

Conclusion

Recent articles attempting to describe the gifted self have lacked in definitional clarity and theoretical rigor. In this article, a definition of the self experience is proposed that is in accord with recent theoretical developments in psychoanalytic self psychology. This definition is based on the gifted person's subjective experience, which can be accessible to others by empathic exploration and attunement. In particular, it is the subjective experience of organization that constitutes the self experience. One's impression is that there is a central subjective 'I' that experiences a world of people and objects, all typically fitting together into an understandable and meaningful whole. From the earliest moments of life, transactions with others determine a significant part of the self experience. With supportive, validating, affirming interactions comes a sense of coherence, continuity, agency, affect, and other senses of self. Absent these interactions, the self experience loses cohesion and the sense of organization is threatened. A fragmented self experience leads to behavior, possibly negative and viewed by others as dysfunctional, that nevertheless reflects an attempt to reestablish a coherent sense of organization and meaning.

In self psychological terms, a fundamental aspect of human motivation is the maintenance of cohesion of the self experience. The experienced world is built up internally and influenced by encounters with others; this experience has a particular theme, referred to by some self psychologists as an unconscious, invariant organizing principle.

The particular personality characteristics that describe giftedness, such as high intelligence, creative talent, intensity of feeling, passion for learning, and depth of understanding have an influence on the gifted self experience. In addition, the way in which essential others in one's life respond to these traits influences the role the traits play in the self experience. Asynchronous development potentially disrupts the self experience, and the reactions of peers, parents, and teachers can compound or ameliorate the problem. Perfectionism, a problem for some gifted individuals, reflects the threat to the unity of the self experience when one feels one must be perfect in order to be accepted by others.

The self experience is about the meanings ascribed to the world as experienced. In the case vignette, the student concluded that his inability to do math problems as easily as before meant that he was no longer gifted. Although this involves a conclusion based on an erroneous idea about the stability of human intelligence, there is much more to it. The conclusion has given rise to a negative self-evaluation, and the student's reality is that something has gone wrong in him. This in turn leads to depression and related feelings. An attuned, affirmative, and supportive essential other in the student's life can be crucial in repairing the lost cohesion of his self experience by helping to make the organizing principle conscious and open to change, thus imparting hope.

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By Thomas S. Greenspon

Tom Greenspon is a psychologist in private practice in Minneapolis with his wife, Barbara. They are former Co-Presidents of the Minnesota Council for the Gifted and Talented and have worked with gifted individuals and families for 25 years.

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