

# *Keeping Our Children Emotionally Safe;* **The Unique Vulnerabilities of Gifted Students**

*Chris Croll*  
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*Chris@LoCoPOGS.org*

# LoCoPOGS.org

- Parent education and support nonprofit
- 700+ families who have children attending public, private and home schools in Loudoun County, VA
- Meetings free and open to all, active FB group
- Mission: *"To support the next generation of innovators and problem-solvers by educating parents about how best to address the special needs of their children."*

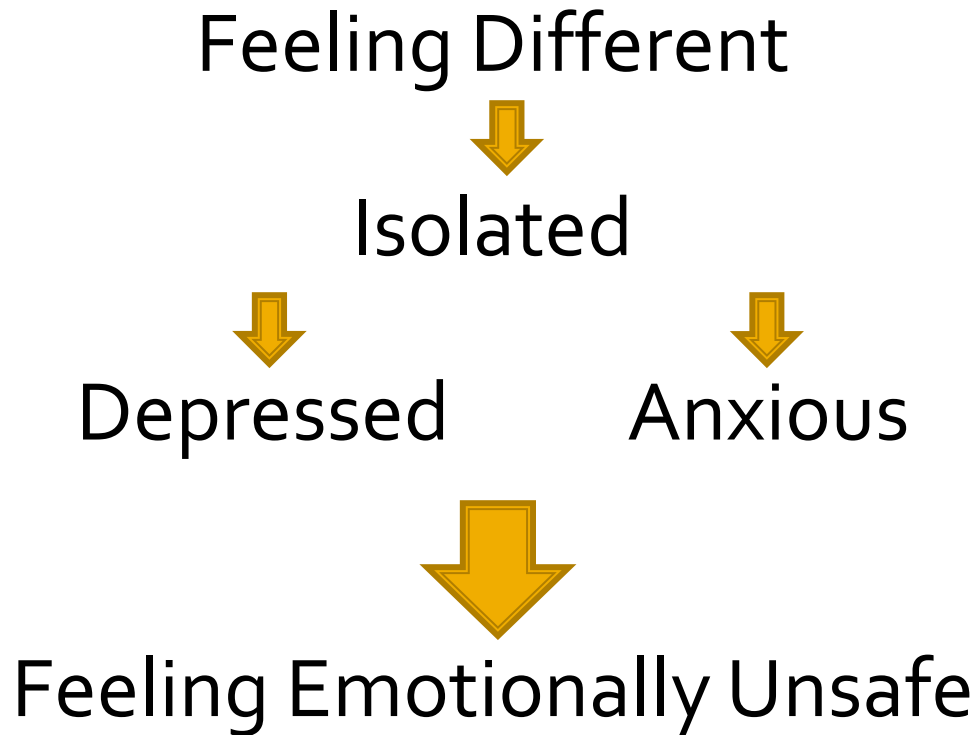
# The “G” Word....

- Gifted label is universally disliked by parents
- Asynchronous learners
- Our kids have special needs
  - intellectual, social and emotional
  - “rage to learn”
- Gifted does not mean high achieving....the desire to learn is not the same as the desire to *perform*

# Why Be Concerned about Emotional Safety in Gifted Kids?

- “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. This asynchrony increases with higher intellectual capacity. The uniqueness of the gifted renders them particularly vulnerable and requires modifications in parenting, teaching, and counseling in order for them to develop optimally.”
- The Columbus Group, 1991

# Why Be Concerned about Emotional Safety in Gifted Kids?



Isolation is a form of emotional abuse

# Twice-Exceptional (2e) Children

- Children who are gifted and who also have other exceptionalities such as learning, physical, neurological (ADHD) can be even more at risk for feeling isolated from peers and adults at school

# Other Factors Affecting Emotional Safety in Gifted Children

- Gifted children are often bullied at school
  - 67% of gifted 8<sup>th</sup> graders reported being the victim of bullying as opposed to 13% of the general population (Cross)
- Many gifted children do not know how to ask for help...and adults don't always see the struggle
  - Gifted children are adept at masking their feelings
  - Gifted children behave differently (quirky) anyway
  - Gifted children can perform at very high levels at school and still be suffering inside

# What Can Parents Do To Help?

- Model good coping skills
- Be a safe space for children (empathize with them, validate their feelings)
- Engage gifted children you know in conversation (how are you feeling about things? What are you reading these days?), connecting with adults can be a lifeline
- Include, include, include! (birthday parties, play dates, etc.)



# What Can Parents Do To Help?

- Let your children know their worth is more than their accomplishments and grades
- Create a home environment where failure is viewed as a natural part of learning
- Become aware of support resources available at school (guidance counselors, deans, gifted specialists)
- Establish a relationship with a trusted family psychotherapist and take your child in for “mental health maintenance” visits

# What Can Teachers Do To Help?

- Be inclusive in the classroom; don't further isolate kids by shaming students for being smart ("aren't you a little smarty pants")
- Help facilitate social connections for gifted children at school (most have few friends)
- Make parents of gifted students aware of the resources available at school
- Reinforce that a child's worth is more than their accomplishments and grades

# Join the Dialogue about Supporting Gifted Students

- LoCoPOGS.org
- Parents-only Facebook group “LoCoPOGS”
- 2016 Meetings...
  - Tuesday, November 15<sup>th</sup> 6:30pm, “Academic Options for Advanced Middle and High School Students,”
  - Thursday, December 8<sup>th</sup> 6:30pm, “Gifted Children and Addiction; What Parents Need to Know.”

Chris@locopogs.org

# Emotional Safety

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Thank You L.E.A.P.