



# COLLÉGIAL INTERNATIONAL SAINTE-ANNE

Natacha Lebois

Student number: 2230274

01 December 2022

**Final Project: research source**

**How does the giftedness of young HIPs affect their social ties?**

Presented to:

Jessica Schwartz

Course Name: Research Methods

Course number: 300-300-SA

Department of Social Science

Collegial International Sainte-Anne

## **Introduction**

The topic of this project is “How does the mental health of young people who have a High Intellectual Potential affect their social ties?”. This subject was chosen first by the fact that the capacities of HPI are impressive, and, by the fact that it is interesting to know more about their characteristics whether it is at the mental, social, or behavioral level. Moreover, it is the better occasion to do deeper research on this subject. Finally, few research has been conducted on this subject which explains the difficulty of some HPI to be diagnosed. The research report will therefore focus on the psychological and sociological aspects of young people with intellectual disabilities, as it is at a young age that the behaviors that characterize them are most noticeable. I suppose that the mental health of gifted people, especially youth, has negative impacts most of the time, on their social life. Thus, the purpose of this research report is to provide an overview of this topic by summarizing and explaining the most significant sources in the field. First, the definition of High Intellectual Potential will be discussed. Furthermore, the particularities of HPI children will be developed as well as the different emotions that HPI often feel. Likewise, the different disorders that can be associated with this giftedness will be expressed. Finally, their social life and their interactions with others will be presented. During this research, the different sources used were academic’s sources, journals articles and mostly books. These sources presented many experiences, surveys, statistics, testimonies, and results of experiences about gifted people. Scientists like neuropsychologists or psychologists used IQ tests on the people they want to study. Some studies were conducted on people who have a HPI, and, other on gifted people who have disorders linked to this HPI. The references bring different but complementary information, so that permits to cover numerous aspects of this topic. Most of the sources are based on anecdotes and not really on quantified research. In addition, many of the authors of the books have added personal experiences to their professional findings. Finally, this field of research is new, which

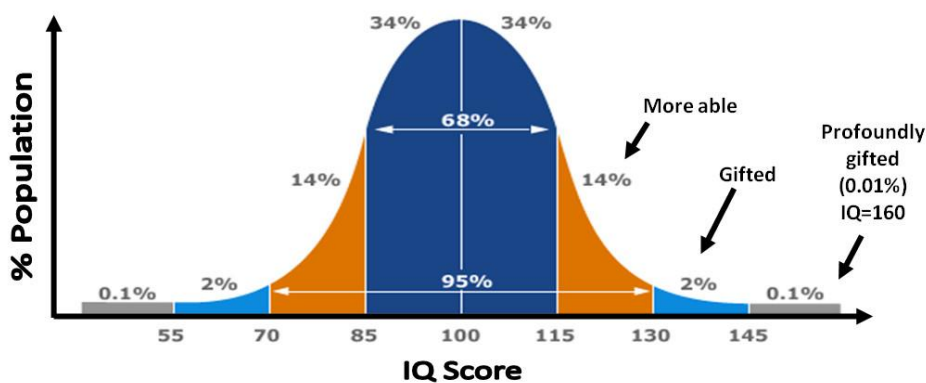
leads the authors of the different sources to admit that their research is not yet complete and that the information they say must be improved by others works on it.

### 1) Developmental particularities of HPI

- **The definition and recognition of an HPI**

The definition of giftedness given in the book: “*La douance: Comprendre Le Haut Potentiel Intellectuel et créatif.*” (M. Bélanger, 2019) presents it to us as an early development that makes a person capable of doing an activity at a higher level than others; and if that person learns to develop that ability, he or she can turn it into an exceptional skill, a talent. This intellectual maturity is not necessarily the same in all fields. According to Sandrine Gerin, "an 8-year-old child can have the intellectual equivalence of a 12-year-old child". Giftedness is mostly genetic even if it can be non-genetic. (Gauvrit, Bronner., 2015).

First, HIP's have very different ways of thinking than others. Indeed, conforming to Douglas, C. (2022), their brain is super active. So, they notice for example many more details than we do. This also leads to certain problems for these people such as overthinking, hypersensitivity, lack of self-confidence. HPI's have difficulty managing their emotions and often put great pressure on themselves because they know they have a high IQ.



Thus, they are very anxious and sensitive. Generally, gifted people have a high level of creativity and perfectionism and motivation in the field in which they excel. They are also optimistic, courageous, passionate, sensitive, energetic (physically and mentally) as well as determined. HPIs are sometimes very paradoxical too (indifferent and interested, mature and immature, attentive and distracted...).

- **The skills and characteristics of an HPI**

According to Save-Pédebos, & Florea, (2021), they show a more rapid and intense development of certain brain areas, a faster processing of information as well as a greater efficiency and neuronal power. For example, a gifted person will be able to learn a language very quickly, a sign of his or her great intellectual vivacity and openness to knowledge. In terms of motor skills, some are very precise and skilful in their gestures, while others have difficulty with coordination. On one hand, the strengths of an HPI are great oral fluency, above average cognitive skills, complex thoughts, rapid information processing, intensity of perception, rich memory, heightened emotional sensitivity, empathy, creativity, intuition, imagination. On the other hand, their principal weaknesses are frequent associated learning disabilities, variable motivation, difficult effort management, variable social integration, anxiety, somatization, fragile self-esteem, fear of failure, restlessness, insolence, opposition, questioning of authority and rules, disproportionate emotional reactions, discrepancy between intellectual and motor and/or affective development, lack of motivation at times and procrastination.

According to Gerin (2001), precocious children share common characteristics. They have high expectations of themselves and others because of their perfectionism and critical thinking. They also take great pleasure in learning and cultivating themselves. They are good observers because they are interested in what is around them and will tend to ask questions until they are pleased with the answers they are given on various topics in life. In addition, their

vivid imagination and creativity allow them to create and design new things such as "concepts, products, thoughts with a great willingness to learn in the field of interest: researching information, documenting, questioning..." (p.39) At the school level, gifted people encounter socialization problems or differences with groups of people their age which makes it difficult for them to integrate into groups of friends. Generally, according to Shenfield (2022) in class, they tend to show a certain annoyance. This is because their efficiency allows them to be always one step ahead during exams and homework assignments. Thus, they get bored doing nothing while others continue to do the assignment. This explains why HPI's tend to be disruptive in class. They encounter problems of academic failure because the educational systems in some countries are not at all adapted to these people, in addition to the fact that few students are diagnosed as gifted. According to Gauvrit & Bronner (2015), children are also driven to stay with adults because of their interest in the subjects that adults discuss and because they feel more comfortable and secure with them. Finally, they have the "ability to reach a state of intense concentration when the child is in a learning situation"(p.39, Guerin, 2001) and the desire to learn to read earlier than usual.

## **2) The emotions of an HPI**

- **The hypersensitivity of HPI**

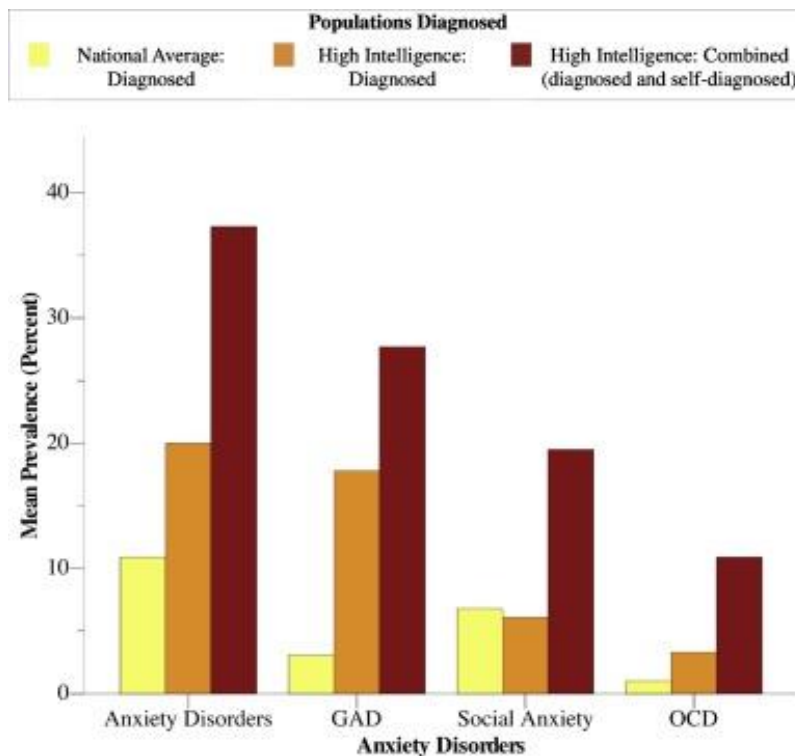
The emotional life of gifted people is particularly intense. First, their hypersensitivity is a character trait that is a real asset for better understanding others and themselves. Their intuition and deduction allow them to analyse and understand people. They can pick up on subtle emotional cues which allows them to better understand what others are feeling and to share empathy for them. HPIs are very sensitive to injustice and feel compelled to be concerned about the welfare of others. They also tend to blame themselves for everything, which can be very tiring and distressing. Their expectations of others can be very intense. "The HPI child

may become possessive and controlling of his or her best friend for fear of losing them. (Save-Pédebos Jessica, & Florea, A., 2021) So they need moments of reassurance and independence too. In addition, regarding their own self-esteem, gifted children often have a lack of self-confidence and a fear of failure. (Shenfield, 2022) The child tends to use lies to avoid a task as well as to make themselves more interesting to others. This can easily become a vicious cycle as others will push him away knowing that he is lying, and he will feel rejected and further lack confidence. He may also lie to himself when he feels rejected. Moreover, "because of their ability to pick up on flaws and insecurities in the world, a gifted child can quickly be overwhelmed by all of their things which explains the disconnect between their abilities for great understandings and their reactions as children." (Save-Pédebos, & Florea, 2021). The fact that they are demanding of themselves is also a source of anxiety. The fear of disappointing themselves and others is due to a strong need for recognition. Their imagination can also make them see very elaborate but highly improbable scenarios that will worry them. Finally, the recurrence of self-worth can become a cause of rumination and withdrawal, leading to sadness and depression.

- **The anxiety in life of gifted people**

Usually, the HPI child can feel a lot of stress. "When the intuitive and empathic child encounters a highly stressed person, he or she often automatically mirrors, or matches, the other person's feeling, creating a "your-stress-is-my-stress". (p.42, Crawford, 2012) These people are more effective at detecting the emotions of others. For everyone, it is very important to have a good level of stress, otherwise we can fall into boredom or the other extreme and the brain begins to sputter and cut off its maximum efficiency. Thus, the high-level reactions to stress of these High Intellectual Potentials are numerous. First, there can be an "emotional implosion resulting in system shutdown when too much information comes in at once" (p. 45, Crawford, 2012). The child may feel sullen, bad, and believe that the problems he or she is experiencing

are his or her fault. Thus, if the child's environment is stressful because the people around them are not paying enough attention to what they are feeling, not trying to understand them, or not having calm emotions, this can add to the stress load felt by the HPI and lead to depression. Second, they may have a "sudden outburst or explosion of emotion" (p.45, Crawford, 2012) On this side, the child does not internalize their emotions but instead externalizes them. "This can manifest itself as an explosion of anger when the child expresses his feelings for taking on too much pressure from others or simply as a reflex to get some space from others." (p.45, Crawford, 2012). Third, they may experience unexplainable emotions. This occurs when an intuitive person "picks up" another person's emotion even though they have moved on. In addition, they may have psychosomatization, which is an emotion that becomes a physical pain. Finally, they may also suffer from social hypervigilance, clouded decision-making ability, distraction, depression, and exhaustion. According to the graphic of Karpinski, R. I., Kolb, A. M. K., Tetreault, N. A., & Borowski, T. B. (2017, October 8), the higher a person's intelligence level, the more likely they are to suffer from anxiety-related illnesses.



### **3) Illnesses and disorders link with giftedness: double exceptionality**

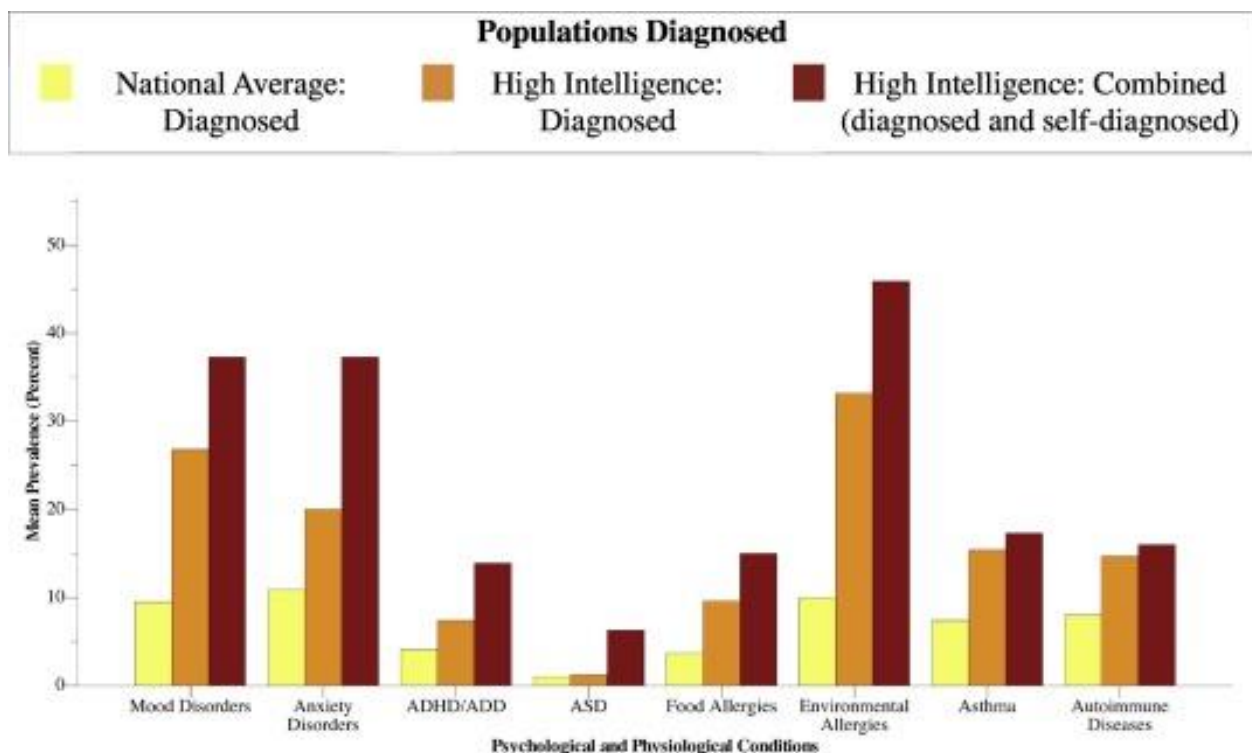
- **The principal disorder due to double exceptionality: TDA/H**

Jobet, P. (2022) presents that scientists have found contradictory results. Indeed, HPI's show results that allow them to be more successful socially and professionally and to adapt better than other people. However, many HPI's have been referred to hospitals for psychological, school, family and mental health problems and present neurodevelopmental disorders (e.g., hypersensitivity and ADHD). According to Karpinski, R. I., Kolb, A. M. K., Tetreault, N. A., & Borowski, T. B. (2017), an HPI can be called a "double exceptionality" if his or her giftedness is associated with a disorder. Thus, being gifted is a strength but having "double exceptionality" is a weakness. In fact, having ADD/ADHD means always having one's mind on the move, which is very exhausting in the long run. These people are often very agitated and have deep emotional wounds, which explains their hypersensitivity. In addition, ADDs have an imbalance between intellectual knowledge and control of their emotions and behaviour. They experience a great lack of self-esteem and confidence, distress, loneliness, and confusion. They have very rapid mood swings, are frustrated with their failures, and have a lot of anxiety. ADD is characterized by 3 elements: difficulty paying attention, lack of impulse control and hyperactivity. Indeed, "their lack of attention is marked by a very frustrating automatic distancing and absence of their mind." (M. Gabor, 2002, p.143) For example, a person suddenly realizes that they didn't hear anything they were listening to or retain anything they were watching. What characterizes ADDs are their high distractibility, short attention span, lack of organization, coordination difficulties, verbal impulsivity or gestures accompanied by a poorly controlled emotional reaction, frequent memory lapses, and social awkwardness that demonstrates a lack of self-discipline. "All of this leads to too much or too little stimulation for ADDs in their daily activities, causing them emotional anxiety and/or hyperactivity leading to depression." (Maté Gabor, 2002, p.150).



- **Other illnesses link with giftedness.**

“In a study of allergies and asthma in such children, 44% of those with an IQ over 160 suffered from allergies compared to 20% of age matched peers and 10% report having asthma” (Karpinski, R. I., Kolb, A. M. K., Tetreault, N. A., & Borowski, T. B. (2017). Numerous tests have also shown that HPI individuals are more likely to develop autoimmune diseases easier than normal people. Indeed, all this is related to psychological overexcitability. Gifted people tend to overthink, which leads to overwork of the brain and body, which get tired much faster. Thus, diseases are much more likely to develop. “Lastly, for autoimmune diseases, there was an increase of 6.7% diagnoses in the high intelligence sample compared with the estimates provided by the NIH”. (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002). In general, mood disorders (e.g., bipolarism), anxiety disorders, depressive disorders and autism are also strongly linked with giftedness. (Gauvrit, Bronner., 2015).



#### **4) The social life of an HPI**

- **Their daily behaviour**

A child with HPI, starting from his intellectual maturity, will tend to stay with older children or adults because the topics of conversation will interest them more: they will be able to enrich themselves and make debates. The interests of gifted children will turn to various subjects that will develop their intellectual knowledge. They will sometimes have difficulty to integrate friend's group because they will be interested in subjects that are still too complex or not interesting enough for young children of their age. In addition, some HPI's may have a leadership role at the social level whereas the more introverted HPI's will need their time alone to recharge their batteries. One of the things that characterizes the behaviour of an HPI is the orientation of the eyes. Indeed, he will tend to look away when he talks with someone to better concentrate on his words. About sensory characteristics, a gifted child may experience significant discomfort or anxiety in the event of too much noise, world, light or physical contact.

Gifted children face common social challenges. According to according to Bélanger (2019), the gift of intuition can challenge these individuals because they receive a large flow of incoming data (expressions, looks, hidden intentions, implicit language). For example, they can sense other people's emotions better and more intensely, digest telepathic flashes of danger, and detect unspoken words from parents, teachers, friends. All this can be stressful for children who don't know how to manage their minds. Indeed, "this information can overwhelm and exceed their developmental abilities to process it, leaving them with feelings of fear, anxiety, confusion, depression and even psychosomatic pain. The intensity of the data influx can stress the nervous system and cause the child to feel physically uncomfortable." (p.25, Crawford, 2012).

In school, HPI children also experience this kind of difficulty. Because of their intuition, they quickly know the needs of others and how to relate to them. But sometimes they can get tired from thinking too much, feeling too much, giving too much, doing more than is developmentally appropriate. This can lead them to be angry, sad, anxious, or frustrated. "One of the signs that children are working too hard is that they fall apart when they get home." (p.26, Crawford, 2012)

Regarding HPI with ASD, they may tend to impose their interests in an obsessive and intrusive way. They may lack dexterity and make inappropriate remarks because of difficulties in developing their social skills. They also need more time to develop the right social skills. Gifted autistics are characterized by their rigidity of thought, their restricted interests, and their sensory particularities. Furthermore, they have an ability to mask and compensate for their difficulties (especially girls). This social gap makes it difficult for them to develop and maintain friendships and explains some of their behaviours and emotions. For example, their hypersensitivity and their lack of filter explain their explosive behaviours, crises, anxiety, rigidity. Thus, HPI associated with disorders present many paradoxes. For example, they have problems understanding social codes, low cognitive empathy but are emotional sponges. They have encyclopaedic knowledge but pragmatic difficulties with language, implicitness, irony and second degree. (Gabor, 2002)

- **Their relationship with others**

The greater the intellectual maturity of a gifted person, the greater the difficulty of blossoming at the social level, since the differences between the people concerned and their age group become greater. Moreover, according to Gerin (2001), "Hypersensitive, the gifted child often also has the immense capacity to "enter" the mind of the other, to put himself in his place, to think for the other. They feel the emotional state of their interlocutor, whether it is a parent,

a teacher, or a classmate. From then on, all his relationships with others, and moreover an individual outside the family and intimate circle, becomes complex." Furthermore, gifted children are placed in classes above their age because their intellectual maturity allows it. This can be problematic because they are surely more fulfilled in their academic learning, but their emotional needs or common social interests are very different from those of people in their class. In addition, at the extracurricular level, gifted people like to do and practice the cultural, musical or sports activities that interest and excite them. However, as said before, the activities and interests they will have concern subjects that are too complex for people of their age. Therefore, even outside of school, they will have difficulty forming relationships with people their own age. In addition, HPI's often tend to sacrifice the social part of their lives as well as the time spent going out with friends because they will see it as a waste of time. They would rather spend time cultivating themselves.

Society's expectations of the gifted prevent them from having normal social relationships. Indeed, they are often envied, jealous, and destabilized by those who want to test them and evaluate their abilities. They are perceived as abnormal by others, which puts them directly in different boxes. Thus, some are discriminated against because of their superior intelligence and their difference. Some jealous students call them nerds, and other unpleasant names. Depression is also more common in groups of gifted youth. "To overcome this misunderstanding, they need to show great self-confidence, a sense of repartee, a good family balance, and have a few real friends" (p.79, Guerin, 2001) In addition, the challenge of being accepted by others is very present. In addition, some HPI want to fit in with a group of young people so much that they will use their adaptation skills to the point of changing their tastes, their passions, their desires to resemble those with whom they want to stay. "The hypersensitivity with which precocious children are endowed can sometimes work against them when they are in a group. Negative thoughts about them, a boyfriend's defiant attitude, sometimes cause them to withdraw further."

(p.77, Guerin, 200) This can be dangerous for them because they try so hard and suffer psychologically to be able to seduce others.

### **Conclusion:**

To conclude, the mental health of HPI's is different from others and, therefore, affect their social life well. This research confirmed the hypothesis. Indeed, mental health of gifted people, especially youth, has negative impacts most of the time, on their social life. Firstly, the developmental characteristics of the gifted have rather negative aspects such as insolence, opposition, questioning of authority and rules, disproportionate emotional reactions, lack of motivation at times and procrastination. In addition, their hypersensitivity leads them to be very anxious or to feel strong emotions that impact their mental health. In addition, their psychological overexcitability or overactive brain causes them to develop diseases more easily than others. Thus, autism or ADD are generally diseases related to giftedness. Finally, the difference in the interests of HPI's compared to the hobbies of young people of their age pose a big problem of social integration. All the sources do not contradict each other at all and are quite complementary because each one addresses a more specific subject than the others. They are also reliable because most of them are written by doctors who are experts in this field or psychologists. The information is also easy to understand while keeping some technical terms affordable. However, the weaknesses of the sources are the lack of scientific rigor because most of them only give a factual account without really presenting the results. There is also a lack of dept, especially at the psychological and neurological level. All the necessary information to answer the problematic has been found. Moreover, I learned a lot of things I didn't expect. So, it is important to conduct more research about the behaviour of gifted people when they face certain situations and their ways of thinking to help them at best to be well developed educationally and socially and to help them overcome the various challenges they face.

## Bibliography

- Bélanger Marianne. (2019). *La douance: Comprendre Le Haut Potentiel Intellectuel et créatif*. Midi trente éditions.
- Crawford, C. (2012). *The highly intuitive child: A guide to understanding and parenting unusually sensitive and empathic children*. Hunter House.
- Douglas, C. (2022, May 22). *Psychology. how to recognize high intellectual ability?* The Press Stories. Retrieved November 28, 2022, from <https://presstories.com/2022/05/22/psychology-how-to-recognize-high-intellectual-ability/>
- Gauvrit, N., & Bronner Gérald. (2015). *Les Surdoués Ordinaires*. PUF.
- Gerin, S. (2001). *Et s'il était surdoué?: Découvrir, comprendre, élever et vivre avec un enfant précoce*. Marabout.
- Jobet, P. (n.d.). *L'adaptation psychosociale et scolaire des enfants et des adolescents qui présentent un haut Potentiel Intellectuel Associé à un trouble du déficit de l'attention/Hyperactivité*. Fonds de recherche du Québec. Retrieved November 28, 2022, from <https://frq.gouv.qc.ca/projet/ladaptation-psychosociale-et-scolaire-des-enfants-et-des-adolescents-qui-presentent-un-haut-potentiel-intellectuel-associe-a-un-trouble-du-deficit-de-lattention-hyperactivite/>
- Karpinski, R. I., Kolb, A. M. K., Tetreault, N. A., & Borowski, T. B. (2017, October 8). *High intelligence: A risk factor for psychological and physiological overexcitabilities*. Intelligence. Retrieved November 28, 2022, from <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0160289616303324>
- Maté Gabor. (2002). *L'esprit dispersé: Comprendre et traiter Les Troubles de La Concentration*. Ed. de l'Homme.
- Save-Pédebos Jessica, & Florea, A. (2021). *L'enfant à Haut Potentiel Intellectuel décrypté: Et si votre enfant pouvait vous expliquer son fonctionnement ?* Mango éditions.

Shenfield, T. (2022, October 27). *5 Common Problems Experienced By Gifted Children & Adolescents*. Advanced Psychology. Retrieved November 29, 2022, from <https://www.psy-ed.com/wpblog/common-problems-of-gifted-children/>