

**Unit Title:**

Living and Learning with Dabrowski's Overexcitabilities OR "I Can't Help It – I'm Overexcitable!"

**PROFILE OF CLASS**

This unit was written for use in a pull-out setting for gifted students at the middle school level, although most of the activities would also be appropriate for high school students and even some upper elementary students. The unit is designed to take about 3 weeks, meeting approximately one 50-minute period per day. Teachers may pick and choose activities to make the unit longer or shorter. The activities may also be done over the course of a longer period of time, if the class does not meet daily.

This unit would also be an appropriate unit of study in an honors language arts class because of the amount of writing, reading, and presenting that is required, or in an honors social studies course due to the sociological and psychological aspects of the topic. This curriculum might also fit in with a health or child development curriculum.

**WHY DABROWSKI?**

Dabrowski's work has become of great interest to educators concerned with the social and emotional development of gifted students. Intensity is mentioned over and over again as a trait that is often found in gifted individuals; both in intensity of feelings and of experiences. The concept of overexcitabilities or supersensitivities is one way to explore this intensity with gifted students and adults. It has been my experience in working with gifted middle school students, that knowing about and understanding this particular concept gives students increased insight into their personality traits and reassures them that they are not alone in some of their feelings and reactions to various stimuli. For parents, I have found that the concept of overexcitabilities helps them to better understand their children (and often themselves as well!). Parents may come to realize that at least some of what their child does is not necessarily done to "bug them," but is a natural outgrowth of *who* the child is; how the child is "wired" psychologically and physically. Teachers and parents must be careful that "I can't help it, I'm overexcitable!" does not become an excuse for bad or rude behavior. Instead, we should help students realize that by understanding their predisposition towards certain reactions in certain situations, students can learn to rejoice in the joys of overexcitabilities and at the same time learn to cope with difficulties that are sometimes related to this way of "being."

While this unit was designed to be used with gifted students, it could be adapted to work for all students. Adolescents in particular are highly motivated to better understand themselves and might find this concept interesting. As in all other areas of human differences, students vary in their ability to self reflect and in their ability to objectively examine personality traits of themselves and others. Some students may find this topic and the related activities to be very difficult for them, especially if they do not personally relate to the concept of overexcitabilities. Yet I believe it is the teacher's responsibility to help students grow along the path of self-understanding and acceptance of human differences.

In a broader study of personality theories, activities from this unit could help guide those students interested in Dabrowski's concept of overexcitabilities in particular, although many of the activities could easily be adapted to other theories of personality, development and/or learning styles (Maslow, Krathwohl, Piaget, Gardner, etc.) The teacher might introduce several theories of personality and/or development and have students choose one of these theories for further study as an independent investigation.

**Semester Concepts:**

Self-awareness, self-understanding, human variation

**Principles & Generalizations:**

Self-awareness can lead to self-actualization.

People have varying capacities for self-understanding.

Personality is made up of many factors.

Some factors of personality are identifiable.

Some aspects of personality are currently unknown.

Personality factors vary in intensity.

What is a problem factor for one person is not necessarily so for another.

There are two sides to every personality trait.

Humans vary in infinite ways.

Conflict can arise from differences.

It can be joyful to recognize differences in people.

It can be painful to recognize differences in people.

By understanding ourselves, we understand others better.

**Know:** At the end of this unit, I want students to KNOW

1. Dabrowski's 5 types of overexcitabilities
2. Characteristics of persons with a particular type of OE
3. Basic background information on Dabrowski
4. Students' own traits of OE and their relative strengths
5. The OE profile of at least one close friend and/or family member
6. Dabrowski was interested in the link between OE and giftedness
7. Studies using Dabrowski's work are ongoing

**Understand:** At the end of this unit, I want students to UNDERSTAND THAT...

1. Dabrowski's OE are one way to describe variation in personality traits between people.
2. There are definitions and descriptions for each of the overexcitabilities.
3. Recognizing their OEs can help them better understand themselves and others.
4. Recognizing their OEs can help them get along better with others.
5. People are different from each other and yet alike.
6. It is not necessarily "good," "bad," or either to have OEs.
7. People have the capacity for increased self-understanding.

**Be able to do:** At the end of this unit, I want students to BE ABLE TO...

1. Recognize their own traits or lack thereof of OE.
2. Recognize OE in others.
3. Discuss the implications of Dabrowski's OE in understanding themselves and others.
4. Demonstrate an understanding of the two-sided nature of the OE.
5. Demonstrate increased self-awareness.
6. Define the various OE.
7. Explain OE to a fellow student or adult.
8. Reflect on how their OE profile helps define who they are.
9. Discuss their feelings and those of others in an accepting and nurturing atmosphere.
10. Define OE in a unique and creative way that is reflective of their particular Oes.
11. Journal their reactions to OE discussions.

**Related Virginia SOLs**

**Language Arts: 6.1-5; 6.7-9; 7.1, 7.4; 7.5-6; 7.8-10; 8.1, 8.4-5; 9.2, 9.6-8; 10.1-2, 10.4, 10.7, 10.9-10; 11.7, 11.9; 12.1-2, 12.4, 12.7**

**UNIT PLAN AND ANNOTATIONS**

LESSON PLAN	TEACHER NOTES
<p><b>Introduction to Unit (3-4 days)</b></p>	<p><i>Note: Specific length of unit activities is not given, in order that you may adapt the unit to your students and your teaching situation.</i></p>
<p>Show cartoons that exemplify certain Overexcitabilities (OEs) and ask students to comment on what information the cartoons give about the personality traits of the characters. Point out those traits that are exaggerated by the cartoon in order to make a point.</p> <p>Optional: Ask students to briefly journal on which cartoon “speaks” to them most and why.</p>	<p><i>Some good sources are Calvin and Hobbes, Family Circus, Farside, Jean Watts, etc.</i></p>
<p>In small groups, have students answer and briefly discuss questions such as the following: What do people say is your best quality? Your worst?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is your biggest pet peeve at home? At school?</li> <li>• How can someone tell when you are bored?</li> <li>• What do you do when you are tense?</li> <li>• What is the longest you have been good friends with someone?</li> <li>• What does it mean to have a good friend? To be a good friend?</li> <li>• Who have you been friends with the longest? Describe your relationship.</li> <li>• Do you have any nervous habits? What are they?</li> <li>• What is your favorite game?</li> <li>• What does fear smell like?</li> <li>• What is hard for you to decide?</li> <li>• Do you still have or sleep with a teddy bear or something like that?</li> </ul>	<p><i>Note: This activity assumes that a level of trust has been established in the class or group. If it is early in the year, you may wish to substitute less personal questions.</i></p> <p><i>You can use different questions to start out the class on different days. Once students have begun to learn about the OE, they will probably relate some of the questions to OE.</i></p>
<p>Ask students: “What is personality?”</p> <p>Brainstorm a list of personality traits</p> <p>Have students put personality traits into columns according to positive or negative traits</p>	<p><i>By doing this activity, students should soon realize that it is impossible to label certain traits as purely positive or negative. Most traits can be either positive or negative, (or both or neither!) depending on the context.</i></p> <p><i>Related principles and generalizations:</i></p> <p><b>Personality is made up of many factors.</b>  <b>Some factors of personality are identifiable.</b>  <b>Some aspects of personality are currently unknown.</b>  <b>What is a problem factor for one person is not necessarily so for another.</b>  <b>There are two sides to every personality trait.</b>  <b>Humans vary in infinite ways.</b></p> <p><i>Extension: (Ascending Intellectual Demand)  Discuss heredity and its link to personality characteristics. Debate nature vs. nurture.</i></p>

<p>Discuss what bugs people most about you/what bugs you most about people. Link this to personality differences and similarities.</p> <p>Discuss what you enjoy most about yourself / about other people. Link this to personality differences and similarities.</p>	<p><i>Related principles and generalizations:</i>  <b>Conflict can arise from differences.</b>  <b>It can be painful to recognize differences in people.</b>  <b>It can be joyful to recognize differences in people.</b></p>
<p>Tell students that you will study what psychologist Dabrowski noticed about the personality traits of many of his clients who were “gifted” and/or highly creative. Students will learn about his concept of overexcitabilities and relate this concept to what they know about themselves and the people around them.</p> <p>Throughout the unit, students will keep a journal (written, recorded or videotaped) that includes their reactions to class activities and helps clarify their understandings of the unit concepts.</p>	<p><i>This functions as an anticipatory set and overview of purpose of unit.</i></p> <p><i>At this point you may wish to inform students of goals of unit.</i></p> <p><i>Related principles and generalizations:</i>  <b>Personality factors vary in intensity.</b></p> <p><i>Students may begin to answer selected questions in their journal (see attached prompts and RAFT activity). Please note that it is not intended that students answer every question listed. The teacher may assign certain questions or let students choose which ones to answer. The teacher may wish to collect the reflective journals periodically throughout the unit in order to monitor and/or comment on student writings.</i></p>
<p>Presentation of information via PowerPoint:  Prepare students for difficulty of language and concepts to be presented.</p> <p>Challenge them to explain the advanced vocabulary as you go through the PowerPoint, before moving to the translations slides.</p> <p>After each type of OE is presented, ask if students know anyone like this - do one of the following activities: share in the large group, share in small groups, journal by self, draw a picture of someone doing something that indicates that particular OE, etc. Vary what you do after talking about each overexcitability.</p>	<p><i>Outline attached</i>  <i>Be sure to stress with students that not all suggested characteristics of each OE may show up in all people. The traits listed may or may not be present in a particular individual.</i></p> <p><i>Extension: Don't include the translation slides. Have students translate the vocabulary on their own!</i></p> <p><i>Optional: As a follow up and comprehension check the next class period, ask students to spend 4-5 minutes writing down everything they remember about the overexcitabilities.</i></p> <p><i>Remind students of the need for confidentiality and respect for the feelings of others. These discussions are not intended to be a talk show “tell-all” but rather a sharing of ideas and impressions of a particular overexcitability.</i></p>
<p><b>Learning Activities (4-5 days)</b></p>	
<p>Read material on Dabrowski and OE.</p> <p>Have students react to what they read in journals.</p>	<p><i>Extension: Provide appropriate level of reading material on overexcitabilities according to reading and comprehension readiness. (See bibliography for some suggestions)</i></p> <p><i>Optional extension: Discuss the elements of a concept of personality and how Dabrowski's concept of OE fits into such a framework.</i></p>
<p>Have students read and complete an OE self-rating</p>	<p><b>***Be aware of your school's policy on activities of</b></p>



<p>Is there a correlation between the particular OE represented in their group and their ease or unease with this activity? Brainstorm other ways the groups might have described their OE that might have been more comfortable for them and more indicative of their OE.</p>	<p><b>What is a problem factor for one person is not necessarily so for another.</b></p> <p><i>Option: Students may wish to explore this further in their journals.</i></p>
<p>In heterogeneous groups, have students discuss the curse and blessing of their particular OE. They should then make 2 posters, one entitled “Overexcitabilities are Great”, the other, “Overexcitabilities are Trouble.”</p>	<p><i>Related principles and generalizations:</i>  <b>What is a problem factor for one person is not necessarily so for another.</b>  <b>There are two sides to every personality trait.</b>  <i>The teacher may wish to point out that OEs may be both positive AND negative at the same time – or perhaps they might even be considered as neither positive NOR negative!</i></p>
<p>Discuss as whole class or in small groups: How do I cope with the possible difficulties associated with my particular OEs (overexcitabilities)? What learning, listening, studying strategies might help me capitalize on my particular OEs?  Discuss also what they enjoy about their OEs. How does their OE help them in school and/or life in general?</p>	<p><i>Teachers may wish to bring in experts to discuss certain coping strategies with students. For example, teachers could have mini-seminars on “Organizing Your Life,” “Dealing With Criticism,” “Sitting Still in Class,” etc.</i></p> <p><i>It is important that students not get the impression that having OEs is something to be “fixed!”</i></p>

<p><b>Culminating learning activities (4-5 days)</b></p>	<p><i>You may decide which of the following activities you wish students to complete as a culminating activity. These activities may also be presented in the form of a Think Tac Toe (see attached) In this case, you may assign certain activities to particular students, have them choose the activities that most interest them, or do a combination of both. Consider also that certain activities might appeal to students with a particular learning style or preference. There are numerous resources available to teachers for finding out a student’s learning style.</i>  <i>Extension: The activities are listed in approximate order of ascending intellectual demand.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In homogeneous pairs, have students make a top-ten song list or book list that they think a person with a particular overexcitability would have. They should briefly explain how each song or book relates/responds to the overexcitabilities.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Related principles and generalizations:</i>  <b>Humans vary in infinite ways.</b>  <b>It can be joyful to recognize differences in people.</b>  <b>It can be painful to recognize differences in people.</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In homogeneous groupings, students write a poem about having a particular overexcitability. The structure of the poem should reflect the overexcitability they are writing about.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Related principles and generalizations:</i>  <b>By understanding ourselves, we understand others better.</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In homogeneous groups, students create a soundscape of what a particular OE sounds like.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Provide tape recorder to each group. Students must not use any narration or words.</i></p> <p><i>Related principles and generalizations:</i>  <b>Humans vary in infinite ways.</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using quotes from Piechowski handout or the samples attached, or quotes from your</li> </ul>	<p><i>See handout reference in bibliography</i>  <i>See attached for some examples – find more</i></p>

<p>own students' journals, have students guess and discuss what OE they think is represented by the quote and why.</p>	<p><i>Related principles and generalizations:</i>  <b>Personality is made up of many factors.</b>  <b>Some factors of personality are identifiable.</b>  <b>What is a problem factor for one person is not necessarily so for another.</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read or place on overhead a quote from a famous person and have students read the quote, decipher its meaning and relate it to one or more OEs. Discuss how the quote relates to the student's life and/or OEs.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Related principles and generalizations:</i>  <b>Personality is made up of many factors.</b>  <b>Some factors of personality are identifiable.</b>  What is a problem factor for one person is not necessarily so for another.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss: "What is the best combination of OEs?"</li> </ul>	<p><i>Related principles and generalizations:</i>  <b>Personality factors vary in intensity.</b>  <b>What is a problem factor for one person is not necessarily so for another.</b>  <b>There are two sides to every personality trait.</b>  <b>Humans vary in infinite ways.</b>  <b>Conflict can arise from differences.</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In heterogeneous groupings, create a "Guidebook For Enhancing School/Family/Life/Etc With OEs."</li> </ul>	<p><i>Related principles and generalizations:</i>  <b>What is a problem factor for one person is not necessarily so for another.</b>  <b>There are two sides to every personality trait.</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss relationship between OEs and giftedness.</li> </ul>	<p><i>See Ackerman reference in bibliography for a good chart.</i></p> <p><i>Related principles and generalizations:</i>  <b>People have varying capacities for self-understanding.</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss how the overexcitabilities relate to adolescence. In other words, what is it about adolescence or puberty that might exaggerate a person's expression of certain overexcitabilities?</li> </ul>	<p><i>Related principles and generalizations:</i>  <b>Personality factors vary in intensity.</b>  <b>What is a problem factor for one person is not necessarily so for another.</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read and discuss an actual research study concerning the concurrence of OE and giftedness.</li> </ul>	<p><i>See the bibliography for an example.</i></p> <p><i>Related principles and generalizations:</i>  <b>People have varying capacities for self-understanding.</b>  <b>Personality factors vary in intensity.</b></p> <p><i>Extension: Look at conflicting research studies and discuss dilemmas encountered by researchers when this occurs.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss how OE fits into the larger picture of Dabrowski's theory of positive disintegration. (The overarching theory of which overexcitabilities is a part.)</li> </ul>	<p><i>Related principles and generalizations:</i>  <b>People have varying capacities for self-understanding.</b>  <b>Personality factors vary in intensity.</b></p> <p><i>Extension: The Theory of Positive Disintegration is very complex. Depending on the level of students, teacher should decide to what extent they wish to go into the theory. Also, be aware of the connotation students may give to the term "disintegration." It is conceivable that this might cause some students to wonder about their own psychological issues.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss feelings about the Theory of Positive Disintegration and its hierarchy of levels? If gifted individuals are found to</li> </ul>	<p><i>This could be a very emotional discussion. Consider carefully your student audience before embarking on this particular journey!</i></p>

<p>have a higher developmental potential, how might a hierarchical theory such as this intersect with the charges of elitism that are often leveled at gifted education?</p>	
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## POWERPOINT OUTLINE

(Actual PowerPoint presentation is available from the author via email:  
cas2k@virginia.edu)

### **SUPERSENSITIVITY**

*In Gifted Individuals*

#### **A Key to Understanding Your Personality**

*Based on...*

*Dabrowski's Concept of Overexcitabilities*

**Presented by Cindy Strickland**

**University of Virginia**

**Supersensitivities/  
Overexcitabilities/  
Superstimulatabilities**

#### **Translation!**

*☞ Some individuals tend to react more strongly than average to things that happen to them.*

*☞ Some individuals tend to react to these things for a longer time than average.*

#### **Remember...**

*☞ These reactions are a part of the physical and mental make-up of the individual.*

*☞ Such individuals do not react this way on purpose.*

*☞ This is simply a part of who they are.*

#### **[IMPORTANT NOTE TO TEACHER PRESENTING THIS INFORMATION:**

***Not all characteristics may show up in all people. The traits listed below may or may not be present in a particular individual. Be sure to stress this with students.]***

### **PSYCHOMOTOR**

#### **PSYCHOMOTOR**

#### **OVEREXCITABILITY**

*☞ Heightened excitability of the neuromuscular system*

*☞ Capacity for being active and energetic*

*☞ Love of movement for its own sake*

*☞ Organic surplus of energy*

*☞ Psychomotor expression of emotional tension*

#### **Translation!**

*☞ You like a lot of movement and activity*

*☞ You may talk fast and use lots of gestures*

*☞ You may be impulsive*

*☞ You might sleep less than other people.*

**When upset you may ...**

- ☞ get nervous ticks*
- ☞ become overly competitive*
- ☞ feel the need to organize your environment*

**SENSUAL**

**SENSUAL OVEREXCITABILITY**

- ☞ Heightened experience of sensual pleasure or displeasure*
- ☞ Sensual expression and outlets for emotional tension*
- ☞ Appreciation for aesthetic pleasures*

**Translation! You may...**

- ☞ dislike labels in your clothing*
- ☞ love “good” smells, textures, tastes*
- ☞ hate “bad” smells, textures, tastes*
- ☞ be sensitive to bright lights and harsh sounds*
- ☞ love to be the center of attention*

**When upset, you may...**

- ☞ overindulge*
- ☞ seek comfort and/or luxury*

**INTELLECTUAL**

**INTELLECTUAL OVEREXCITABILITY**

- ☞ Heightened need to seek understanding and truth*
- ☞ Intensified activity of the mind*
- ☞ Penchant for probing questions; problem solving*
- ☞ Preoccupation with logic, theoretical thinking and development of new concepts*
- ☞ You have trouble falling asleep at night because your mind is racing*

**Translation! You may...**

- ☞ love to be logical*
- ☞ enjoy brain teasers and puzzles*
- ☞ like to figure things out, especially if they are complicated*
- ☞ seek out truth and knowledge*
- ☞ be very observant*

**When upset, you may...**

- ☞ analyze things to death*

## IMAGINATIONAL

### IMAGINATIONAL OVEREXCITABILITY

- ☞ *Heightened play of the imagination*
- ☞ *Rich association of images and impressions*
- ☞ *Spontaneous imagery as an expression of emotional tension*
- ☞ *Capacity for living in a world of fantasy*

#### Translation! You may...

- ☞ *be called a dreamer*
- ☞ *be creative*
- ☞ *love metaphors*
- ☞ *think in pictures*
- ☞ *believe in magic*
- ☞ *remember your vivid dreams*

#### When upset, you may...

- ☞ *tend to “tune out” or disappear into a fantasy world*
- ☞ *experience an overwhelming fear of the unknown*

## EMOTIONAL

### EMOTIONAL OVEREXCITABILITY

- ☞ *Heightened, intense positive and negative feelings*
- ☞ *Somatic expressions*
- ☞ *Strong affective expressions*
- ☞ *Capacity for deep relationships*
- ☞ *Well differentiated feelings toward self*

#### Translation! You may...

- ☞ *have extreme emotions*
- ☞ *have a broad range of emotions*
- ☞ *understand and be sensitive to others' feelings*
- ☞ *be compassionate and caring*
- ☞ *form strong attachments to others*
- ☞ *experience difficulty adjusting to new environments*
- ☞ *be “in tune” with yourself*

#### When upset, you may...

- ☞ *get physically ill*
- ☞ *become depressed and/or anxious*
- ☞ *feel overly responsible for things that are out of your control*
- ☞ *be highly self-critical*

**Overexcitabilities can be...**

*☞ great!*

*☞ exciting!*

*☞ fulfilling!*

*☞ challenging!*

*☞ troublesome!*

*☞ painful!*

**Suggested JOURNAL Prompts**

<b>QUESTIONS THAT RELATE OEs TO SELF</b>
◆ Am I intrigued by the concept of OE?
◆ What OEs do I exhibit/ not exhibit?
◆ What do I think of the concept of OE?
◆ Which OE especially speaks to me? Why?
◆ What surprises me about OE?
◆ How does my or someone else's OEs affect my daily life?
◆ What problems do OEs cause me?
◆ What joys does OEs give me?
◆ Am I proud of my OEs? Should I be?
◆ How do I reconcile OE with other ideas about personality traits?
◆ Should I/Must I?
◆ How might OE affect my long-term goals?
◆ Does OE help or hinder my creativity? In what ways?
◆ What does knowing about OE contribute to my understanding of myself?
◆ What is difficult about having OEs?
◆ What is wonderful about having OEs?
◆ Is OE something with which I feel a need to "cope?"
◆ If I accept the concept of OE, how does this affect my outlook on life?
◆ How does my OE shape my personal ethics?
◆ How can OE help me better understand others and myself?
◆ What is my opinion of Dabrowski and his work?
◆ What is my opinion of those who disagree or discount Dabrowski's ideas?
◆ How do I reconcile the unknowns of this concept?

**POSSIBLE RAFT IDEAS to Use as Journal Prompts**

*Use these as examples or have students generate their own examples*

<b>ROLE</b>	<b>AUDIENCE</b>	<b>FORMAT</b>	<b>TOPIC</b>
Teacher	Other Teachers	Lesson plan	Overexcitabilities Are Trouble! / Overexcitabilities Are Great!
Teacher	Gifted students in an elementary school	Play	My Brother Is A Pain!
Author	Beginning authors	Seminar	How To Develop Characters With OE
Author	Young adults	Short Story	Living With OE
Psychologist	Clients	Brochure	Am I Overexcitable? What Does That Mean?
Psychologist	Other Psychologists	Conference presentation	Why We Should Learn About OE
Parent	Teacher	Letter	What You Should Know About My Child
Parent	Child	Bedtime story	You Are Special
Law enforcement officer	Community leaders	PowerPoint Presentation	Recent Violence And Possible Links To OE
Minister	Congregation	Sermon	We Must Be Tolerant
Social Worker	Clients	Display	Understanding Our Strengths
Politician	Constituents	Commercial	My OE Makes Me The Best Leader For You
Singer	Generation X	Country Western Song	My OE Heartbreak, My OE Love
Poet	Children	Nursery Rhyme	When It Is Good It Is Very, Very, Good; But When It Is Bad It Is Horrid!
Satirist	Young adults	Political Cartoon	My OE Is Better Than Yours
Child with OEs	Mother or Father	Valentine's Day Card	gOEasy on me!
Philosopher	Another Philosopher	Song Lyrics	"It's not sOEasy being green."

**SAMPLE RUBRIC**  
**Unit Assessment**

	<b>Intern</b>	<b>Valued Assistant</b>	<b>Practitioner</b>	<b>Ph.D.</b>
<b>Journal</b>	Journal demonstrates a general understanding of OE.	Journal demonstrates a general understanding of OE. Writing reflects progress toward self - understanding.	Journal demonstrates accurate knowledge of OE and how it affects the self.	Journal demonstrates a thorough understanding of OE and a high degree of insight into self.
<b>Learning Activities</b>	Learning activities are completed, but in a perfunctory manner. Work shows little or no link to the self.	Learning activities are completed and demonstrate a growing self-understanding of the student.	Learning activities are thoughtfully completed and are clearly connected to the self.	Learning activities show great insight, self-understanding, and creativity of expression.
<b>Think Tac Toe OR Assigned Product</b>	Product is not of interest to the audience. Product does not relate to OE.	Product is of interest to the audience. Product is related to OE in a minimal fashion.	Product is of practical use to the audience. Product highlights the importance of knowledge of OE.	Product is indispensable to the audience. Product clearly demonstrates intimate understanding of OE and its importance to the self.

Overexcitability Self-Evaluation  
Adapted from Self-test on Giftedness  
([www.rocamora.org/gift\\_selftest.html](http://www.rocamora.org/gift_selftest.html))

*Place a 3 in the blank if the statement is true about you in most areas of your life or very frequently.  
Place a 2 in the blank if the statement describes you sometimes or in some cases.  
Place a 1 in the blank if the statement does not really describe or describes you rarely.*

**PSYCHOMOTOR OVEREXCITABILITY**

- \_\_\_\_\_ I am a high-energy person.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I feel constantly pressured to take action.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am impulsive.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I have nervous habits.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am restless, always on the go, incapable of just relaxing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I talk compulsively.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am a workaholic.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I use my whole body to communicate.

**SENSUAL OVEREXCITABILITY**

- \_\_\_\_\_ I often become totally captivated or immersed in music or the visual arts.
- \_\_\_\_\_ A beautiful sunset mesmerizes me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Bad sounds, sights, smells or tastes irritate me to distraction.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am prone to drinking or eating too much because this gives me intense pleasure.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am adventurous where new sensory experiences are concerned (food, music, environmental settings, etc).
- \_\_\_\_\_ When I recall an experience, I also recall the smells, sounds, and tastes associated with the experience?
- \_\_\_\_\_ I love the taste, touch, smell or feel of things.
- \_\_\_\_\_ People call me "picky."

**INTELLECTUAL OVEREXCITABILITY**

- \_\_\_\_\_ I am always questioning everything.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I constantly ask or wonder 'how' or 'why.'
- \_\_\_\_\_ I love to explore a wide variety of theories and ideas.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am able to examine ideas outside of the framework of my own opinion.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I enjoy research, analysis, and theoretical thinking.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Problem-solving is a source of immense satisfaction to me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I think about the many possible consequences of certain events or actions.
- \_\_\_\_\_ People often accuse me of over-intellectualizing or over-analyzing things or people.

**IMAGINATIONAL OVEREXCITABILITY**

- \_\_\_\_\_ I write, speak, dream or think in vivid imagery.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I embellish the plain truth in ways that make my end of the conversation more impactful or amusing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I express myself in ways that demonstrate a rich association of images and impressions. In other words, I make it easy for others to hear, see, taste, smell, or feel what I am describing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I entertain myself endlessly with private jokes and wacky visual, auditory, or associational images.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I enjoy the unusual.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I tend to be disorganized in my day-to-day life.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I think of or treat animals or objects as if they are people.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I tend to daydream when bored.

**EMOTIONAL OVEREXCITABILITY**

- \_\_\_\_\_ I am excruciatingly sensitive; I experience intense emotions.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am easily hurt.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am highly compassionate and caring.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I can describe my feelings with great precision.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I have intense emotional attachments to others.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I often spend time thinking about feelings and/or emotions.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I tend to be fearful or over-anxious.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am intensely critical of myself and/or of others.

*Add up the number of points for each overexcitability.*

<b>OVEREXCITABILITY</b>	<b>POINT TOTAL</b>
PSYCHOMOTOR OVEREXCITABILITY	
SENSUAL OVEREXCITABILITY	
INTELLECTUAL OVEREXCITABILITY	
IMAGINATIONAL OVEREXCITABILITY	
EMOTIONAL OVEREXCITABILITY	

*Do you think these results accurately reflect you? Why or why not?*

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*Now, using the results of the survey, or your own best judgment, order your overexcitabilities from strongest to weakest:*


OVEREXCITABILITIES RATING GRID  
 Adapted from Sharon Lind  
 “Gifted? ADHD? Supersensitive? All of the above?”

*Rate the following people on a scale from 0 to 7.*

*0 means the person has none of the characteristics.*

*7 means the person has many of the characteristics **and** with great strength or intensity.*

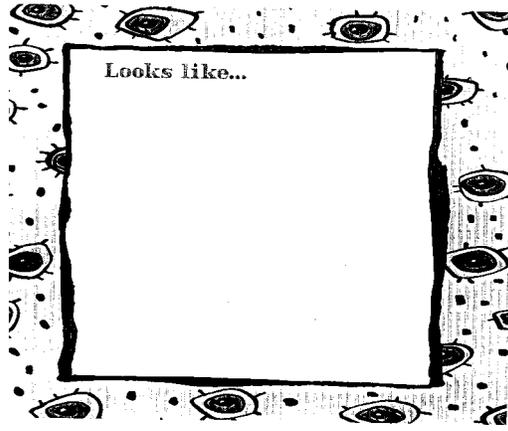
	Name	Psychomotor	Sensual	Intellectual	Imaginational	Emotional
You!						
Parent(s)						
Sibling(s)						
Friend(s)						
Teacher(s)						

*Think about and/or discuss:*

- *With which of these persons would you say you get along best? Worst?*
- *Are these persons like you or unlike you in the OE profile you have assigned them?*
- *Speculate on the possible link between OE and getting along with others.*
- *Think about asking these people to rate themselves, using the rating form you filled out in class. Compare this rating to the above grid.*

SYNECTICS – TYPE ACTIVITY

Feels like...



Tastes like...



**THINK TAC TOE – Overexcitabilities**

*You may give all students the same Think Tac Toe or differentiate by assigning students to one grid or the other.*

**CHALLENGING:**

*Choose one activity from each row*

Make a top-ten song list or book list that they think a person with a particular overexcitability would have. Briefly explain how each song or book relates/responds to that overexcitability.	Create a soundscape of what a particular OE sounds like. Write a brief explanation of your soundscape and its link to that OE.	Design the perfect bedroom or classroom for a person with one of the overexcitabilities. On the back of the drawing explain your design.
Find and illustrate a set of quotes by famous people that would be particularly inspiring to a person with a particular OE. Annotate the quotations, explaining their significance to this OE.	Create a student guidebook for enhancing school with a particular OE.	Administer the OE rating sheet to a friend or family member who has not heard of this concept. Tape record your explanation and discussion of the results with this person. Have them sign the rating sheet.
Research Dabrowski’s theory of positive disintegration. Write a 1-page reaction paper to his ideas.	Write a 2 page essay in which you discuss "The Perfect Combination of OEs"	Draw a concept map showing possible links between OE and adolescence. Be sure your ideas are clearly represented by your map. Include a brief explanation of your map on the back of your drawing OR explain and discuss your map with your teacher and a small group of students.

**MORE CHALLENGING**

*Choose one activity from each row*

Write a poem about having a particular overexcitability. The structure of the poem should reflect the overexcitability you are writing about.	Find and illustrate a set of quotes that would be particularly inspiring to a person with a particular OE. Annotate the quotations, explaining their significance to this OE.	Design an introductory lesson to give to 3 <sup>rd</sup> graders on one of Dabrowski’s overexcitabilities. You must include a visual aid of some sort.
Write a 2-page essay in which you discuss "The Perfect Combination of OEs"	Design the perfect classroom for children with overexcitabilities. Be sure your design accommodates the varied needs of children with each of the OEs. On the back of your drawing, explain the unique features of your design.	Draw a concept map showing possible links between OE and giftedness in adolescence. Be sure your ideas are clearly represented by your map. Include a brief explanation of your map on the back OR explain and discuss your map with your teacher and a small group of students.
Choose a profession or discipline. Create a guidebook to help professionals with a particular OE in this field “survive” and “celebrate” their uniqueness. Be sure you think about how OE intersects with the discipline.	Design a mini research study to find out the OE profile of a particular group. Administer the OE rating sheet to this group. Report your results in the form of an appropriate graph or chart. Write a brief summary of your findings.	Research how OE fits into the larger picture of Dabrowski’s theory of positive disintegration. Write an essay in which you discuss the implications of this theory to the charge of elitism that is often leveled at gifted education.

## SAMPLE OE-RELATED QUOTES

I used to say my son functioned like a short circuit because he was sparking all the time. It's web thinking, it's connected thinking. You take two steps down a path and you see a junction, and you may end up very far from where you intended. And it may be a wonderful place to be, but it isn't what you intended, and if you're in an environment like a school that says you must attend to these things, in this order, then a highly creative, a highly gifted person is going to have difficulty with that.

- Stephanie Tolan

"She has the same kind of passion and excess [an Joan of Arc] and, you know, she can laugh and she can cry two seconds afterwards. She can cry for an ant on the street. She has, like, no skin. She feels everything. Even the wind can make her cry."

Director Luc Besson, about Milla Jovovich in their film "The Messenger: The Story of Joan of Arc" [LA Times, Nov. 11, 1999]

"Hail to you psychoneurotics, for you perceive sensibility in the insensibilities of the world, uncertainty in its certainty. For you are often as conscious of others as of yourself. For you feel the anxiety of the world, its limits and its false unlimited assurance...For your fear of the absurdity of existence. For your awkwardness, for your transcendental realism and your lack of daily realism...For your creativity and your ecstasy, for your maladjustment to what is and your adjustment to what ought to be. For your immense possibilities not yet actualized...For what is unique, original, intuitive and infinite in you. For the solitude and the oddness of your paths. Hail to you."

- K. Dabrowski

"...Their vast emotional range make them appear contradictory: mature and immature, arrogant and compassionate, aggressive and timid. Semblances of composure and self-assurance often mask deep feelings of insecurity. The inner experience of the young gifted person is rich, complex and turbulent."

- Linda Silverman

"The intricate thought processes that mark these individuals as gifted are mirrored in the intricacy of their emotional development. Idealism, self-doubt, perceptiveness, excruciating sensitivity, moral imperatives, desperate needs for understanding, acceptance, love – all impinge simultaneously..."

- Linda Silverman

"The truly creative mind in any field is no more than this: A human creature born abnormally, inhumanly sensitive. To him...a touch is a blow. A sound is a noise. Misfortune is a tragedy. A joy is an ecstasy. A friend is a lover. A lover is a god. And failure is death."

- Pearl Buck

"I cry a lot and I experience intense emotions. I spend a lot of time thinking about emotions and feelings and try to sort them out. I am also intensely critical."

- Middle School Student

"Sometimes when I tell the story of something that really happened, I change part of it to make it more interesting or so I think it sounds better. I sometimes don't like it because I don't know when I am doing it, until afterwards."

- Middle School Student

The following as well as many other useful quotes can be found at the website listed below:

<http://talentdevelop.com/mntlhlth.html>

"The propensity for changing one's internal environment and the ability to influence positively the external environment indicate the capacity of the individual to develop. Almost as a rule, these factors are related to increased mental excitability, depressions, dissatisfaction with oneself, feelings of inferiority and guilt, states of anxiety, inhibitions, and ambivalences - all symptoms which the psychiatrist tends to label psychoneurotic.

Given a definition of mental health as the development of the personality, we can say that all individuals who present active development in the direction of a higher level of personality (including most psychoneurotic patients) are mentally healthy."

-from book: Kazimierz Dabrowski. Positive disintegration

"Who we are -- the very center of what we call our selves -- is a product of the complex interrelationships among what we think, what we feel, and the environment that surrounds us. ... in our relationships with those around us, our actions and emotions are interpreted and responded to by others based on their own storehouse of feelings and experiences developed over their lifetimes. ... our experience of the world isn't based only on brain -- the thinking analytic us -- but on mind -- the feeling, experiencing us."

-Tipper Gore - from speech: "Discovering our Selves: The Science of Emotion"

"Mental health professionals... deal with pathology, are accustomed to looking for it, and label anything that they perceive to have a downside for the individual to be a problem... Some of the very greatest gifts bring an inevitable downside which you cannot 'cure' without curing the gift at the same time."

- Stephanie Tolan

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**THE BEST SOURCE OF INFORMATION ON DABROWSKI AND HIS THEORY IS THE FOLLOWING WEBSITE BY BILL TILLIER:**

<http://users.imag.net/~cgy.btillier/>

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