

“I’m Bored!”

Spring fever and the Gifted Child

By Desiree R. Lindbom-Cho



“I’m bored!” It is the refrain dreaded by all parents. By the time winter weather has come and gone, all kids, not just gifted ones, are ready for a change of scenery and/or a change in routine. What is an overworked parent plagued by spring fever him- or herself to do? Finding the right distraction for a gifted child can prove especially challenging given gifted individuals’ propensity for overexcitabilities (Piechowski & Chucker, 2011). These overexcitabilities can manifest in a variety of ways, including restlessness, avid curiosity, overactive imaginations, and heightened emotional sensitivity, among others (Silverman, 2000). Combining a gifted child’s unique overexcitabilities with boredom resulting from winter routines can confound even the most resourceful parent. Thus, finding new places to see, new things to do, and new or familiar faces with whom to play can alleviate the inevitable bout of cabin fever that sets in at this time of year for younger and older children alike. Options for finding an activity that will meet the needs of your child are numerous if one knows where to look in the community.

If we are fortunate, this March will come in like a lamb and remain that way too. This gives children and families the opportunity to get out of the house and explore their local areas. A quick search on the Internet using your hometown and “park” as keywords can yield lists of recreational sites specific to a local area. Further use of a favorite search engine can reveal community event calendars. I know that when I deliberately search for kid-friendly events for my entire

family to enjoy, I find out about goings-on that I did not even know were going on! When I am really lucky, they are free or, at the very least, inexpensive to attend. An outing to our local farmers’ market on Saturday mornings can be as costly as I want, and allowing my gifted 6-year-old to bring his own money provides us with a real-world opportunity to budget for breakfast and other treats if so desired.

Nationwide lists of museums, parks, and zoos also exist, and parents can simply enter their state name on these websites to find nearby attractions. For instance, the National Park Foundation lists all nationally registered sites, not just famous parks such as Yellowstone. There may be hidden places of interest in your own state. Just recently, a friend showed us around her hometown of Natchitoches¹, LA, a mere 3 hours from our home. It was only after looking at the National Park Foundation’s website that I realized I had seen a national historic park near the Cane River area. Likewise, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums lists accredited facilities that must uphold a certain standard of care for their animals. The International Council of Museums has a page dedicated to museums in the United States and is maintained by John Burke from the Oakland Museum of California. Types of museums and recommendations from readers are also included. (See the Resources section of this article for links to the national lists noted here.)

When going out to see new places is impossible due to the weather, time, money, or any or all of the above, finding new things to do at home becomes another

option. Hitting up a local library for activity or craft books is one option, and finding books to read for fun is a bonus. Otherwise, the Internet quickly becomes my best friend as I look for different projects and experiments to occupy a busy mind. I hate to admit it, but I am a closet Pinterest user. There are endless art projects, science experiments, and hobby ideas for my son and I to enjoy together. For an older child, independent projects can be found, and a sense of accomplishment can be gained by allowing your son or daughter to work at a project of interest on his or her own. Of course, Pinterest is only one place to look, and giving children the opportunity to search the Internet with you will ensure that interest is peaked.

Having friends join outings or activities at home can contribute to the fun. Including friends who have similar interests and abilities as your child increase the likelihood that all will enjoy themselves. For gifted children, having peers who are close to their mental age, not their chronological age, is a top factor in choosing friends (Silverman, 2000). Also, parents should not be alarmed if their gifted child does not want to have a friend come to play or join in a family field trip as studies have shown that gifted adolescents have a greater tendency toward introversion compared to their nongifted peers (Cross, Speirs Neumeister, & Cassady, 2007). This means that time for reflection and the need to be alone sometimes may be important to a gifted child (Silverman, 2000).

Cabin fever may plague us all at this time of year, but the refrain "I'm bored" need not add to a family's irritation. Instead, families can turn to resources online and in their local community to combat children's ennui. Bringing along a friend or two and knowing when a gifted child might just want some down time to be alone will make the outings and activities that much more fun. ☺

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Resources

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Footnotes

1. I am not local to Louisiana and was happy to discover the correct pronunciation is **Nack**-uh-dish.

Author's Note

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