

Professional Biography

Dr. Patricia Gatto-Walden, Ph.D.



As a nationally recognized licensed psychologist, I have worked holistically with thousands of gifted and profoundly gifted children, adolescents and adults for three decades. Over my career, I have had extensive experience in counseling, consulting, counseling supervision, educational administration, university teaching, public speaking and writing.

As a doctoral student in Counseling Psychology at the University of Illinois, I began my professional employment in educational administration as the Director of Guidance and Counseling for a nationally renowned high school for the profoundly gifted affiliated with the College of Education. My passion for working with gifted and creative multicultural clientele and their subsequent diverse needs across the life span began with this initial opportunity and has never ceased. It is my belief that home life, education and counseling of the gifted must attend to the integration and enhancement of the mind, heart, body, spirit and social self in order to have contentment and balance in everyday life.

After attaining my Ph.D. in 1982, I was a Visiting Assistant Professor in the Department of Educational Psychology, Counseling Division. I trained and supervised doctoral level students and taught: Individual Counseling Practicum, Individual Counseling Supervision and Group Counseling Practicum. In subsequent years as a Visiting Specialist at Illinois State University, I taught Group Therapy and School Personnel Services to graduate students. Training and supervising graduate counseling interns, as well as supervision of fellow psychologists, has been an enjoyment throughout my career.

For over 25 years, as a licensed Psychologist, I had a large private counseling practice for the gifted and talented, serving thousands of international clients of all ages in the university community of Champaign-Urbana, Illinois. My client base came from faculty and their dependents, university students, community professionals and leaders, and area gifted children and adolescents. I provided short-term and long-term individual, couple, family and group counseling to clients of diverse races and cultural heritages, socio-economic status, gender, age, and sexual orientation. My counseling expertise includes treating depression and anxiety, eating disorders, incest, sexual abuse and emotional trauma, couple and family conflicts, life transition decision making; and issues related to being gifted. Specific gifted concerns addressed are experiencing life with greater intensity and sensitivity, stress and perfectionism, internalized pressure from high expectations, relationship building difficulties, social discomfort and isolation. In addition, community corporate EAP programs have referred clients with employment unease, substance abuse and addiction, and grievance and harassment incidences during employment. I also have provided phone consulting with both previous clients and new clients who seek information on innate characteristics of being gifted, understanding of their holistic complexities, and supportive guidance.

In addition to my private counseling practice, I successfully created a national consulting business for the gifted and talented, which has included being a featured speaker at international and national gifted conferences and hundreds of educational workshops, trainings and presentations. I was co-chair for two years of the Global Awareness Division of NAGC, and once again, currently act as chair-elect of the same division. I have conducted staff development seminars; facilitated problem solving sessions; and assisted in program development for gifted students. While living in the Denver area from 2004 through 2006, I consulted with large school districts providing conflict resolution, advisement and faculty trainings for gifted services. For the last two years, as a consultant for the Florida Department of Education, I have presented to multicultural audiences of teachers, administrators and parents throughout the state, highlighting the innate complexities of being gifted. I was also commissioned to revise a state training manual for teachers of the gifted, entitled, "Guidance and Counseling for the Gifted", which was published in 2007. I am a Senior Fellow for the Institute of Educational Advancement in Los Angeles, which provides programs for multicultural profoundly gifted youth, including Yunasa, a holistic summer camp I co-created and facilitated for the last 7 years. For over three decades, I have helped thousands of parents, educators

and administrators understand and accept the multifaceted inner world, needs and concerns of gifted individuals.

Recently I have begun providing a blend of both counseling and educational consulting for families with gifted and profoundly gifted children, which incorporates my decades of comprehensive experience, called “Family Educational Consultation” and “Family Renewal”. “Family Educational Consultation” is a brief, three part consulting process. I first meet with parents to assess the overall individual and family situation; second, I meet with the child to understand individual complexities; and third, in a final meeting with parents, I address specific issues and concerns, and offer feedback and suggestions on future academic and personal pursuits.

A more comprehensive service for family members and the family unit as a whole is “Family Renewal”. For two or three days our meeting times are blended with opportunities for the family to relax, explore and enjoy the spectacular natural surroundings while on a family retreat. The goal of our time together is to provide supportive personal and educational services for each family member, enrich parenting proficiency to skillfully respond to the complex and multifaceted needs of gifted children, and revitalize the family unit. Meeting over several days allows for in-depth holistic assessment, comprehensive understanding of family dynamics, and targeted guidance. Families who have participated in this two day expansive experience have proclaimed it to be exceedingly beneficial in increasing parenting skills and promoting family harmony, in finding a goodness of fit educationally for children, and in effecting a sense of individual well being and direction.