



# PATRICIA GATTO-WALDEN, PHD

## **Dr. Patty's Professional Story**

As a nationally recognized licensed psychologist, I have worked holistically with over a thousand gifted, highly and profoundly gifted children, adolescents and adults for more than 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 Educational Psychology Department at the University of Illinois, I began my professional employment in educational administration as the Director of Guidance and Counseling for University High School, a nationally renowned school for the profoundly gifted, affiliated with the College of Education. During those years, I formulated my holistic counseling orientation. I fully realized how important it was to see beyond the brilliance of a profoundly gifted person's mind and what they could produce. It became essential to help these gifted youth acknowledge, respect and integrate the inherent value of their whole self-mind, heart, body, spirit and social realms. I quickly recognized that home life, education and counseling of the gifted must attend to the integration and enhancement of the whole self in order for the individual to have contentment and balance in everyday life. My passion for working with gifted and creative multicultural clientele and their subsequent diverse needs across the life span began with this initial counseling and administrative opportunity.

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. While I loved graduate level teaching, career ambitions were at odds with my growing family of four gifted children. Instead of heading down the academic path, I chose to open my counseling practice for the gifted. In subsequent years, I enjoyed graduate level teaching of Group Therapy and School Personnel Services at Illinois State University. Training and supervising graduate counseling interns, as well as supervision of fellow psychologists, has been an enjoyment throughout my career.

I became licensed as a Clinical Psychologist in the state of Illinois in 1989 and maintained a large private counseling practice for the gifted and talented, serving international clients of all ages in the university community of Champaign-Urbana, Illinois. My client base largely 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, socioeconomic status, gender, age, and sexual orientation. My counseling expertise included 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. Other gifted concerns addressed were greater intensity and sensitivity in daily life, stress and perfectionism, internalized pressure from personal and others' high expectations, relationship

building difficulties, and social discomfort and isolation. In addition, community corporate Employee Assistance Programs referred clients with employment unease, substance abuse and addiction, and grievance and harassment incidents.

In addition to my private counseling practice, I created a national consulting business focused on the gifted and talented, which has included being a featured speaker at international, national, and state gifted conferences. I have facilitated several hundred educational workshops for parents, teacher professional development seminars, and educational administrators' problem solving and program development meetings. Additionally, through teleconferencing, both previous and new clients across the nation have connected with me to better understand their innate gifted characteristics and holistic complexities. I have been active in the National Association for Gifted Children for over thirty years and was chair of the Global Awareness Network in the organization for two terms, 1999-2001, and again in 2010-2012.

When I relocated to the Denver metro area in 2004, I became licensed as a Counseling Psychologist in Colorado and established my gifted counseling practice. In my adjunct Colorado consulting practice, I worked with large school districts and charter schools providing conflict resolution and staff engagement, gifted program advisement and faculty trainings for gifted services.

After a second "short term" relocation to Florida in 2007, I was asked to be a gifted consultant for the Florida Department of Education (DOE). For two years, I presented to multicultural audiences of teachers, administrators and parents throughout the state, highlighting the innate complexities of being gifted. Working on Gifted Issues grant (WOGI), funded by the Florida DOE, I was commissioned to revise the state graduate level accreditation course, "Guidance and Counseling for the Gifted," published in 2007. This graduate online class was one of five graduate courses required for educators to be accredited in Florida to teach gifted students. Additionally, I authored five articles for the WOGI grant website called "Frequently asked questions for Dr. Patty," and created a five-part podcast series for teachers and parents entitled, "Understanding Your Gifted Child from the Inside Out." Both the articles and podcasts were translated into Spanish for multicultural families.

I have been an active Senior Fellow for the Institute of Educational Advancement (IEA), located in South Pasadena, California for over twenty years. IEA is a unique gifted organization, providing numerous exceptional programs for multicultural highly and profoundly gifted children nationally, from early childhood through high school years. Together with other Senior Fellows and the IEA president, Betsy Jones, we created a holistic summer camp called, Camp Yunasa, which means "balance" in Lakota Sioux. The camp has been thriving for twenty years with summer programs in two locations—Michigan and Colorado. Children who attend Yunasa are recognized and embraced for who they are, their whole gifted self every day. As children returned year after year to camp, it was necessary to add a leadership training option for older teens. Once children are members of Camp Yunasa, they are always welcomed and accepted in our Yunasa family.

For the past five years, I have split my professional time between Florida and Colorado. With our four highly gifted and twice-exceptional adult children living in both locations, I have

traveled back and forth extensively. As such, I have been able to keep my counseling and consulting practice active in Colorado and my educational and corporate consulting practice flourishing in Florida.

Currently, due to the national Covid-19 stay-at-home protocol, I expanded my counseling services to include temporary licensure as a Psychologist, or “Out-of-State Telehealth Provider,” to gifted clientele in Florida, Kansas and Washington. Additionally, I maintain a teleconsulting practice nationally.

In 2016, my first book, Embracing the Whole Gifted Self, was published by Royal Fireworks Press. It is a foundational book defining what it is like to be gifted, from the inside out. I am pleased to learn that parent groups are using it nationally as a manual for weekly discussions. Hopefully, a second book will be forthcoming over the next couple of years.

