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Pure Alexithymia: The Boy with No Stories.

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**Background:**

Research on alexithymia primarily consists of studies on adult patients found to suffer co-morbid psychiatric disorders. The following case describes a gifted adolescent presenting with pure alexithymia but no DSM-IV disorders.

**Case History:**

In 1972 Peter Sifneos. coined the term alexithymia to describe a group of patients with deficits in emotional cognition resulting in a paucity of fantasies, restricted imagination, a rigid external cognitive style, problems in processing emotional information, difficulties identifying facial expression and an inability to name and describe their emotions.

Three models of neuropsychological dysfunction have been proposed.

One hypothesizes a disconnection between the limbic system and the neocortex while another favors a disconnection between the two cerebral hemispheres. A third suggests a reduction of neural signaling caused by psychological trauma.

A. J. a 17 year old male was referred for investigation of Oppositional Defiant Disorder stemming from his apparent refusal to write stories in English Literature. A. J. insisted he had “always” been unable to write fiction because there was “something wrong with his brain”.

Subsequent psychometric testing found A. J.’s full scale I.Q score was at the 94th. %ile with no cognitive deficits. Psychiatric evaluation found no evidence of DSM-IV disorders but the Toronto Alexithymic Scale was positive for Alexithymia.

**Conclusions:**

A.J. is an adolescent exhibiting pure alexithymia in the absence of psychiatric or behavioral abnormalities. Other youth labeled with behavior disorders based on non- participation in English Literature may in fact be suffering from unidentified alexithymia.