

Simone de Hoogh

Founder and Director
PowerWood, Non-profit



AN EXPERIENCED LIFE

coach, Simone de Hoogh started her career in the corporate world coaching managers to develop business practices to address the strengths and weaknesses of their employees. The skills she developed around looking for strengths and supporting weaknesses proved to be an excellent grounding for later work in twice-exceptional education.

In 2007, when she moved with her family to the United Kingdom from The Netherlands, she began studying to be a specialist in gifted education in an attempt to better understand her own children and their experiences in school. She studied twice-exceptionality, which helped her make sense of some of the challenges she had faced in the school system. During an assignment to write about the provisions for highly able children in specific educational situations, she was surprised to notice that the sort of children she identified as highly able were dismissed as having emotional issues or behavioral problems, or as underachieving. It became clear to de Hoogh at this point that the children's twice-exceptionalities were preventing their abilities from being recognized.

Amidst the challenges of supporting her own twice-exceptional children, de Hoogh realized that unless she put her academic work to use, her efforts had no value to anyone outside of herself. This placed her on the path of supporting young individuals and families going through similar types of challenges. She set up PowerWood, a not-for-profit, community-driven organization to raise awareness about neurodiversity as a positive force for change in society. De Hoogh offers consultancy and coaching sessions, as well as opportunities for families experiencing similar challenges to come together as a community.

Many of the families de Hoogh works with were initially unaware that their children were twice-exceptional. They often doubted

their child's intelligence as they saw them struggle with an inability to regulate their emotional reactions. Such emotional responses in schools also prevented others from seeing their high abilities. De Hoogh sought to reframe the narrative, fostering an understanding of high ability and twice-exceptionality in which regulation issues, overexcitabilities, and certain other personality traits are also a part of a student's neuropsychological profile. This mindset shift enabled her to connect with parents whose children had behaviors that masked their strengths and talents.

In her work, de Hoogh takes on distinct but related roles. As an

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educational consultant and family coach, she supports children and their parents, providing information, practical tools, and strategies. These resources allow individuals and children to steer their heightened energy, sensitivity, imagination, and emotional depth toward positive outcomes and outlets. She also helps parents understand the innate psychological differences between them and their children. She further helps parents focus on growing their understanding and recognition of their children's behavior as an expression of being overwhelmed — and not to take said behavior personally.

De Hoogh is also a prolific writer, and her academic articles have appeared in many publications, including the *European Council of High-AbilityNews*; *Labyrinth*, a magazine for the members of the German Association for Gifted Children; and the *Mensa Research Journal*. Over the next five years, Hoogh

hopes to expand PowerWood's online community, also training PowerWood-approved coaches to set up and facilitate "Talking Circles." These would be safe, affordable, and supportive online communities where parents and individuals can regularly connect and discuss whatever is challenging to them, moderated by experienced, trained facilitators to keep the participants on track.

De Hoogh is proud of her work with PowerWood, which has empowered families and children to develop their strengths and talents. She was driven to create Powerwood as a place where any parent faced with a challenging child could

find resources and support. She is grateful to the many contributors who freely give their time to the organization, supporting people who might otherwise have felt isolated and misunderstood. She is working to extend PowerWood's reach to impact more families.

De Hoogh encourages parents to take charge of their own emotional reactions and not to shy away from uncomfortable feelings; when they do that, she says, eventually their children will also. She also points out that self-compassion is key, because we cannot be more compassionate to others than we are to ourselves.