Raising Your Spirited Child: Understanding Temperament
Idealist

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professionalparenting.ca
M of 5-Realist

- 987 Temper Tantrums
- 15,000 diaper changes
- 5 years single parenting
- 3 broken limbs
- 2,390 spilled drinks
- 16 years breastfeeding
- 18 years sibling fights
- 98 bouts of gastroenteritis
- 15,600 bedtime battles
- Said “No” 6,840 times
- 8 hours of continuous sleep – PRICELESS!
MOM'S TIP JAR
Send mom on a holiday
Housekeeping

- Unmuted – keep background noise to minimum as we can all hear each other like a class.
- Click on audio to choose telephone or mic
- Use a headset to hear better.
- All opinions honored.
- Not going to use the question box. Please just interrupt me to ask a question. (Yell “Judy!”)
- This webinar is for education purposes only. It is not to replace medical advice.
Agenda

• Learn the 8 characteristics of temperament
• **Identify common behaviours of a spirited temperament**
• Explore helpful parenting strategies
• **Discover the benefits of a spirited temperament**
My Goal

Take home one idea

Give up one unhelpful practice

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What is Temperament?

Temperament is the “how much” of personality.

Children are born with a temperament and live with it all their lives.
Research

• New York Longitudinal Study, began 1968, 131 participants were followed from 3 months to adulthood

• Thomas, Chess and Birch, began studying Temperament in 1956 for 30 years.
The Temperament Continuum

Easy-Going  40%
Slow To Warm  15%
High Need – Spirited  10-15%
Mix of all above  30-35%

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Temperament Traits

• Persistence (also distractibility)
  • Sensitivity
  • Adaptability (long term)
  • Intensity (energy)
• Regularity (body functions)
  • Activity level
  • First reaction
  • Mood
Behaviours

**Babies**

- Needs to be held constantly
- Cries for no “apparent” reason
- Hates isolation – night or day
- Can not accept substitute care
- Can not accept confinement in cribs, etc
- Sensitive to stimuli
- Can not self-soothe
- Poor sleepers and eaters
Behaviours

Toddlers and Preschoolers

- Prefer real items over toys
- **Unpredictable moods**
- Wakes up cranky
- **Night awakenings and poor naps**
- Severe separation anxiety
- Very active
- Picky eater
- **Frustration tolerance low**
- Needs much attention and physical contact

- Severe resistance and negativity to daily routines
- **Cling's in new situations and strangers**
- Insists on self direction, decisions and choices.
- **Not distractible**
- Violent, intense temper tantrums
Behaviours

**Teenagers**

- Determined – not easily swayed by peers
- Sensitive to self and others needs
- Goal oriented and self directed
- Excellent social skills and communicators
- Advanced ability to solve problems
- Perceptive about people and situations

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Choose Carefully

Red Basket – Must uphold no matter what
Yellow Basket – Teach and guide gently
Green Basket – Accept
Parent Temperament

Does your temperament “fit” with your child’s temperament?
Parent Feelings

• Doubt, lack of self confidence, inadequate
• Drained energy reserves, exhausted, tied down
• Resentful and frustrated
• Fearful of being “manipulated and controlled”
• Worried about increasing dependency or spoiling the child
• Defensive
• Alone, lost, and isolated
• Increased partner relations stress
Parent Feelings after Support and Information

- Confidence
- Empathetic and nurturing
- Pride
- Connected to child
- Vindicated

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Parenting Strategies for Spirited Children
Manage, Not Control!

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Understanding and Working with Temperament

Acceptance
What Do Spirited Children Need?

• Patience
• Flexibility
• Priorities – choose your ‘battles’
• Problem solve, not punish
• Encouragement and understanding
• Protect your child and you from criticism – your child is unique!

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Coping With Meltdowns

Calm-down Tools
Tips for Babies

• Use different kinds of carriers
• More important to stay calm then to stop crying
• Find your community
• Meet your needs – sleep, food, hobbies
• Ease into childcare that works for everyone
• Meet dependency needs on their schedule

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Tips for Toddlers

• Pick your battles wisely!
• Re-direct over and over
• Carry snacks
• Have regular meals, nap and toileting time
• Stay calm during tantrums and melt-downs
• Teach emotional intelligence
• Give many choices
• Connect on her path, then direct onto yours
• Nudge, don’t force

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Tips for Preschoolers

First Reaction - Negative
• Fit programs to your child, not your child to the program
• Stay with your child in new situations until he is comfortable
• Invite play dates at your house
• Give warnings before transitions and provide gradual exposure to new situations, people, etc.
• Rehearse and role-play new activities

Activity Level High
• Provide many outlets for active, boisterous play
Tips for Preschoolers
Continued #1

Adaptability
• Acknowledge feelings
• Teach and practice coping skills

Mood Change
• Respond to negative moods with positivity
• Don’t take it personally!
• Ensure adequate food and rest
• Teach appropriate ways to handle anger and frustration
• Point out the positives of everything
• Have a calm-down place – not time-out!

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Preschoolers
Continued #2

Regularity
• Have regular bed-times and meal times.
• Keep to routines

Sensitivity
• Acknowledge feelings and teach coping tools for anger and surprise
• When possible, adapt environment to meet her needs
• Leave if it becomes overwhelming
• Pay attention to cues that your child has enough
• Teach coping strategies when calm
Intensity
• Allow full range of emotions and feelings
• Stay and respond calmly!
• Teach calm-down strategies when child is calm

Persistence
• Problem solve – not punishment
• Stay with “no”
• Choose your battles carefully
• Provide choices and lot’s of “yeses”
• Find another way to say ‘no’
Tips for School-aged Children

• Keep structure and routines
• Keep food and sleep needs filled
• Accept child’s readiness for programs, and separations from family
• Continue physical affection
Tips for Teenagers

• Problem solve parenting issues
• Be a mentor, guide, and listener
• Continue meeting affection needs
• Continue structure

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There are two sides of the coin
Highly Sensitive
Empathic
Caring
Curious
Affectionate
Awareness and perceptive
Intense
Intimate
Deep thinker
Passionate
Expressive
Enthusiastic

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Highly Active
Energetic
Accomplished
Fit

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Incredibly Persistent
Confident
Resourceful
Knows what they need
Great sense of justice
Respectfully questions authority
Reaches goals
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Mood Swings
Can identify feelings
Practiced in coping with emotions
Learns personal boundaries with eating and sleeping needs
Low Adaptability
Loyal
Practiced in coping with surprises
Copes well with routines
Prefers not to travel
Irregular Body Functions
Loves routine
Fits well in ordered lifestyle
Negative First Reaction
Provides devil’s advocate
Realist
Practical
Cautious

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The Other Side of the Coin

- Empathic
- Caring
- Curious
- Affectionate
- Perceptive
- Intimate
- Deep thinker
- Passionate Practical
- Realist
- Cautious
- Expressive
- Enthusiastic
- Loyal
- Homebody

- Energetic and fit
- Accomplished
- Loves routine and order
- Confident
- Resourceful
- Self Aware
- Just
- Reaches goals
- Respectfully challenges status quo
- Practical
- Realist
- Cautious

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Today’s mighty oak tree was yesterday’s acorn that stood it’s ground
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Resources

• Discipline without Distress: 135 tools for raising caring, responsible children without time-out, spanking, punishment or bribery, By Judy Arnall
• Kids, Parents and Power Struggles, By Mary Sheedy Kurcinka
• Raising Your Spirited Child, By Mary Sheedy Kurcinka
• Your Fussy Baby and High Need Child, By Dr. William Sears
• Growing Miracles, Alberta Health Services
• Google “temperament” or “spirited child”

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