

Parenting the Spirited Child

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Defining the Spirited Child

The Nine Temperament Traits

Defining the Spirited Child

Spirited children are more:

- ▶ Intense
- ▶ Persistent
- ▶ Sensitive
- ▶ Perceptive
- ▶ Maladaptive
- ▶ Irregular
- ▶ Energetic
- ▶ Reactive
- ▶ Moody

Trait 1: Intensity

Experience powerful reactions

- ▶ Feelings are extreme
- ▶ Loud and dramatic
- OR
- ▶ Quiet and observant

Trait 2: Persistence

Determined and strong. Often get “locked down” in their thinking.

- ▶ Don't want to be distracted from an activity
- ▶ Often get frustrated when they “can't do something”
- ▶ Can argue a point for hours

Trait 3: Sensitivity

Spirited children feel, see, hear and smell things more deeply than other people.

- ▶ Easily overwhelmed
- ▶ Stimulated by their environment
- ▶ Emotional

Trait 4: Perceptive

Their alert senses make them easily distractible.

- ▶ Hear what others do not
- ▶ Make observations that others miss
- ▶ Feel the emotions of those around them
- ▶ Appear to have difficulties following instructions

Trait 5: Maladaptive

Spirited children struggle with transitions.

- ▶ Difficult for them to switch gears
- ▶ Resistant to change
- ▶ Slow to adapt

Trait 6: Irregular

Many spirited children are unpredictable.

- ▶ Unpredictable
- ▶ Do not appear to have natural rhythms
- ▶ Difficult to schedule

Trait 7: Energetic

The need to move is strong.

- ▶ Always on the go
- ▶ Fidgety
- ▶ Cannot sit for long periods of time

Trait 8: Reactive

Often experience strong reactions to new stimuli.

- ▶ Slow to warm-up
- ▶ Weary of new situations/people
- ▶ Need encouragement to succeed

Trait 9: Moody

Serious and analytical; often seeing only the negative.

- ▶ Tend to be whiny
- ▶ Overly negative
- ▶ Appear to display poor manners

Spirited Child Quiz

Quiz Introduction

- ▶ Scale from mild to strong or low to high
- ▶ Everyone has a temperament that has both positive and negatives aspects to it
- ▶ The Spirited child tends to fall toward the strong end of the scale

Parenting Techniques

How to parent the spirited child

Diffusing Intensity

- ▶ Pick up on Non-verbal cues
- ▶ Some examples:
 1. Getting louder
 2. Moving quickly between activities
 3. Acting bossy
 4. Increased Impatience

Diffusing Intensity (cont)

Calming Activities:

1. Warm bath
2. Playing in the sink
3. Running water through his fingers

Sensory Activities

1. Play doh or silly putty
2. Sand trays
3. Back rubs

Diffusing Intensity (cont)

- ▶ Reading

- ▶ Time-Out (but NOT for punishment)
 1. Talk about “cooling off”
 2. Identify a comfortable spot
 3. Talk soothingly
 4. Rub their back gently

Handling Persistence

- ▶ Choose your battles: power struggles
- ▶ Look for opportunities to say “yes”
- ▶ Practice reflective listening
- ▶ Be willing to negotiate
- ▶ Teach problem-solving skills
- ▶ Make sure your rules are clear
- ▶ **BE CONSISTENT!**

Managing Sensitivity

- ▶ Check stimulation levels
- ▶ Use words
- ▶ Know when to quit
- ▶ Limit television time

Addressing Perceptive Traits

- ▶ Use multiple methods to direct
- ▶ Make eye contact
- ▶ Keep directions simple
- ▶ Tell them what they CAN do

Dealing with maladaptive behaviors

- ▶ Establish a routine
- ▶ Time management
- ▶ Forewarn
- ▶ Allow time for closure
- ▶ Limit transitions

Improving Regularity

- ▶ Teach self-help skills
- ▶ Work together

Channeling Energy

- ▶ Expect energy
- ▶ Direct with touch
- ▶ Stay attentive
- ▶ Practice self-care

Reducing Reactivity

- ▶ Encourage vs. push
- ▶ Steps to encouragement:
 1. Support your child
 2. Express understanding
 3. Allow her to move at her own pace
 4. Remind him of past successes
 5. Break down the task
 6. Allow warm-up time

Reduce Moodiness

- ▶ Point out the positives
- ▶ Teach good manners
- ▶ Model a positive attitude
- ▶ Ignore negative statements

Specific Troublesome Behaviors

And how to address your child's needs.

Tantrums

- ▶ Stay with or near a child that is having a tantrum
- ▶ Try to identify the cause of the distress
- ▶ Know your child's most difficult times of day
- ▶ Provide a gentle touch
- ▶ Make rules and consequences clear
- ▶ Process the tantrum

Bedtime

- ▶ Provide activities and objects that are associated with bedtime
- ▶ Make sure some of the objects are portable
- ▶ Avoid any activities that encourage physical behavior
- ▶ Stay with your child to calm him or her
- ▶ Take turns with your spouse (or other adult)
- ▶ Allow enough time for bedtime preparation
- ▶ Set a firm bedtime

Meals

- ▶ Provide healthy foods
- ▶ Make snacks nutritious and easy
- ▶ Explain and model how to refuse food appropriately
- ▶ Allow your child to help plan/prepare meals
- ▶ Make the menu known in advance

Getting Dressed

- ▶ Have a specific area for getting dressed
- ▶ Use a thermostat to teach appropriate clothing choices
- ▶ Buy clothes that are easy for your child to put on and take off without assistance

Questions?

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The basis of this presentation is the following book:

Raising Your Spirited Child
by Mary Sheedy Kurcinka

Visit my blog at www.penwellcounseling.com for a copy of these slides.

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