

TEMPERAMENT TRAITS OF SPIRITED CHILDREN

Kurcinka, M.S. 1991. Raising Your Spirited Child: A Guide for Parents Whose Child Is More Intense, Sensitive, Perceptive, Persistent, Energetic.

Intensity: strength of emotional reactions. People often remark how "alert" an intense baby is or how much "personality" she has. While average kids will giggle at something funny, intense children burst into peals of laughter. When they are happy, they are always smiling, laughing, singing. When sad or upset, they are desolate, inconsolable. Intense children are very easily over-stimulated. When too excited they lose their impulse control and often hit, bite, pinch or kick for no apparent reason.

Persistence: the length of time particular activities are pursued. They will stick to something for a long time. But they also have the negative kind, stubbornness. They "lock in" to ideas and have trouble unlocking. They can never take "no" for an answer; they'll ask for the same thing 20 times in a row if allowed.

Sensitivity: low sensory threshold for noise, lights, emotions, temperatures, tastes, smells, clothing. Spirited kids are physically sensitive to environmental factors. Lights can't be too bright, noises too loud, clothing too tight or scratchy. Dressing a sensitive child is a special challenge: shirts have itchy tags, pants have elastic waistbands, and socks are full of lint and other uncomfortable things.

Perceptiveness: the amount of stimulation, such as sound or light, necessary to evoke a reaction. The smallest detail seldom escapes the perceptive kids. However, these details provide distractions, which make completing other tasks difficult. Perceptive kids are often accused of not listening, when in reality, their attention is simply focused elsewhere. Adults have learned to screen out stimuli that are not important. Yet, we complete our task without mishap. Perceptive children have not learned to screen out extraneous stimuli, nor have they learned which stimuli are more important to attend to than others.

Adaptability: to transitions, surprises, changes in schedule or routine. These children are not being demanding, they just don't adjust well to changes or surprises.

Regularity: of eating, sleeping and bowel habits. Spirited kids often have irregular body rhythms. New parents are told that they will soon learn to distinguish between the baby's various cries. But, the parents of spirited kids do not always find this to be true because the child's eating, sleeping and elimination patterns are not regular.

Energy: the amount of physical motion during sleep, eating, play, dressing, etc. Most (but not all) spirited kids have limitless energy. From morning until night they are moving.

First Reaction: to new people, places or experiences. Often the child will need a few minutes to warm up to a new stimuli. Ask a spirited kid a "yes/no" question and the first answer will most certainly be a resounding "no!" With a little encouragement and patience, these kids will try something new -- we just have to wait until they're ready.

Mood: the amount of pleasant and friendly or unpleasant and unfriendly behavior in various situations. While some spirited kids have generally happy or sunny personalities, others tend to be serious, analytical and cranky. They are not trying to be difficult, this is their disposition, which is directly linked to brain patterns. These kids tend to see what's wrong with things instead of what's right. They don't display their emotions easily, so determining when they are happy is hard. There are no management techniques for moody kids; parents learn to cope by realizing that their kids can't help how they view the world.

SUGGESTED READING

Kurcinka, M.S. 1991. *Raising Your Spirited Child: A Guide for Parents Whose Child Is More Intense, Sensitive, Perceptive, Persistent, Energetic.*



Recently, temperament traits have come to the forefront of child development theory. In *Raising Your Spirited Child*, Mary Sheedy Kurcinka's first contribution is to redefine the "difficult child" as the "spirited" child, a child that is, as she says, MORE. Many people are leery about books that are too quick to "type" kids, but Kurcinka, a parent of a spirited child herself and a parent educator for 20 years, doesn't fall into that trap. Instead, she provides tools to understanding your own temperament as well as your child's. When you understand your temperamental matches--and your mismatches--you can better understand, work, live, socialize, and enjoy spirit in your child. By reframing challenging temperamental qualities in a positive way, and by giving readers specific tools to work with these qualities, Kurcinka has provided a book that will help all parents, especially the parents of spirited children, understand and better parent their children.

Turecki, S. 1985. *The Difficult Child: Expanded and Revised Edition*



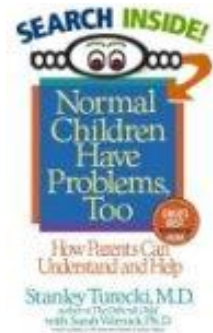
How to help--and cope with--the difficult child

Expanded and completely revised, the classic and definitive work on parenting hard-to-raise children with new sections on ADHD and the latest medications for childhood disorders.

Temperamentally difficult children can confuse and upset even experienced parents and teachers. They often act defiant, stubborn, loud, aggressive, or hyperactive. They can also be clingy, shy, whiny, picky, and impossible at bedtime, mealtimes, and in public places. This landmark book has been completely revised to include the latest information on ADHD, medications, and a reassuring approach to all aspects of childhood behavioral disorders.

Turecki, S. & Wernick, S. 1994. *Normal Children Have Problems, Too : How Parents Can Understand and Help*

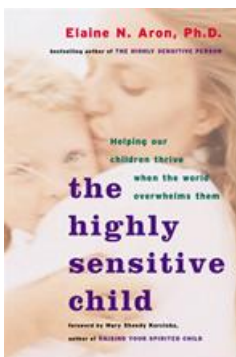
Lack of friends * poor self-image * sibling rivalry * hyperactivity * sadness and fearfulness * eating problems * nervous habits * aggressive behavior * defiance * sleep problems * lying * learning disabilities. . .



Even normal children can have problems. And parents can help them.

That is the powerful assurance Dr. Stanley Turecki offers parents in this compassionate and practical book. Whatever the situation, Dr. Turecki shows you: A new way to understand your child's difficulties and gain insights into causes and solutions, how to discuss problems without destructive arguments and win your child's cooperation, to strengthen self-esteem by making the most of your child's individual temperament, to improve discipline by focusing on planning and prevention rather than punishment, to collaborate with teachers about school problems, & what to do if you are told that your child should be tested for ADD or placed on medication

Aron, E. 1999. *The Highly Sensitive Child*



A highly sensitive child is one of the fifteen to twenty percent of children born with a nervous system that is highly aware and quick to react to everything. This makes them quick to grasp subtle changes, prefer to reflect deeply before acting, and generally behave conscientiously. They are also easily overwhelmed by high levels of stimulation, sudden changes, and the emotional distress of others. Because children are a blend of a number of temperament traits, some HSCs are fairly difficult--active, emotionally intense, demanding, and persistent--while others are calm, turned inward, and almost too easy to raise except when they are expected to join a group of children they do not know. But outspoken and fussy or reserved and obedient, all HSCs are sensitive to their emotional and physical environment.

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