

# What Kind of Parent Are You & What Kind of Child Do You Have?

## The four Temperaments

KindredGrace.com

Sanguine



Choleric



Melancholy



Phlegmatic



## 1. Understanding the Temperaments

Tim La Haye, Author of *Spirit-Controlled Temperament* and *Why You Act The Way You Do*, describes temperaments as inborn traits that subconsciously influence everything we do. That is why it's so important to understand the temperaments of ourselves and others, so that we can maximize our potential and enable others to maximize theirs. Especially when it comes to understanding the best way to parent our children!

In Scripture temperament is described as the "hidden person of the heart"

1 Peter 3:4 "Rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of the gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God."

Hippocrates, the ancient Greek Physician and Philosopher, considered to be the father of medicine, conceived of the 4 general temperaments a2400 years ago: Sanguine, Choleric, Melancholy and Phlegmatic.

But... God created the temperaments and they are personified in biblical figures as well as in the writers of the 4 Gospels (God foreknew the writers of the Gospels and all the generations of their audience-Do you have a favorite Gospel, one that you may be more emotionally connected to perhaps?) Jesus embodies all of the temperaments-He is all of the strengths and none of the weaknesses. And as a New Creation in Christ, we can strive to for Christlikeness and all of the strengths and work to let go of our weaknesses.

Ephesians 4:22-24

God foreknew you and knit you together in your mother's womb and you are uniquely, fearfully and wonderfully made (paraphrase from Psalm 139, so your temperament is uniquely you, a specific combination of strengths and weaknesses, but each of us has a general category that we fit into.

### Temperament Overview:

**Popular Sanguine**- "Lets do it the fun way"

**Desire:** to have fun

**Key Strengths:** bubbly personality, ability to talk about anything with anyone at any time, optimism, sense of humor, enjoyment of people, story telling ability, playful, makes friends easily

**Key Weaknesses:** disorganized, forgetful, exaggerates, lets others do the work, too gullible, naïve

**Emotional Needs:** attention, affection, approval, acceptance

**Recognized by:** constant talking, loud volume, bright eyes, colorful creativity, entertaining

**Controls by:** charm

**Powerful Choleric**-“Let’s do it my way”

**Desire:** to have control

**Key Strengths:** ability to take charge if anything instantly and make quick, correct judgments, goal-oriented, natural leader

**Key Weaknesses:** too bossy, domineering, autocratic, insensitive, impatient, unwilling to delegate or give credit to others

**Emotional Needs:** sense of obedience, appreciation for accomplishments, credit for ability

**Recognized by:** fast moving approach, quick grab for control, self-confidence, needs to be and usually is right, high-producer

**Controls by:** threat of anger

**Perfect Melancholies**-“Let’s do it the right way”

**Desire:** to have it done right

**Key Strengths:** ability to organize and set long-range goals, to set high standards and ideals, to analyze deeply, deeply concerned for others

**Key Weaknesses:** easily depressed/moody, spends too much time on preparation, too focused on details, remembers negatives

**Emotional Needs:** sense of stability, space, sensitivity, support

**Recognized by:** serious and sensitive nature, well-mannered approach, meticulousness and well-groomed, self-deprecating, sense of detail, follow-through, compassion

**Controls by:** threat of moods

**Peaceful Phlegmatics**-“Let’s do it the easy way”

**Desire:** to avoid conflict and keep peace

**Key Strengths:** balance, even disposition, pleasing personality, dry sense of humor, competent, good listener

**Key Weaknesses:** indecisive, low enthusiasm or energy, hidden stubbornness, indifferent

**Emotional Needs:** sense of respect, feeling of worth, understanding, emotional support

**Recognized by:** calm approach, mediator, objective, problem solver

**Controls by:** procrastination

## **Do any of these more closely describe you? Your spouse? Your children?**

We are typically a blend of at least two of the temperaments, possibly three, but we have one that is most dominant. So knowing this can help us gain insight into:

- Why opposites attract
- Why we parent the way we do
- Why we may have a harder time getting along with some people
- Why we feel more comfortable with others

## ***2. What type of parent are you? Common dynamics...***

### **Popular Sanguine Parents love to have fun, are playful and are optimists**

- **Sanguine child:** because organization and timeliness are not their strength (nor the child's), the parent must at instilling a sense of responsibility and discipline in their child. Also, this parent needs to be careful not to compete for the spotlight with their sanguine child.

A Sanguine parent & child both share an enthusiasm for life and humor that binds them together

- **Choleric child:** because this child fights to get their way, the sanguine parent tends to give in to avoid conflict. But sanguine parents need to be sure to set boundaries and show resolve-this is the child that will constantly challenge you, not like your instructions and make sure you know it.

A Sanguine parent & choleric child are both optimists and the parent makes a great cheerleader for an achievement-oriented Choleric child

- **Melancholy child:** the child is introverted, quiet and sensitive so the sanguine parent needs to be good listener and an encourager of the child's accomplishments. Sanguine parents need to respect the child's need for structure and routine and promptness.

A Sanguine parent and Phlegmatic child are both naturally creative and artistic; if they work at understanding each other they can be compliments to each other even though they have very different personalities

- **Phlegmatic child:** the child does not show excitement for the things the parent thinks are fun, so the parent needs to avoid becoming discouraged and encourage the child in a loving, quiet way that is not pushy. Both the parent and child struggle with organization, so the parent needs to model self-discipline.

A Sanguine parent & Phlegmatic child are witty and share a relaxed attitude that they appreciate in each other

### **Powerful Choleric Parents have a "Just do it", take charge attitude, they are trustworthy and take care of business**

- **Sanguine child:** the child does not have the same intense drive as the parent so the parent needs to make sure to allow time to have fun with this child or they make seek fun outside of the family in unacceptable ways.

Both the Choleric parent and Sanguine child share an outgoing, optimistic outlook. This child will often comply with the parent if they are encouraged and praised for it

- **Choleric child:** if the parent and child have different likes and goals, there is conflict. The parent needs to listen well to the child's viewpoint, model and teach compromise.

Both are outgoing highly motivated achievers, which binds them together

- **Melancholy child:** they need time to analyze and think about things so don't insist on quick decisions and responses. Allow them to express their opinions and listen before giving advice, as they may feel judged otherwise.

The Choleric parent & Melancholy child get along well when the parent motivates the child in a quiet and encouraging way

- **Phlegmatic child:** avoid doing everything for this child or make their decisions for them even though it might be easier. Instead teach them responsibility and use kind, motivating words. Give them enough down time to relax.

The Choleric parent & Phlegmatic child can be balanced and the child can enjoy following the parent's lead and learn from the parent's organization

### **Perfect Melancholy Parents are clean, neat, talented, dedicated, sensitive and sincere**

- **Sanguine child:** this child needs to have fun at home, so allow for plenty of fun at home. Help them develop organization and discipline without being highly critical. Give them rewards for a job well done and plenty of opportunities to be creative.

The Melancholy parent & Sanguine child can balance each other. The parent helps the child develop organization and the child brings a sense of fun to the relationship

- **Choleric child:** this child needs credit and praise for their hard work. Don't expect perfection, but praise effort and initiative. Be flexible and fair with choices when you can, to give the child a sense of control in their lives.

The Melancholy parent & Choleric child share the ability to be organized and on schedule

- **Melancholy child:** you both have definite ideas about the proper way to do things but they may not be the same so try to compromise, teaching them to express their feelings as you model these skills as well. Encourage artistic pursuits they choose, not only the ones you want them to pursue.

Melancholy parent & Melancholy child both enjoy the arts, order and routine

- **Phlegmatic child:** the child needs plenty of encouragement and encouragement does not come naturally to a melancholy parent. Encourage them to reach their potential by praising them and don't let them slide by just because they are quiet.

Melancholy parent & Phlegmatic child both enjoy a peaceful, relaxed atmosphere

### **Peaceful Phlegmatic Parents are relaxed, patient, sympathetic, and agreeable.**

- **Sanguine child:** neither the parent or the child are born organizers so the parent must develop this skill and model it. Also, they need to set a behavioral standard and stick to it or the sanguine child will charm their way out of consequences and responsibility.

Phlegmatic parent & sanguine child have a great sense of humor and enjoy having a good time. They appreciate each other

- **Choleric child:** establish appropriate guidelines for discipline and stick with them or the choleric child will attempt to run the household. The child needs to have some age appropriate choices that they can properly handle but the parent needs to guard against being a pushover. The child needs to be praised for their accomplishments.

Phlegmatic parent & Choleric child can compliment each other but only when the naturally easy-going parent establishes their parental authority and maintains it

- **Melancholy child:** both can suffer from lack of communication since both are more naturally quiet. The child needs to be "drawn out". If the parent does not work on this, the child may withdraw further and the parent can become discouraged.

Phlegmatic parent & Melancholy child just enjoy "being" in each others company because both are more quiet and reserved

- **Phlegmatic child:** parent & child can get into a rut of not communicating. The parent needs to put effort into being intentional in the relationship. Also, they need to model self-discipline and motivate the child to set goals. The child needs to be praised often.

Phlegmatic parent and Phlegmatic child really enjoy their relaxed, easy going relationship

## **3. What kind of child do you have?**

Some of the child's **emotional needs** to be aware of so that you can help them feel affirmed and validated:

- Popular Sanguine: Attention, Affection, Approval, Acceptance
- Powerful Choleric: Loyalty, Sense of Control, Credit for Their Work, Achievement
- Perfect Melancholy: Sensitivity, Support, Space, Silence
- Peaceful Phlegmatic: Peace & Quiet, Feeling of Self-Worth, Lack of Stress, Respect

What the child needs to work on (**besetting sins**):

\*\* Besetting sins are habits or pattern of behavior that controls an individual such that it overtakes a person's character to the extent that the good they do is often offset by the behavior this sin produces (from Mom's Notes).

**Popular Sanguine's** besetting sin is lying. Often the lying is habitual avoidance of conflict and stems from the need to please others. They need to work on honesty and self-control.

Some subtle forms lying can take is saying "I forgot", leaving out or twisting the facts, exaggeration

Work with the child persistently to be truthful and hold them accountable. They are people pleasers so train them by teaching them healthy, appropriate ways to deal with conflict.

**Powerful Choleric's** besetting sin is anger. Because they need to be in control they get angry quickly when they don't get their own way. They need to work on the heart attitudes of submission, humility and self-control, and take personal responsibility rather than blame others.

Anger is a form of control so the parent needs to choose their battles wisely, stay in control and remain calm. The child can't be allowed to argue, debate or negotiate. The parent must be resolved. They should give the child some choices that are age appropriate as to not exasperate the child.

**Perfect Melancholy's** besetting sin is the inability to control their emotions. They can become critical of others and themselves so they lose it when things don't go they way they want them to. The way this child feels impacts the way they relate to others and vice versa. They use emotional outbursts to manipulate and get others to feel sorry for them.

Parents can train this child to gain self-control and give them plenty of praise. The child can be joyful and positive when they feel appreciated. Parents should validate feelings and emotions but teach what is appropriate-don't affirm feelings that lead to sinful outbursts. "Know this child's love language and keep their tank full" (to quote fellow Contact Mom, Jerrine Hicks). Also, teach this child empathy and sensitivity toward others.

**Peaceful Phlegmatic's** besetting sin is stubbornness and lack of initiative. The stubbornness is related to the lack of initiative and can lead to a hardened, selfish heart. They have a hard time submitting and are born procrastinators. They are happy to let everyone else do the work for them or serve them.

Parents need to teach in times of Non-Conflict because the child does not respond to conflict and emotion. They use their stubbornness as a way to control the situation and get out of doing what they don't want to do (it takes too much effort and energy). The parent needs to refrain from doing for the child what they can do for themselves. They can channel their stubbornness in positive ways such as endurance, perseverance and patience, so parents can encourage that.

Please be encouraged because all of the temperaments are important in God's kingdom and plan! And He knows you and your child intimately and has a wonderful plan for your family!

Based on what we know from Scripture, here are the temperaments of people that God worked through in amazing ways:

***Sanguine-Peter***

***Choleric-Paul***

***Melancholy-Moses***

***Phlegmatic-Abraham***

### **So what do you do with all of this?**

- Pray and ask God to reveal dynamics in your parenting that are not working and to see what you need to see in each child in order to help them feel loved, encouraged and valued for the way He made them. But also, to see what needs to be corrected so that they can reach their potential.
- Talk to your husbands about what besetting sins they may see in your children and make a plan of how you will deal those.
- Focus on your child's strengths and encourage those and gain understanding in dealing lovingly and purposefully with the weaknesses.

Resources:

*Mom's Notes*, by Joey and Carla Link

*Wired That Way*, by Marita Littauer

*Why Do You Do What You Do?* by Tim LaHaye

*Spirit Controlled Temperament* by Tim LaHaye

*GrowingFamiliesUSA.com*