

Michelle Watson, “Shades of Character”

Anyone who has spent time around children will notice that each one has a special personality all his or her own. Children, like adults, have different traits that make up their personalities. Experts have researched these traits in detail, and they classify children into different categories. Some experts have named more than three categories, but Dr. Peter L. Mangione has chosen three that most experts agree with. These categories are “flexible,” “fearful,” and “feisty.” Children generally may have similar interests, but the way they interact and deal with these interests displays their personality types.

The flexible personality is the most common of the three types. About “forty percent of all children fall into the flexible or easy group” (“Flexible, Fearful, or Feisty”). These children usually handle feelings of anger and disappointment by becoming only mildly upset. This does not mean that they do not feel mad or disappointed, they just choose to react mildly. These actions mean the flexible child is easy to take care of and be around. According to Mangione, such children usually “adapt to new situations and activities quickly, are toilet-trained easily, and are generally cheerful.” Flexible children are subtle in their need for attention. Instead of yelling and demanding it, they will slowly and politely let their caregivers know about the need. If they do not get the attention right away, they “seldom make a fuss.” They patiently wait, but they still make it known that they need the attention. These children also are easygoing, so routines like feeding and napping are regular (“Flexible, Fearful, or Feisty”).

Flexible children may be referred to as “good as gold” because of their cheerful attitudes. Since these are well-behaved children, the caregiver needs to make sure the child is getting the attention he or she needs. The caregiver should “check in with the flexible child from time to time” (“Flexible, Fearful, or Feisty”). By checking in with the child regularly, the caregiver will be more knowledgeable about when the child needs attention and when he or she does not.

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Classification system is made up of three personality types determined by experts

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Explains the PRINCIPLE OF CLASSIFICATION for the categories

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Watson devotes two paragraphs to each category; ¶12 & 3 explain the significant characteristics of “flexible” children

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Suggests the PURPOSE for classifying children (to aid in their care)

The next temperament is the fearful type. These are the more quiet and shy children. This kind makes up about 15 percent of all children, according to Mangione. They adapt slowly to new environments and take longer than flexible children when warming up to things. When presented with a new environment, fearful children often cling to something or someone familiar, whether it be the main caregiver or a material object such as a blanket. The fearful child will cling until he or she feels comfortable with the new situation. This can result in a deep attachment of the child to a particular caregiver or object. Fearful children may also withdraw when pushed into a new situation too quickly (“Flexible, Fearful, or Feisty”). They may also withdraw when other children are jumping into a new project or situation they are not comfortable with. These children may tend to play alone rather than with a group.

In dealing with fearful children, caregivers find they need more attention than flexible children. A good technique for helping these children is having “a sequence of being with, talking to, stepping back, remaining available, and moving on” (“Flexible, Fearful, or Feisty”). The caregiver can also help fearful children by giving them “extra soothing combined with an inch-by-inch fostering of independence and assertiveness” (Viorst 174). One of the most effective techniques is just taking everything slowly and helping the child to become more comfortable with his or her surroundings.

The third temperament type is called feisty. About “ten percent” of children fit into this category (“Flexible, Fearful, or Feisty”). Feisty children express their opinions in a very intense way. Whether they are happy or mad, everyone around them will know how they feel. These children remain active most of the time, and this causes them to be very aggressive. Feisty children often have a tendency toward “negative persistence” and will go “on and on nagging, whining and negotiating” if there is something they particularly want (“Facts About Temperament”). Unlike flexible children, feisty children are irregular in their napping and feeding times, but they do not adapt well to changes in their routines. They

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Significant characteristics of “fearful” children explained in ¶4 & 5

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By including percentages, Watson shows how little her categories overlap and how inclusive they are, since the categories cover in total about 65% of the population

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Significant characteristics of “feisty” children explained in ¶6 & 7

get “used to things and won’t give them up” (“Facts About Temperament”). Anything out of the ordinary can send them into a fit. If these children are not warned of a change, they may react very negatively (“Flexible, Fearful, or Feisty”). Feisty children also tend to be very sensitive to their surrounding environment. As a result, they may have strong reactions to their surroundings.

When dealing with feisty children, the caregiver should know strategies that receive positive results when different situations arise. Mangione supports the “redirection technique” to calm feisty children. This method helps when the child is reacting very negatively to a situation. According to Mangione, to properly implement the redirection technique, the caregiver should

begin by recognizing and empathizing with the feelings of the feisty child and placing firm limits on any unacceptable behavior. This response lets the child know that both his or her desire for the toy and feelings of anger when denied the toy are acceptable to the caregiver. At the same time, the caregiver should clearly communicate to the child that expressing anger through hurtful or disruptive behavior is not acceptable. The child will probably need time to experience his or her emotions and settle down. Then offer an alternative toy or activity that may interest the child, who is then given time to consider the new choice and to accept or reject it.

Caregivers should consider that these children generally do not have regular feeding and napping times. The caregiver should be flexible when working with these children and should try to conform more to the desires of the child (“Flexible, Fearful, or Feisty”). If there is going to be a change in a child’s routine, the caregiver has an easier time when the child has been warned of the change.

Generally speaking, children can be divided into three groups, but caregivers must not forget that each child is an individual. Children may have the traits of all three of the personality groups, but they are categorized into the one they are most like. Whatever their temperament, children need to be treated

..... Conclusion reiterates the categories and ends with a THESIS statement explaining why it’s helpful to classify children this way

according to their individual needs. When these needs are met appropriately the child will be happier, and those around the child will feel better also. Knowing the general personality types and how to react to them will help to make the caregiver's job much easier and aid in the relief of unnecessary stress.

Works Cited

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