

LET'S GET PERSONAL: *Back to school blues*

Kate Jones

Special to OSA

As part of the celebration of our 10th edition, OSA welcomes you to our newest column, "Let's Get Personal!" written by Kate Jones. We invite you to interact with Kate in this fun and informative column that is all about motivating positive behaviour of various personality types— whether it is your kids' behaviour or that of other members of the school council. We would love to hear from you. Kate welcomes your questions, comments and responses to the column. Let's share best practices with other personality types! Please call Kate at 905-825-1456 or e-mail her at kjassociates@cogeco.ca.

Dear Kate,

All of the kids in our complex are getting ready to return to school on September 7. Unlike many of the kids who seem to be eager to return, my daughter seems to be upset. While she is usually easy to get along with and has friends she likes at school, she is clinging more to me and seems to constantly want to be with her little brother. Meanwhile, I have a list of supplies that I am ready to buy with her, but she tears up when I even mention going back to school. It is bothering me that I cannot check off these things and have her ready to go as planned. I know there are different temperaments and wonder if this may be something to do with her specific personality. Can you help me understand this?

Thanks, A Concerned Mom

Dear Concerned Mom,

I'm glad you mentioned that you have an inkling that it could be something to do with your daughter's temperament; that narrows it down considerably. Research tells us that there are four basic temperament types that

tell us "why" we behave in certain ways, what motivates us, and what stresses us out. Each of us usually falls within one primary temperament type. One of the assessment tools that we use to assess temperament type is Personality Dimensions, a tool created and distributed by a Canadian company, which describes each of the types using the metaphor of colour.

By the way, the notion of human beings falling into one of four temperament categories has been around since Hippocrates, who first observed the four groups centuries ago. Many experts and studies since then have confirmed the four broad groups.

Getting back to the question, it would seem that your daughter may fall into the "Authentic Blues" colour group and that you may fall into the Organized Gold group. Naturally, without a full assessment I can only make an "educated guess."

The Authentic Blue personality has a core need for relationships. She needs to know that her relationship with you and her little brother will remain intact when she goes to school. Since she has had a whole summer building relations with her family, she is hesitant leaving you every morning. If she thinks the relationship might change because she isn't around you during the day, that is a stress for her. Hence her concern about going back to school. Remind her of the friends at school she has probably not seen since June. Have her recall their names and chat about them so she starts to look forward to their friendships again. Perhaps talk about things that you will do as a family when she comes home after school and on weekends so she realizes that your relationship is still very strong.

You, on the other hand, seem to be an "Organized Gold" whose temperament is

task-oriented and who wants to check things off the list once they are done. Your Authentic Blue daughter does not share your penchant for the details, so right now it is not important to her to get the supplies on your list. It is important for her to know that her relationship with her family members will remain in tact while she is at school.

If she is a younger child you may want to accompany her to school the first day and personally introduce him/her to the new teacher, giving a brief "personality snapshot." A file card with a passport-sized photo, a brief character summary, and important personal information (emergency contacts, medical information, phone numbers) on the back could help both teacher and student find common interest areas, as Authentic Blues like to know that they are accepted for who they are.

Finally, let her carry a small snapshot of the family with her so she can look at it during recess or lunch hour to assure her that you are not very far away. Meanwhile, go ahead and buy the supplies so she will have them when she needs them, or make it a family shopping trip where her little brother is also part of the trip.