



SPECIAL NEEDS

You know the type!

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Special to OSA

Do you sometimes find yourself saying things like, “Oh, you know her type,” or “He’s the type of child who...”?

We often speak about type as a way of describing people’s personality differences and understanding what makes others tick, including our own children.

Of course, there are lots of ways to explain personality differences. Scientists now tell us that some differences may be acquired throughout our life experiences while other differences can be attributed to the temperaments or natures with which we are born. Did you know that there are only four main temperament types? Did you also know that each of us, including our children, tend to prefer only one of these four natures?

If you, as parents, learn to recognize your children’s primary nature then you will gain an even better understanding of them, be able to help increase their self esteem, and generally improve your relationships with them.

Kate Jones & Associates presented a seminar on personality type at the Council For Exceptional Children 2003 Conference. Many of the attendees were teachers of special needs students. They were somewhat surprised that they recognized the four different temperaments amongst their students, once we described them. They not only requested future in-depth workshops but also indicated that parents with special needs children would definitely benefit from learning about these natural personality tendencies too.

In subsequent conversations with Miss Lychy, teacher of students with Developmental Disabilities at a large senior public school in Mississauga, we discovered that all four temperaments are represented in her small special needs classroom. Here is a brief introduction of each temperament as observed in four unique students.

Renée Ellis is a people pleaser, sometimes to a fault, says her mom. This 12-year old is very adaptable to most situations. She is a sociable girl whose various caretakers love working with her. Renée will often reach out

to hug people for no real reason. Although she suffers a little from separation anxiety, Renée has helped resolve this by carrying a picture of her mom in her backpack. She loves music and books. This “very good girl” suffers from a rare disorder, 3Q MINUS.

Zachary Parris has an open, gregarious personality. He communicates his feelings very well. In fact, his dad refers to him as “the boy with the cocktail party personality.” He likes interacting with everyone. Zachary enjoys being the centre of attention, and indeed, will act out the fairy tale unit for anyone who will take a moment to watch him. This happy, friendly person has Williams syndrome.

Matthew Bodach has perfectionist tendencies, that is, he wants things done correctly. When he is working on a task at home his mom tells us they need to give him signals that time will be up to prepare him to stop working. However, if he is not good at something, such as spelling, he doesn’t want to do it all and expresses his frustration with the lack of competence. He enjoys puzzles and will pull things apart to figure out how they work. His teacher attributes this curious nature to the reason he constantly asks “why?” Like Frasier on the popular hit television show, Matthew can be very opinionated. By the way, he usually “gets” the jokes on Frasier before the rest of his family! Matthew has been diagnosed with Global Developmental Delay.

The fourth child we’ll name Jane. She is the type who likes to make sure that routines are maintained in the classroom. She will remind the teacher on Monday morning, for example, that it is time to look at the agendas for the week. Jane looks forward to doing the spelling exercises routinely each morning. For her, there is a time and place for everything, and she wants to be sure that the classroom routines are planned and carried out in a dependable, clockwork manner. Jane is diagnosed under the Autism Spectrum Disorder group.—

For more information about workshops in these four temperaments, please call Kate Jones & Associates, 905-825-1456 or email kjassociates@cogeco.ca