

Parenting by Temperament

Nancy Harkey and Teri Jourgensen

BookSurge

Unknown (pp)

978-1-4392-2977-4

“Conflict is not necessarily a sign that you are doing the wrong thing,” the authors write. As *Parenting by Temperament* points out, all parents and children are different. This book, by mother and daughter team Nancy Harkey and Teri Jourgensen, is designed to help parents develop an understanding of why their children behave the way they do.

Parenting by Temperament not only offers parents advice and strategies for discipline and behavioral issues, it also helps them recognize how personality types can impact these issues. While no one personality type is necessarily better than another, knowing how to respond to certain types in different situations can diffuse many problems before they erupt. Jourgensen is certified as a Myers-Briggs Type Indicator trainer and holds a master’s degree in public administration. Harkey has a doctorate in psychology and taught psychology courses at California State Polytechnic University in Pomona.

Understanding how children think can provide a new perspective on their behaviors. The authors include an example of a child who has been told not to touch a fragile vase. They explain that the child may think, “I want you to love me totally, completely, all the time, no matter what I do—and let me get my hands on that vase when I want to.” Though the child is defying the rule, she is doing so because she doesn’t yet have the capacity to regulate her actions, not because she doesn’t want to obey. “She simply believes that there is no reason why she can’t have it all,” Harkey and Jourgensen write.

Though no one can change their underlying temperament, the authors give a great example of how behavior can be “stretched” to suit one’s parenting needs. They explain that while writing with your non-preferred hand is difficult, if you practiced, it would eventually become easier and more legible. Altering one’s temperament is the same way. It will take practice, but even parents who are very passive and like to avoid conflict can make rules for their kids and enforce them strictly.

Parenting by Temperament teaches readers that stretching their temperamental boundary’s comfort zone can help them understand and resolve conflicts, whether or not they are doing the wrong thing. Some passages of the book are quite academic, so it isn’t a light read. The charts, questionnaires, and tables are overwhelming at times and may be difficult for some parents to truly utilize. But persistent parents, grandparents, day care providers, psychology enthusiasts, and teachers may gain important insight into different temperaments and child care strategies.

LAURA MUNION (July 1, 2010)

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