

A child’s temperament has a powerful influence on his or her readiness for school. Temperament is inborn. It cannot be changed. It is a big part of what makes a persons who he or she is. It is important to recognize their children’s temperaments and respect their individuality. There are no “good” or “bad” temperaments— just different ones. Every temperament has its own strengths. We *can* identify each child’s strengths and build on them. We can also identify each child’s unique challenges and create supportive environments that allow each child to thrive.

Parent-child relationships are strongly affected by *the match* between the child’s temperament and the parent’s temperament. It’s very important for parents to think about their own temperaments and consider how well they match their children’s. For example what might happen if a parent who enjoys hours of quiet has a child with a high activity level? What will happen if this child is kept indoors and expected to engage in quiet activities?

Beginning school marks a major turning point in the life of the child when his/her world changes. They must quickly learn to manage on their own, get along with new children, meet expectations of new adults, and follow new schedules and routines. Temperament greatly affects how children respond to starting school and early experiences will affect learning throughout the coming years.

Develop a picture of your child’s temperament using the Dimensions of Temperaments below.

- 1. Activity level:** Some children are highly active, while others prefer quiet activities, such as looking at books or doing puzzles.
- 2. Rhythms:** Some children have predictable rhythms, getting hungry, sleeping, waking, using the bathroom at regular intervals, while others have changing, uneven rhythms.
- 3. Adaptability:** Some children gladly approach new situations while others are hesitant. Some children adjust quickly to new things while others adjust slowly and need more support in transitions.
- 5. Distractibility:** Some children are easily distracted moving from one thing to the next, taking a long time to finish tasks because their attention is drawn in different directions. They also readily shift their attention to something that can change their mood. Other children are not easily distracted. They can focus for long periods. It’s not easy to shift their attention from particular emotions or concerns.
- 6. Persistence:** Some children stick with a challenging task until it is done. It’s not easy to convince these children to stop doing what they are doing. Other children will lose interest if they don’t succeed quickly. These children are easier to move away from an activity you don’t what them engaged in.
- 7. Intensity:** Some children have very intense responses to events and situations and show strong emotions. Others have subdued reactions, making it difficult to know how they are feeling.

Identify what strengths are in your child’s temperament profile.

Identify what challenges you child’s temperament profile may present.

According to the American Association of Pediatricians, potty training is the time in a child's life when they are most vulnerable to abuse. Adults have spent years using the toilet, so we forget how difficult a task it is to learn. For a toddler who has been in diapers, noticing the urge to eliminate takes great attention and hard work. Consistently controlling that urge is a major achievement. As with all learning, a child needs to be ready to learn to use the toilet and allowed to proceed at his or her own pace. Parents' job is to provide encouragement and conditions for success. Punishment actually makes it more difficult for a child to control accidents. The parent gets more frustrated and the punishment escalates. The situation can spiral out of control. Punishment increases the fear and makes it more difficult for children to control their bodies because fear shuts down the learning centers of the brain. Further, punishment erodes the parent-child relationship, humiliates the child, and interferes with the child's motivation to keep at it. The process ceases to be a chance to master a new skill and instead becomes a source of stress.

Fortunately, moving from diapers to the toilet is a fairly natural process that humans have been succeeding at for centuries. We don't need to "toilet train" but rather set up conditions so children can learn in a process that unfolds over time, as with all other new skills. Consider the following tips:

1. Don't be in a hurry to start. Your child is ready to learn to use the toilet when he or she:
 - Stays dry for at least 2 hours at a time, or after naps.
 - Recognizes that s/he is urinating or having a bowel movement.
 - Has the physical skills—walking, pulling pants up and down, and to getting o/off the potty.
 - Copies a parent's toileting behavior or communicates wanting to be changed.
 - Can follow simple instructions.

Don't do potty learning when you are going through a significant change (a move, new child-care arrangements, switching from crib to bed, a new baby or family crisis.

2. Begin by reading books about toileting with your child such as *Toilet Learning* by Alison Mack. Potty learning dolls can also be very helpful.
3. Encourage your child to sit fully clothed on the potty to develop comfort and build muscle memory for getting on and off.
4. Keep a potty in each bathroom so children can practice sitting whenever they want.
5. Casually ask if the child wants to sit on the potty without the diaper. Read potty books or other books to while the child sits. Toddlers are busy so the potty needs to be a place they enjoy being.
6. Begin dumping diaper contents into the potty so the child comes to understand that's where it belongs. Explain that soon he or she will begin going right into the potty.
7. When the child does use the potty offer praise, but don't make such a big a deal that the child feels excessive pressure about something he or she isn't yet confident of his or her ability to do consistently.
8. Pay attention to signs the child needs to go: becoming quiet, going off by him or herself, squatting. Ask "Are you ready to poop? Do you want to do it in the bathroom?"
9. Don't make the move into underwear until your child is interested and ready.
10. Many toddlers prefer a seat that allows them to assume a squatting position rather than a big toilet. If you use a sit that goes on the toilet, provide a stool because dangling legs tighten rectal muscles.
11. Institute regular times to use the potty.
12. Expect accidents as a step in the right direction. Don't scold or the stakes will become too high. Offer encouragement, "*Oh well, accidents are how we learn. Soon you'll get it in the potty every time.*"

Thoughts and feeling about God or other spiritual themes appear to be a natural part of human development. Research indicates that children form mental representations of God by the age of six whether or not they are raised in religious households. In general, images of God change from a physical, anthropomorphic one to a semi-physical one to a non-physical one as we move from childhood to early adulthood. There are numerous understandings of stages of faith develop. This simple outline of faith development can be useful to parents and church leaders.

- **Early childhood:** Before the age of seven when children lack an abstract thought, they appreciate religious symbols and rituals, but don't connect them to an "invisible" God.
- **Later childhood:** Between the ages of 7 to 12 children are still grounded in the concrete. They are beginning to develop a sense of spiritual identity based on personal experience and religious practice. Rituals are effective in helping them understand religious themes.
- **Early adolescence:** From ages 13 to 16, a feeling of personal closeness to God often emerges with God becoming a confidante and guide.

Keep in Mind

- Young children are literal thinkers. If a four-year-old child is told "Grandma is up in heaven now with God," he or she is likely to look up in the sky expecting to find Grandma.
- While God is an abstract concept, children learn about faith through concrete experiences and watching—experiencing kindness, seeing people pray, or sensing parents' confidence and hope in life's goodness even during hard times.
- Treat thoughts or questions with the utmost respect with comments like "What you just said about God is really interesting to me. Tell me more," rather than "We don't believe that." Never be judgmental about them. Model God's acceptance of us just as we are.
- Practice child-friendly religious rituals in the home. Research shows that home-based practices (prayers at bedtime, lighting candles, setting up a creche) have a greater impact on a child's faith development than does attending church.

Development of Conscience

(Adapted from *The Nonviolent Christian Parent: Raising Children with Love, Limits and Wisdom*)

Understanding the stages children go through in forming conscience will help adults avoid placing unreasonable demands on them.

- **1 to 2 years:** They can't yet imagine consequences or others' feelings—"I want it, I take it."
- **2 to 3 years:** They see parents as big people who supply good things in life, so they don't want to upset them—"I would take it, but the big people might not like it."
- **3 to 5 years:** They begin to think things through and weigh risks—"I would take it, but my parents will find out."
- **6 to 7 years:** Wanting to please, they are learning some internal control, are more connected to others, and are beginning to notice/care about how others feel;—"I would take it, but my parent(s) (or God) would disapprove." **Caution:** *Rather than emphasizing how pleased they are, parents need to reflect how children feel, (proud and happy about their choice) to help them move toward internalizing values.*
- **8 to 11 years:** They have begun to develop internal control and are developing values based on healthy attachment to parents and thinking of the interests of others as well as their own.

RESOURCES

“Acquired Spontaneity: Punishment and Reward” By Miki Kashtan Ph.D. (*Psychology Today*, Oct. 2012)

“12 Biblical Reasons To Reconsider Spanking Your Kids” by Shannon Wasie (Love is Not Reward, October 2014; loveisnotareward.com/)

The Child Theology Movement website (www.childtheology.org)

“Dangers of Crying It Out” by Denene Millner, Ph.D (*Psychology Today*, December 22, 2011; www.psychologytoday.com/blog/moral-landscapes/201112/dangers-crying-it-out)

The First Years Last Forever video (www.youtube.com/watch?v=TI-BXTHvRfs)

“Adverse Childhood Experiences Study” (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Kaiser Permanente, <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/about.html>)

Letting Go of Anger: The Eleven Most Common Anger Styles and What to Do About Them by Ronald Potter-Efron and Patricia Potter-Efron (New Harbinger Publications, 2006) (See also the interview with the authors at parentingbeyondpunishment.com/what-is-your-anger-style/)

Christians for Nonviolent Parenting website (<http://nospank.net/cnpindex.htm>); Download *The Nonviolent Christian Parent: Raising Children with Love, Limits, and Wisdom/Padres Christianos Y nonviolentos: Decisiones Acerca de la Crianza Cristiana* by Teresa Whitehurst, PhD, Debbie Haskins, and Al Crowel, MFT at this site.

“Reasons Punishment Doesn't Work” by Mac Bledsoe ([parenting with dignity.com](http://parentingwithdignity.com))

“Roman vs. Christian Treatment of Children” (ntbc.wordpress.com/roman-vs-christian-treatment-of-children/)

“The Shepherd Breaking His Sheep’s Legs—Myths That’ll Preach” by Dustin Germainach (pulpitandpen.org/2014/06/27/)

Shaming Children Is Emotionally Abusive Children by Karyl McBride Ph.D. (*Psychology Today*, 9/10/2012 (<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-legacy-distorted-love/201209/shaming-children-is-emotionally-abusive>))

Sparing the Rod: A Torah Perspective on Reward and Punishment in Education, Meir Munk; (Mishor Publishing, 1989)

“*Spare the Child: The Religious Roots of Punishment and the Psychological Impact of Physical Abuse.*” Philip Greven, Ph.D. (Vintage, 1992)

“10 Parenting Strategies for Raising Nonviolent Children” by Benjamin L. Corey. *Christian Week*, December 10, 2015 (www.christianweek.org/10-parenting-strategies-raising-nonviolent-children)

Thy Rod and Thy Staff, They Comfort Me: Christians and the Spanking Controversy, Download the book for free at <http://whynottrainachild.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Thy-Rod-And-Thy-Staff-They-Comfort-Me-Mar-2013.pdf>.

“Three-Part Program for Serious Breakdowns” by Judy Arnall (<http://actionteamtoendhitting.org/parenting-help/time-outs-what-is-for-parents-and-what-for-children>)