

Your Child's Outer Life: Judging or Perceiving?

Which better describes your child?

- ▶ Likes to have everything in its place or has things everywhere and all over the place?
- ▶ Enjoys the unexpected or wants to know what is going to happen ahead of time?
- ▶ With other children, tends to take charge or goes with the flow?
- ▶ Delays getting to the chore or when given a chore to do, prefers to complete the chore right away?

Your answers to these questions begin to reveal a preference your child may have for *Judging* or *Perceiving*. According to the Myers-Briggs Type Personality Indicator, (MBTI), a personality profile indicator, *Judging* and *Perceiving* refers to the ways people prefer to run their outer lives. These attitudes affect living together. Judging and perceiving differences can bring about conflict. Differences can be evident even in young children and can strain the tolerance of everyone involved. Strategies to better understand and cope with differences between judging and perceiving children can help promote healthier adult-child relationships.

If a parent has difficulty understanding a child's preference, it is likely that the parent and child have different preferences. When a parent is concerned about a child's habits, it is usually because the parent is afraid the habits are harmful, rude, or ineffective.

There are many good, observable behaviors that give clues to differences. Listed here are clues to deciding if your child has a preference to Judging or Perceiving. Go through the list and check items from each list that you think fit your child. (You will probably check items from each list, but you will likely find that your child has more characteristics from one list than the other.)

Knowing your child's preference can help you in your interactions with your child. Young children have little or no control over their preferences. When a situation requires them to behave counter to their natural way, they may become stressed and frustrated.

Children Who Prefer Judging

- G Like to make decisions; decide quickly
- G Offer opinions
- G Want to do things the "right" way and try to make things happen the way they are "supposed to"
- G Prefer completing one task before beginning another and can become stressed by too many unfinished projects
- G Do not like to mix work and play; would rather work first and play later
- G Must finish their work before they can rest
- G Like to know what is going to happen ahead of time
- G Place more value on the finished product than the process of doing something
- G Need predictability and can find frequent changes upsetting

Children Who Prefer Perceiving

- G May procrastinate; put off decisions
- G Offer information
- G Find rules and structure confining and limiting
- G May start too many projects at once and have difficulty completing them
- G Work and play simultaneously and try to make work fun
- G Rest first and then work at the last minute
- G Enjoy the unplanned and unexpected
- G Place more value on the process of doing something than the finished product
- G Adapt well to change

Orderliness and Type

Children with a judging preference seem to have “external order” and children with a perceiving preference seem to have “internal order.” Children with a judging preference usually have their possessions arranged in an orderly manner.

Children with a perceiving preference are sometimes said to have internal order. The space they have may look chaotic, but they can usually locate things upon request. Finding things amid chaos is a skill that develops with the perceiving child, so it is not uncommon for younger perceiving children to be less adept at locating missing items.

Work and Play

Judging children prefer to work first, then play. For example, a parent might ask a child with a judging preference to do a chore--help wash the dishes, weed a row in the garden, sort socks in the laundry. The child is likely to complete the task as quickly as possible so that there will be plenty of time for fun activities. Children with this preference like to bring closure to tasks quickly. Parents with the same preference value this efficiency.

Perceiving children prefer to play while they work. A perceiving child is more likely to prolong the task of doing the chore by playing around. The sink might become a basketball hoop for the dishcloth, the insects in the garden more interesting than the weeding, and hiding under the laundry basket more fun. Parents with a judging preference may find this kind of behavior annoying. They cannot understand why the child doesn't complete the task and be done with it. Parents may respond by lecturing about the child's laziness, irresponsibility, or the child's incompetent way of performing a task. A child with a perceiving preference must, however, have fun while they work.

Deadlines

Children with a judging preference value time to prepare. They take pride in work completed. They appreciate clear guidelines and expectations from adults. Working against a deadline can be stressful to a judging child.

Children with a perceiving preference like to keep choices open and may delay making decisions. Deadlines provide the stimulus for action. When the available time has elapsed, the child with the perceiving preference gears into action. Perceiving children become stressed when tasks are completely defined that gives them little or no options.

Rules and Type

Sometimes young children are accused of being “tattletales.” But there is another possible explanation. Children with a judging preference must know what the rules are so they can be “good” and follow them. When another child breaks the rules, the judging child will often tell. For the judging child, the real question is--Does the rule still stand? In other words, punishment for the child who broke the rule confirms for judging child that the rule still stands.

Perceiving children seem to have more difficulty remembering rules. They may violate rules because they live so spontaneously that they act before they have time to think about the rules. They are also indifferent to rules. Rules exist for other children and if they can be ignored, they will be. Perceiving children will also test rules to be sure they will be enforced. If you enforce a rule one day and not the next, perceiving children will think the rule can be broken. Many perceiving children see rules as barriers, rather than guidelines. When dealing with a perceiving child, a good guideline is to have as few rules as possible.

Adjusting Parenting to Type Difference

A father who had a judging preference had a difficult time getting his daughter, who had a perceiving preference, to prepare for bedtime. He was a single parent and needed her cooperation. Bedtime rituals began early but lasted for several hours while the child played in the tub, played as she was dressed in her bedtime clothes, and played with whatever toys or things came within her view. The father nagged and using frequent prompts, such as “Hurry up” and “Finish what you're doing” but none were successful. The father finally used type awareness to help remedy the situation and set a bedtime deadline.

The girl loved to have her father read her a story before she went to bed. The father set a rule that story time began at 8 p.m. sharp. He began reading the bedtime story whether or not his daughter was in her bed at that time. At first, only a few stuffed animals heard the tales, but it didn't take long before the child began to pace her play, bath time, and related bedtime activities so that she could be in bed when her father started to read the evening's story. There was no need for the father to nag and remind his daughter about her bedtime, since the deadline took their place. Both father and daughter were better able to enjoy each other.

Sources:

Elizabeth Murphy. *The Developing Child*. 1992.

Paul D. Tieger and Barbara Barron-Tieger. *The Art of Speed Reading People*. 1998

Author: Joan E. LeFebvre, Professor, Department of Family Development, University of Wisconsin-Extension, a qualified administrator of the Myers Briggs Personality Type Indicator

Reviewer: Dr. Gordon Lawrence, author of *People Types and Tiger Stripes*

Layout: Penny Otte, Program Assistant I, Family Living Area Office, Vilas County

For more information on Parenting the Child Development, contact: Joan E. LeFebvre, Area Family Living Agent, University of Wisconsin-Extension, 330 Court Street, Courthouse, Eagle River WI 54521-8362, 715-479-3653, FAX 715-479-3605, E-Mail joan.lefebvre@ces.uwex.edu March, 1999