

Supporting Children with a Feeling Preference

Does your child?

- Show skill at understanding people?
- React sensitively to the feelings of others, being careful not to hurt others?
- Want to be praised for their personal contributions and cooperative spirit?
- Seek to maintain harmony with others?

Thinking and Feeling are two fundamentally different ways to make decisions. This preference guides how choices are made. Feelers make decisions in a personal way, taking into account how their decision will affect others and themselves. It's difficult for a Feeling child to make a choice that will result in someone else's unhappiness, especially someone close to them. They need others to like them and work to maintain harmony in their relationships.

Parenting a Child Who Prefers Feeling

Feeling Children Connect with Others

Children with a Feeling preference want and need to be liked. They are eager to make connections with others. Jodi, mother of a three-year-old Tyson, said she is sure her son has a Feeling preference. When she walks down the road with him in the stroller, he expects everyone to wave. When they don't, he turns to her and says, "Mama, they no wave." When Tyson expects to see Noah, his best friend who is also three years old, he said, "When I see Noah, I hug him. I tell him I love him."



Harmony Is Important to Feeling Children

Feeling children go to great lengths to maintain harmony in their relationships. Lori describes her Feeling preference son as the "glue that holds our family together." He will ride for hours on a tractor just to spend time with his dad.

As Feeling children get older, they often work to please others and maintain harmony. However, at the preschool age, says Elizabeth Murphy, the child is still very egocentric so rather than looking at the needs of others the Feeling child is more likely to interpret every perceived negative action to them as personal and tainted with a tone of rejection. They are sensitive to the needs of others but their needs always take precedence. When all is well with them then they can attend to others. When they are upset or want a turn or feel needy then they only see those needs.

Feeling Preference Children Deliver Criticism Softly

Always concerned about preserving harmony in the relationship, a Feeling preference child will deliver messages in a "soft" manner. Mother Janet had spent considerable time fixing her hair into a new "do." Coming out of the bathroom, she asks, "How do you like it?" Her Thinking preference daughter comments, "Huhhhh! It looks messy." Her Feeling preference daughter said, "Mom, it's OK but maybe you want to start over." Sometimes, you have to listen very carefully to actually hear the message that your Feeling child is giving.

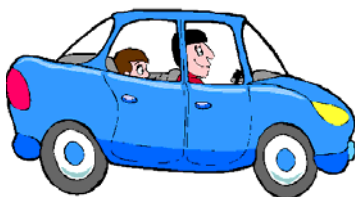
Feeling Preference Children Seek Approval

As Leah dressed in the morning for preschool, she would ask her mother what to wear. Mom told her anything she picked out would be just fine. After getting dressed, Leah would come to show her mother, seeking confirmation that what she selected was all right. Leah wanted to please her mother while her mother was taking steps to help Leah learn how to please herself. Feeling preference children often want to know what everyone else thinks before declaring a position. They depend on the opinion of others. Feeling children sometimes need encouragement to follow their own ideas. Insecure Feeling preference children may be vulnerable to doing what others want them to do for acceptance and friendship. Parents and caregivers can give Feeling preference children practice making choices and learning to trust their own judgment.

Kim reports that her Feeling preference daughter often wants to come to sleep in their bedroom. When Kim needs a good night's sleep and doesn't want her daughter in bed, she has found that it is more effective to tell her daughter, "I am getting upset with you here tonight," rather than using a punishment. Kim says her Feeling preference daughter responds to the appeal for maintaining a positive relationship and having her approval.

Understanding Others Affects Feeling Children's Decisions

Feeling preference children weigh the pros and cons of their decisions with people in mind. Lianne indicates that both her sons have a preference for Feeling. After hockey practice, the boys ride home with either Mom or Dad. Sometimes, as they are planning who to go home with, they discover they are both to ride with Dad. Then, they confer, because they don't want to have Mom riding home by herself. They don't want her to feel left out.



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Emotions Impact Feeling Children

When conflict is present, a Feeling child may be unable to move forward. Until the conflict is resolved and harmony restored, the child may not be able to focus on tasks at hand. Feeling preference children benefit from parents and caregivers who help them sort through their emotions and help re-establish harmony.

A Thinking Parent and a Feeling Child

Thinking parents tend to encourage a child's development of independence, problem solving, and curiosity for learning. If a child is clingy, Penley and Stephens (1998) indicate that a Thinking parent may worry that the child will never be independent. They suggest relaxing and enjoying your child, realizing that building attachment and offering security is a way to truly help children become independent.

Another suggestion Penley and Stephens (1998) make is to tune into and be patient with feelings. When problem solving, remember that feelings are as important as facts.

When giving feedback to your Feeling preference child, balance criticism and suggestions with appreciation and praise. Feeling preference children are sponges for appreciation and praise. You can't tell them often enough that you love them and appreciate them.

Sources:

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