

It Starts with the Child



*Understanding Your Child's
Unique Personality*

Personality Insights for Motivating Reluctant Learners

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Life as a homeschool parent:

“My child refuses to do their school work!”

“Which curriculum should I use?”

“I feel so defeated!”

Thousands of homeschool families struggle every day. Millions more parents have unexpectedly been thrust into the realm of home educating their child. Stress and frustration is the new normal.

Often we are trying to recreate public school in our homes. It’s like trying to keep up your lawn using the same methods and tools used at Yankee stadium to maintain their gargantuan baseball field.

In the same way, public schools have one massive tool (the curriculum) applied using the same methods to the whole field of children, in a specific, highly controlled environment. It’s a system that does not work at home.

You already know things aren’t working, that’s why you are here. The solution doesn’t start with finding The Perfect Curriculum, The Perfect Schedule, The Perfect Teacher or The Perfect Method (none of which exist, by the way.)

It starts with the child.

Knowing your child’s personality with its strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities will help you create a home education environment to:

- Give them greater confidence and motivation
- Restore their love of learning
- Encourage them to develop their unique potential
- Master the basics
- Lay a foundation which equips them to learn whatever they need, whenever they need it



Let's take a brief look at each personality type with some quick insights into how they are wired. If you want to skip right to the details of each personality with specific teaching tips to help motivate each type, jump to page 14.

Personality, Passions, and Potential

Knowing our child's personality can unlock the door to joyful learning

Four Different Types

The Greek physician Hippocrates was the first to identify four basic personality types. He labeled them Sanguine, Choleric, Melancholy and Phlegmatic. Those names are hard to remember and have very little relevance to us so I've paired each one with an easily recognizable character from Winnie the Pooh books to make it memorable:

Sanguine - Tigger

Average to high energy output and average to extremely high people-persons. They are friendly to everyone, love large gatherings, would rather move than sit, and if life isn't exciting enough, they will create some excitement. The term drama queen fits them perfectly!

Motivating Tigger - Sanguine Tigger kids are motivated by being popular, part of the crowd, having fun and being active. They see the world as being all about enjoyment, getting the most out of life, getting people moving, laughing, finding joy in every moment. Anything that requires boring tasks or putting work above being with people feels constraining.

Choleric - Rabbit

They share the high energy level with Sanguine Tigger but focus their efforts on achieving goals. Choleric Rabbit knows what everyone else should be doing and doesn't hesitate to tell them. They can be bossy, strong willed and independent. They deeply dislike being outsmarted or taken advantage of.



Motivating Rabbit – Choleric Rabbits are all about accomplishment. They want to get stuff done and they see achievements as the ultimate goal of life. New challenges to a Rabbit are like catnip to a cat. They can't resist showing the rest of us what they can do. They have very little patience for "twaddle" or for dealing with emotions. Busy work, or anything that doesn't have a specific purpose will make them impatient.

Melancholy - Eeyore

Slow movers and slower to express themselves, but make no mistake, they are extremely intelligent, deep thinkers. They notice everything and ponder it. Prone to perfectionism and hard on themselves for mistakes, they get frustrated at anything that does not come easily for them.

Motivating Eeyore – Melancholy Eeyore's want to bring order to life. It is where they find control and stability in a world they see as too unpredictable. They crave perfection, stability, routine, and order. Eeyore is not going to function well in noise, crowds or chaos like Tigger will. Motivate Eeyore by giving them a checklist to complete or a problem to research and solve.

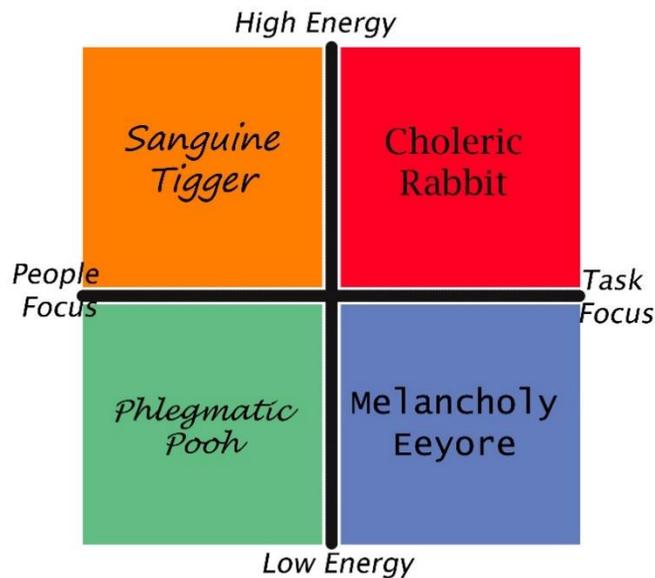
Phlegmatic - Pooh

Sharing Eeyore's tendency for quiet, slow introspection Phlegmatic Pooh Bears seem to take forever to do anything, especially if faced with a high energy impatient parent. They can be as stubborn as Rabbit, but unlike Rabbit they are quiet about it. They will rarely start an argument and are the first to mediate other's conflicts. They are calm, easy going, and compliant.

Motivating Pooh – Pooh's main driving force is the need for harmony. They love to be around people like Tigger, but they prefer quiet like Eeyore. They enjoy helping others as a way to smooth frustrations and ward off chaos around them. Phlegmatic Pooh will light up when given a chance to serve the needs of someone else.



If we laid them all out on a grid, it would look like this:



The vertical axis is our basic energy level, or "pace" as Charles Boyd calls it in his book *Different Children Different Needs*. At the bottom are the laid back, slower paced people. At the top are folks who are driven to move all the time. The horizontal axis represents a continuum of people-focused on the left to task focused on the right.

Mentally put a point where your child might fall on both of those lines on an average day. Then imagine a straight line radiating out from each point. Your lines will intersect in the quadrant that is most like your child.

A couple of things to keep in mind:

- Most of us are a blend of at least two types with influences from a third so it can be hard to pin your child neatly into just one quadrant. Many times the easiest way to find a child's personality type is to figure out which one is the least like them. Whatever type is in the opposite corner is their dominant personality.

- Children under 3 years old are harder to identify. While they will have some obvious traits, as they grow and develop some traits will fade and others will become more prominent.
- The Winnie the Pooh characters fall on the far outer edges of their quadrant. They are fairly clear cut examples of each type. Most of us tend to fall toward the middle of each continuum and will often reflect traits of both our dominate type and one of the adjoining types.

[Click here for a simple personality test](#) with links to more details for each type or keep reading for a one page overview of each type complete with teaching tips.

Now that we have a basic understanding of the personality types, we want to motivate each one to reach their highest potential. Before we get to that, I should point out there are actually two potential obstacles to overcome. One (or both!) applies to most people:

1- Public school mindset

2 – Mom’s expectations of what school should look like based on her personality, not on the child’s



Public School Doesn't Work at Home

“But wait! My child will be going back to public school next year. I need to keep them on track with their class.”

Do you, really? Can we question that thinking for a moment?

Have you seen what the rest of the class is accomplishing? Think about it. Current reports estimate that as many as 50% of students are doing little to no class work while at home due to Covid 19. Kids who are doing their lessons are struggling to grasp the material. Teachers are overloaded, stressed and many are dealing with constantly changing guidelines. When and if the schools do fully re-open there are going to be months, if not years of catch up work to be done. ANY learning your child does is enough to keep them on track!

That's a pretty low standard obviously and certainly not enough to provide a quality education. You can do better without trying to copy public school at home.

The basis of an exceptional education is not stuffing a child's head full of facts so they can regurgitate them back out onto a test.

A well-educated child is one who enjoys learning, is confident in their ability to learn, and has mastered the basics so they know how to learn whatever they need, whenever they need it.

Stop and think about how that definition changes the way we approach education.

Personality based teaching will produce well educated children who excel in school no matter what subject material they need to catch up on.

The reality is, trying to follow the public school methods and routines at home makes home education much harder than it needs to be.



Mom's Personality Determines Her Expectations

A very powerful tool for combating homeschooling stress (or any stress for that matter,) is to question our assumptions and expectations. Our assumptions about how things should be come from the biases found in our own personality not from what is unequivocally true. Questioning those expectations and getting our beliefs into alignment with reality reduces that stress.

Personality and Parenting

The Sanguine Tigger parent believes all kids should get involved in activities with other children because *the parent* is motivated by being popular, having fun, and being with people. This approach will work with a Sanguine Tigger or Phlegmatic Pooh child. Pushing an introverted Melancholy Eeyore to be more social and outgoing will leave the child feeling like there is something wrong with them. This leads to conflicts and rebellion.

You might be thinking "of course kids need to socialize! It's how they learn to live in a society that includes other people" If that's your reaction, you are proving my point! Right now, Melancholy Eeyore moms are thinking "It's perfectly okay to spend time alone." The standards and expectations you set for your child tend to be rooted in the needs of your personality, not in what is ideal for their personality.

A Choleric Rabbit needs power, control and accomplishment. To a Rabbit parent, kids should naturally want to set goals and then do their very best to excel. With a Phlegmatic Pooh child who is motivated by helping people, not by accomplishing goals, the demands of Choleric Rabbit parent will overwhelm them. Poohs respond by retreating into their bear den.



Melancholy Eeyore mom wants everything done precisely according to schedule. She feels like she is doing a good job only when all the boxes on her to-do list are checked off, the house is perfectly clean, and the kids are making straight A's. Give her a Tigger child and they will both be constantly frustrated if mom tries make Tigger live up to her level of order and calm.

Phlegmatic Pooh needs peace and harmony. She is going to be the most likely to accommodate her child's differences, usually to avoid confrontations. Because she is so accommodating, her expectations for her children may be lower than the child's real capabilities, especially if that child has exceptional leadership or academic abilities. She may end up neglecting to give her kids the push they need to reach their fullest potential.

Keeping Pace with Personalities

Each personality type has their own pace as well. Phlegmatic Pooh and Melancholy Eeyore are slower to move, more thoughtful and careful in their thinking, less apt to start new activities without checking things out a bit. A Melancholy Eeyore mom will carefully consider every curriculum option to the point of never making a choice because she doesn't want to make a mistake. Meanwhile her Sanguine Tigger child is climbing the walls because they need to get moving and just do *something*.

Choleric Rabbit and Sanguine Tigger moms are jumping into new activities, trying new curriculums and changing up the schedule every other week. It can make their slower paced children anxious because they aren't getting the structure and consistency they need.

I am a pretty even mix of Choleric Rabbit and Melancholy Eeyore. Naturally my first born is the complete opposite. When we first started homeschooling I assumed she would be thrilled to fill out workbooks, work toward straight A's and enjoy



researching arcane topics like the complex factors which contributed to the Civil War.

What? Don't roll your eyes! I like that sort of stuff.



My poor phlegmatic Pooh daughter simply wanted to quietly enjoy her favorite pursuits, which happened to be caring for horses, riding, and teaching others to ride. It didn't take too many battles and meltdowns for me to figure out I needed a new approach to homeschooling!

Understanding personality types opened my mind to the reality that not only do different people see the world in different ways, it's perfectly valid to have more than one way to look at things. Realizing my way of learning is not the only "right" way to learn was a major step toward embracing my child's uniqueness and deciding to structure her education in a way that nurtured her gifts instead of insisting she be like me.

Identifying where the expectations inherent in your personality don't line up with the reality of what works best for your child means the start of a seismic shift in your approach to education AND your child's level of motivation.

Changing our expectations to line up with reality will magically banish stress!

What is the reality?

- Tigger kids are not organized, punctual, or particularly detail orientated.
- Rabbit is not going to sit quietly and accept day after day of 30 math problems covering the same thing they did a week ago.
- Eeyore will never be gregarious or smile easily.
- Pooh bear kids are not go-getters, they are not driven to achieve, and they were not created to be high energy, always active, doers.



Bill's rules

The hardest part of homeschooling is to accept the reality that our way of doing things is not the only right way. We have to let go of our rules about how our kids should do their work, what school work they must do, the grades they ought to get and even the topics they have to master. What works for our personality may not be the best way to nurture our child's unique personality.

Ask yourself where those rules came from. Why do we insist on them? The first step to getting better results in any area of life is to change how we respond to those areas; examine our rules about how we think things should be, then see if those rules line up the reality of what we are experiencing.

Bill was one of our homeschool group's dads. Bill is more Eeyore than Eeyore himself. Bill is a perfectionist to the extreme and has rules for how everything must be done. He "knew" the one and only right way to schedule lessons and if his wife, Tina didn't do it his way, he made her re-do it.

His kids Jacob and Zoe are more like Tigger and Pooh. When they came to co-op events, they anticipated the chance to hang out with friends. Instead they had to do all of their work PERFECTLY with no talking or interaction with other kids. If something wasn't done exactly perfectly, dad let them know in no uncertain terms they failed and needed to do it over again. In his mind, it was for their own good, so they could be top students like he was. Bill and Tina are divorced today. Jacob is 23 and lives in mom's basement playing video games because he is convinced can't do anything right, so why try? Zoe moved away as soon as she hit 18 and has no contact with her father. (*Sadly this is a true story!*)

Bill is an extreme example but most of us do similar things to a lesser degree. We put expectations on other people to be more like us. When they don't act like we think they should, our emotional response may be anger, frustration, demands and disappointment.

Knowing personality types equips us to build better relationships by understanding the perspective of other people. It's only half the picture though. The next step is to discover how our personality determines our expectations and how those expectations drive our emotional responses to life.



To combat stress in any area of life by changing our emotional response to life's circumstances, click here to access to my free book, [*Emotional Ninja - Mastering Emotions.*](#)

Finally!

How to motivate that reluctant learner

The good news is you do not need a different curriculum to meet the needs of each individual child. The key to motivating a student is simple: You can motivate your child by taking their personality into account and making some basic adjustments to how, when, and where lessons are done. It is possible to spark fresh excitement and enthusiasm in resistant kids.

The next pages give a brief overview of the strengths and weaknesses of each personality type. Below the strengths and weaknesses of each type is a treasure trove of specific ideas you can use to customize your homeschool approach in ways that are easy and free to implement. These simple ideas will motivate your reluctant learner. With that renewed interest, and teaching in ways that work for their unique personality, they will grow in both enthusiasm and confidence.

If you are home educating temporarily or for the long term, taking the time to reignite a love of learning and build their confidence will pay huge dividends in the long run. You can keep following the same curriculum (perhaps at a slower pace, especially if you've got a Phlegmatic Pooh Bear!) and change things up by adding in one or two of these tips every month.

Don't forget! Most people have a dominate personality type with a bit of at least one other thrown in. Use whatever teaching ideas appeal to your kids, regardless of which type they are.



Sanguine Tigger

Strengths

Leadership potential
 Charming
 Energetic
 Gets along with everyone
 Talker
 Life of the party
 Imaginative
 Colorful
 Love to hug
 Dramatic
 Enthusiastic
 Innocent
 Curious
 Creative
 Inspiring

Weaknesses

Inattentive to details
 Irresponsible
 Unreliable
 Thoughtless
 Drama Queen
 Exaggerate
 Shallow friendships
 Hyper
 Guiltable
 Lack follow through
 Don't believe they have faults
 Disorganized
 Forgetful
 Easily hurt
 Dominate conversations

Teaching Tips

Group activities

Use color wherever possible - stickers, paper, crayons and markers instead of pencils etc
 Give short explanations and only one task at a time
 Evaluate learning through putting on plays, telling what they know, creative art projects
 Movies, music and movement instead of silent reading, textbooks, and tests
 Train them to write things down but don't expect them to be organized
 Allow time for them to talk things through
 Follow up and confirm things are done as promised. Hold them accountable
 Age appropriate responsibilities and free choices
 Let them be expressive, energetic and loud on a daily basis
 Hands on projects
 Learn from real life experts
 Biographies and historical novels instead of history text books
 Blow a few things up in science!
 Field trips
 Self directed learning
 Math manipulatives
 Have them record math facts onto audio and play it back or use math songs



Choleric Rabbit

Strengths

Goal setters
 Intelligence
 Action orientated
 Leaders
 Willing to take risks
 Confident
 Independant
 Self motivated
 Optimistic
 Quick moving
 Logical
 Powerful
 Strong willed
 Change makers
 Desire to correct wrongs

Weaknesses

Stubborn
 Insensitive to others feelings
 Bossy
 Work-a-holic
 Controlling
 Intolerant
 Arrogant
 Lack people skills
 Argumentative
 Impatient
 Angers easily
 Manipulative
 Overbearing
 Rebellious
 Dislikes routine

Teaching Tips

Let them choose what, when and how to study within the guidelines you set
 Set goals to reach
 Motivated by challenges
 Give them a cause and a purpose to work toward
 Individual project learning
 Find opportunities to learn leadership under a mature adult
 Avoid boring routine
 Teach logic and critical thinking
 Rigorous academics
 Avoid cute, clever, time wasting worksheets. Stick to the practical
 Need extra help learning to stay focused on mundane but necessary tasks
 When older give them the curriculum and let them be responsible for getting it done
 Enforce consistent discipline and expectations
 Encourage them to higher accomplishments
 Use presentations and teaching others to demonstrate what has been learned
 Ask for and respect their opinions
 Give opportunities to take risks in a safe environment
 Let them associate with successful people in a variety of fields



Melancholy Eeyore

Strengths

Detail orientated
Extremely intelligent
Organized
Systematic
Excellent problem solver
Observant
Persistent
Enjoy learning
Good researchers
Highly focused
Can create unique solutions
Reliable
Wide range of interests
Modest
Responsible

Weaknesses

Easily hurt
Slow to recover from criticism
Perfectionist
Prone to depression
Slow moving
Won't take risks
Always has to be right
Very black and white
Holds a grudge
Can't deal with ambiguity
Apathetic and lazy
Looks for problems
Isolationist
Argumentative

Teaching Tips

Praise them and encourage 10x more than criticize
Don't push them into group activities
Respect need for space and time to be alone
Stick to a consistent schedule they can rely on
Don't ask for quick answers. Give them time to think
Needs to have access to The. Right. Answers.
Give plenty of structure and clear expectations
Allow them to pursue unique interests
Encourage advanced academics
Stimulate intelligence to keep them motivated
Avoid teasing them
They prefer workbooks and text books with clear objectives
Give assignment sheets to check off
Allow them their own special space to work
Watch for perfectionism, it can lead to fear of attempting anything new
Provide lots of books in a wide range of topics
Carefully limit screen time, they are easily addicted
Give them responsibilities that nurture their strengths



Plegmatic Pooh

Strengths

Compassionate
 Love People
 Easy going
 Obedient
 Stable
 Hard working
 Servants
 Mediate conflicts
 Good in a crisis
 Considerate
 All pupose, good at whatever is needed
 Can entertain themselves
 Slow to anger
 Thrives on routine
 Generous

Weaknesses

Indecisive
 Prone to laziness
 Lax about getting things done
 Aimless
 Passive aggressive
 Don't express emotions
 Boring
 Won't share opinions
 Insecure
 Unmotivated
 Resist change
 Lack confidence
 Not good with abstractions
 Selfish

Teaching Tips

Prefer cooperation over competition
 Unit studies and creative projects are ideal
 Avoid high pressure, advanced academics
 Study people, cultures, events instead of dry facts
 Take time to notice their contribution
 they are easily ignored in the company of more demanding personalities
 Shyness is actually quiet observation of new situations. Give them time
 Allow for a slower, gentler pace for school work
 They prefer predictability and routine
 Hands on math manipulatives
 Practical learning that is useful in daily life
 Not interested in hitting goals or lofty achievements
 Motivated by helping others do their own work
 Give responsibilities that will serve others (set the table, volunteer work, etc)
 They enjoy studying animals, especially hands on
 Give one direction, task or assignment at a time
 They typically do not learn well from audio lectures or books



That's it! Thanks for reading "It Starts with the Child." Sharing this information is a joy because I have seen how a deeper understanding of the people in our lives can completely turn around the stress, frustration and difficult relationships we experience on a daily basis.

You have a solid foundation of fresh insights into what makes your child tick and an abundance of ideas to help even the most reluctant student regain an interest in learning. Now you're ready to go deeper. Click [here](#) for a more resources, books, articles, and teaching tips for successful homeschooling.

You need self-care to be your best as well! [Click here](#) to get my free ebook on mastering your emotions for a less stressful, more confident life.

My website www.SusanAScott.com has a wealth of resources for women who want to tame the chaos in any area of life and live with clarity and confidence.



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