

Different Children Different Needs

Adapted from the book by Dr Charles F Boyd and added to from my own experience working with the 'DISC' tool and with parents over the years.

A person's self image is not who or what they are but who/what they think they are.

This self image is an important element of self esteem. Self-esteem is the collection of beliefs or feelings we have about ourselves, our "self-perceptions." It is how we feel about ourselves.

We do not come into the world with this self image so where do we get it from?

- It is something that develops from what is reflected back to us on a day to day basis.
- It is something that is acquired, not inherited.
- We learn it from the reactions of those around us and as parents we have a huge impact during the formative years and beyond.

Children may have a poor self image because they sense their parents want them to act differently. A large number of people don't like themselves because they lack the ability to live up to others expectations of how they should behave.

A positive self-image on the other hand feeds self-confidence and high self-esteem. A positive self-image also aids in the ability to make good decisions and maintain healthy relationships at all stages of life.

As a parent, you are the mirror they look into every day.

What are you reflecting back at them??

There is an ongoing discussion around nature v nurture. What do we come into the world with and what is a result of our conditioning? In very simplistic terms I see it as follows

Nature	Nurture
• Genes (from two parents, 4 grandparents and beyond.....) • Behavioural style or temperament	• Circumstances • Our experiences • Our parent's behavioural style • How our parents respond to our behavioural style • Other influences from our circle of being (*see separate list attached)

So what is temperament? The Oxford Dictionary defines it as follows;

'A person's nature is shown in the way they behave or react to situations or people.'

Our personality and character are formed as we grow and are based on all our circumstances, experiences, interactions and influences. Our temperament is how we express that personality and character. It is our natural way of being in the world.

Stella Chess and Alexander Thomas did a huge amount of work around the whole area of temperament back in the 50's. They said we are

'...shaped by temperament and how our parents responded to that temperament.'

There is also a powerful saying that

*'Secure, mature people know who they are,
They like who they are,
They are who they are,
They are real.'*

The purpose of looking at different styles and temperament is to help us as parents to see that there are different tendencies or styles. Just because they are our children it does not mean they are like us. Anyone who has more than one child will have noticed this already!

The purpose of this piece is to highlight those different styles (of parent and child) and also give some practical tips for dealing with same. They can grow knowing and accepting who they are. Knowing how it will help them in life and where it might be challenging. It means we can help them grow from a place of acceptance of who they are and improving on same rather than thinking there is something wrong and moving away from it.

Background to DISC

Throughout history there have been many systems proposed to explain the differences in people and how we behave.

- Hippocrates, the father of modern medicine, believed that personality was shaped by four different fluids in the body. Red blood, yellow bile, green phlegm and black bile.
- In 1928 Dr William Moulton Marston, in his book 'Emotions of normal people', put forward the theory that people are motivated by four intrinsic drives. These drives, he found, direct behaviour into patterns or personality styles. His model has been refined and updated over the years and is now known as 'DISC' (Dominant, influencing, steady, compliant).

We can possess all four but to varying degrees. What differs from one to another is the extent of each and we usually have a preferred or dominant style.

The DISC (and many of the personality/behavioural models) help to define us but is not meant to confine us. Generally people fall into these categories....but not always.

In a very general sense, there is a divide between peoples pace and priority

Pace

Those who are fast paced; • Outgoing • Takes initiative • Takes risks • Assertive • Can make quick decisions • Broad Focus • Talks or tells	Those who have a slower pace; • Reflective • Responding • Avoids risks • Co-operative • Thinks through decisions • Specific focus • Listens and ask questions
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Priority

Those who are task oriented; • Independent • Guarded in relationships • Cool • Controlling • Calculating • Time conscious • Fact oriented • Impatient	Those who are people oriented; • Relational • Relaxed • Warm • Supporting • Feeling • Flexible re time • Opinion oriented • Easy going
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Characteristic Traits of the Four Styles

DISC

Adapted from the book 'Different Children, different needs' by
Dr Charles F Boyd

THE D STYLE

In the disc model, the D stands for Dominant.

Often described as go-getters, they are outgoing, fast paced, task oriented, competitive and head based.

In the context of families it translates at the *Directive Parent* or the *Determined child*

Characteristics of Directive/Determined Style

High Self Confidence	• Believe in themselves and their abilities • Independent thinkers and doers • Make decisions quickly and easily • Can take care of themselves
Courageous	• Risk takers • Adventurers • Physically often tough • Will stand up to anyone who tries to take advantage of them
Results Oriented	• Goal and results oriented • Often ambitious • Do what is necessary to get the job done • Impatient if goals are blocked or results jeopardized.
Commanding	• I lead you follow • Likes to be in charge or the leader • Enjoy giving orders
Competitive	• Like a challenge and often don't give up/in • Assert themselves physically • Often participate in sports and likes to win • Life is viewed as winning or losing • Don't easily discouraged
Change agent	• They tend to be quick decision makers • Like change and will instigate it
Direct	• They communicate directly and prefer others to do so in a direct manner with them • Get frustrated with long winded or rambling stories/explanations • Prefer the facts of a situation rather than the emotions attaching to it

D as a parent - Directive Parent

- Strong capable role model
- Will give good leadership and direction
- Protective of children and will stand up to anyone who threatens or is seen to disrespect them
- Kids know they can count on a D parent
- Children of D parents are often proud of their parents accomplishments
- Full of energy and action
- Often will want the children actively involved in sports (if competitively all the better!) or activities

Directive parents

**** fear being taken advantage of **** Can lead to being

Autocratic

Wants to be in control so often may be dictatorial - my house my rules, my way or the high way.

This, as you can guess, becomes more difficult as the child grows and becomes more independent. Where parent and child share this style there can be big power struggles although they will, in a way, understand each other. There can be a row and raised voices and some very direct communication but both may get over it quickly. Where the child is not a high D, they may feel overwhelmed or even 'bullied' and anger may build up over time.

Top Tips for D Parents

- Accept not being in charge all of the time.
- Look at ways of engaging co-operation that will encourage and engage the child.
- Listen to them. We have two ears and one mouth and we should use them in that proportion. Don't dive in with the answer straight away.
- Relax. Remember that 'down' time is as important as the activities - both for you and them.
- Focus on the child and what they may be feeling rather than just the task in hand. Don't prioritise the task over the person.

D as a child - Determined

Forceful

Persistent - won't take no for an answer (may view it as a starting point rather than an answer☺)

Thinks ahead and can sense when parents are most vulnerable (and may very well use the opportunity to get what they want!)

Loves to compete

Hates to lose

Adapts well to change

Fast paced - may rush their food, walk quickly etc

Goal oriented

Independent

Natural leaders

Say what they think and not realise it may hurt another's feelings

Finds it hard to say 'I'm sorry'

Top tips for parents of a high D child

- Allow them have responsibility for some tasks, as appropriate, that allows them to exercise some control and choice.
- Give them some specific goals to work towards. They will get a great sense of achievement.
- Allow outlets for physical activity
- Offer choices within what is acceptable to you. For example,
- *'You can have a half a glass of juice or a full glass'* (either way they are having juice)
- *'You can clean your teeth before your bath or after your bath'* (They have to clean their teeth)
- If you can offer choices it allows them some control and choice and they may look for it less in other ways.
- Help them to understand that failure at a task is not failure as a person. The idea of don't take it personally as they may be hard on themselves.
- Help them to slow down and relax
- Help them to accept boundaries and limits
- Help them to have compassion for others by talking through what others may be experiencing. Highlight how listening and asking questions are powerful 'tools' in relationships.
- Keep instructions and requests as brief as possible. In the case of conflict use just one or two words (pyjamas....after dinner....)
- In the case of conflict or boundary setting, reason sensibly and logically but not long winded.
- Don't get caught up in power struggles

The I Style

In the DISC model, the I stands for Influencing.

May be described as Promoters, they are fast paced, love variety, people oriented, sociable and emotional.

In the context of families it translates as the Interactive parent and the Influencing Child.

Characteristics of Interactive/Influencing Style

People Oriented	• Love people • Very social • Very intuitive about others feelings • Want to win friends and influence people • Don't like to be alone
Emotional	• Show their emotions freely • Can be dramatic or animated whether feeling up or down • Often physically affectionate - they are huggers!
Talkative	• Very chatty • Love to tell stories, jokes
Fun Loving	• Party people- love them and are often the centre of attention at them • They like to laugh and make others laugh • Life is rarely boring around them
Optimistic	• See the positive side of things and people • 'Don't worry...Be happy' • Can ignore things that view as unpleasant
Spontaneous	• Like variety and change • May be impulsive and disorganised • Not planners and find it hard to follow through
Seek Social Acceptance and Applause	• Thrive on praise and compliments • Gives praise and compliments freely • Come alive when centre of attention • When asked to describe themselves, may say 'my friends say...' or 'others say....'

I as a Parent - Interactive Parent

Actively involved with their child/children

Huggers.....Very demonstrative and affectionate

Will love having their children's friends over and often the parents that other children (or teenagers) say are 'cool' parents
Good at getting out and about with their children...picnics to park, trip to the beach, visiting.
Creative and may love to do creative activities with their child
Very talkative and chatty
Often have good fun and play with the children

Interactive parents

**** fear not being liked by their children **** can lead to being

Permissive

May give free reign or do whatever they think will make the children 'happy'.

They see only good so may take what their children say at face value and not look beyond or ask questions, explore etc. This means they run the risk of being manipulated.

May be permissive, not solid on setting boundaries and sticking to them which is important for children to know where they stand.

Their own lighter approach to life may mean that they do not take a conscientious child as seriously as they need to be. *'Hey, lighten up, it might never happen'* rather than acknowledging they worry or fear the child may be experiencing.

Top Tips for Interactive Parents

- Remember that 'No' means 'No'... be consistent
- Don't get sidetracked
- Ask questions and explore
- Slow down and match your pace to the child's pace, especially if they are slower paced than you.
- Remember that you need to be the 'bad cop' sometimes. It is one of the most important parts of being a parent. Even as a teenager when they protest they know what they are doing or are aghast that you 'do not trust' them, they need you to ensure they are not exposed to situations they may not be physically or emotionally able to handle yet. Life, also, is not always about getting everything our own way. Being able to say no from a firm but empathetic place helps them accept that

I as a child - Influencing Child

They can talk you around and you are left wondering how you agreed to that.....

Active

Want to be with others

Friends are hugely important to them

Creative but with short attention span - distractible

Sometimes described as a 'live wire' - can't sit still

Open and trusting of other people

Sensitive to what others think of them

Hunger for praise, approval and affection

Emotions can be very high or very low

Make the best of a bad situation

Open with affection and need lots of hugs!

Top Tips for Parents of Influencing Children

- Use Descriptive praise to highlight their strengths and accomplishments and be sincere in that praise
- Plan for fun times with them - they need them even if you do not!
- Dream with them - sometimes. If both parent and child are high I there could be lots of dreaming and not much action.....
- Lots of hugs and kisses as appropriate
- Don't be cool or shut off as a punishment
- Understand that they want to be doing what everyone else is. They are more influenced by peers than other children may be and that is something to be aware of and managed rather than frowned upon.
- Be direct in dealing with peer pressure and unfavourable situations
- Make sure they have friends to play with or situations where they can interact
- They may want your companionship (especially in pre teen years) which is something to enjoy and make the most of at the time.
- They will try and side step the issue if there is conflict or dispute (X didn't put their dish away either...or...you are always picking on me). Stick to the point or issue at hand and afterwards you can deal with any point they bring up about others or you!
- Don't bail them out if they don't follow through. Help them to see the consequences of their actions (or non actions) and to have a sense of responsibility. This should be done in a loving and supportive way.

The S Style

In the DISC model, the S stands for Steady.

May be described as Relaters, they are slower paced, reflective, good listeners and team members, sensitive.

In the context of families it translates as the Supportive parent and the soft-hearted Child.

Characteristics of Supportive/Soft-hearted Style

Steadfast	Loyal Stick with you through thick and thin Will finish a task Can become set in their ways
Team Player	Co-operative Prefer not to make decisions to upset the status quo Considerate and committed team player
Prefer Familiarity	Like the security of structure and routine Like things to be at regular times and consistent order Like consistency - doesn't like change
Service	Prime desire is to be of service to others Their happiness comes from helping others out Prefer to follow rather than lead
Humble	Don't boast Courteous, restrained yet friendly Don't like too much attention, especially in public
Committed to people	Easy going and warm Tolerates others mistakes May not have tons of friends but the ones they do will be good friends Committed and loyal friend
Pragmatic	Step by step approach Think before they act You can depend on their support Often described as easy to live or work with

S as a Parent – Supportive Parent

Strong sense of security for their children
Tuned into their children's needs, often at their own expense
Tend to be extremely nurturing and attentive (especially of their safety)
Create warm comfortable homes
Good at family traditions

Soft hearted Parents

****fear of losing the security of a close relationship**** can lead to
Accommodating

May be overprotective (helicopter parents)
May give in to avoid an argument

Tips for Soft hearted Parents

- Speak up when you are upset about something rather than internalizing your feelings and frustrations
- Be more decisive and stick to the rules you set
- Speed up and take the initiative where appropriate
- Be careful not to be overprotective. Prepare them for life - not protect them from it.
- Allow them handle the consequences of their action where possible so they can learn for themselves - age appropriately. Forgetting a book or copy, PE uniform etc.
- Accept that change is inevitable. They will grow up; go to school move on....
- Take time for yourself. You need to love and nourish yourself as well as you family. If you don't replenish your own reserves you cant give what you don't have!

S as a child - Soft Hearted

Likes routines and familiarity
Quiet and appears easygoing
Willing to accommodate others, go along (let the other child have the toy, share etc)
Likes being part of a group
Good team players - won't want to let the team down
Likes to be shown how to do things...step by step if possible
Don't like change
Good listeners

Loyal friends
Lots of patience

Tips for parents of high S children

- Make home as stable as possible - routine, structure etc
- Needs time to prepare for change - going to school, moving house, even changing the furniture around. Talk to them about it, count them down unless talking about it is worrying them more
- Encourage them to express their feelings
- Don't take advantage of their accommodating nature
- Keep promises and if you can't explain why and apologise
- Answer 'how' questions
- Express your sincere appreciation where applicable
- Be warm and personal
- Don't make decisions for them. If your pace is faster than theirs, don't allow your impatience or frustration take over
- Don't be domineering, dictatorial or demanding
- Keep your voice and tone calm and even

The C Style

In the DISC model, the C stands for Conscientious.

May be described as Analysers, they are slower paced, Task and detail focused, capable, competent thinkers.

In the context of families it translates as the Corrective parent and the Conscientious Child.

Characteristics of Corrective Parent/Conscientious Child

Maintains high standards	Measure themselves and their behaviour against strict inner guidelines Often feel guilty if they fail to meet those standards Fear criticism of their work
Attention to detail	Pay close attention to detail and want you to do so too Seldom wrong because of this attention to detail
Self Disciplined	Capable of intense single minded effort View it as essential often reflected in diet or exercise regime, home etc
Cautious	Risk averse Careful and calculating - will assess all angles Because of caution will not openly express their opinion so may be seen as aloof or cool
Analytical	Ruled by their heads Don't express feelings... Does it make sense?? Rarely let whims etc take over
High Intuitive	Because often collecting so much data and info etc, often able to read people and situations well
Right Way	Look to find the 'right way' to do something Can differentiate between right and wrong but may find it hard to choose between two right ways

The C Parent - Corrective

Encourage the child especially around study etc

Often readers themselves, they will encourage a love of books and learning

Will ask questions to understand (teenagers may not view this as a positive😊)

Enjoy discussing things at a deeper level

They don't rush to anger so environment in the home may be less tumultuous

Very well organised and structured so no problem providing the routine and structure that is important for children

Corrective

****fear of making mistakes or irrational behaviour**** can lead to being Perfectionist

Wants things done the right way and may be less tolerant of anything or anyone less than that

Tries to maintain control by high standards

Rule oriented

Prone to lecture (they will view it as giving the details)

Serious minded and controlling so may be seen as unemotional

May avoid conflict

Top Tips for C parents

- If there is conflict (and that is sometimes necessary!) don't avoid it or be afraid to engage. Face it down
- Be open with your communication and verbalise how you are feeling
- Don't overanalyze - do anything that can help get you out of your head and into your body (meditation, yoga, focusing etc)
- Be careful not to ask too many questions which may come across as interrogation....ask feeling questions.....
- Remember we can only ever do our best - don't beat yourself or those around you up for not being or doing it perfectly. Is it good enough?
- Practice (😊) relaxing and being spontaneous. It may be important for others in your family but it will be essential for you.....

C as a child - Conscientious

(art/guitar lessons/sport/study)

Serious about life

Place for everything and everything in its place

Attention to detail - evident in art

Avoids conflict so may agree rather than fight and then it will build up inside

Worrier (parents often worry as they seem sad or serious)

Very observant

Lots of information and knowledge. May be intolerant of adults around who don't!

Will help other children to get it 'right' too

Top Tips for Parents of high C children

- They need privacy
- Then draw them out slowly -ask about feelings but don't pressurise
- Don't rush them - allow them time to do or think and do quality work
- Use descriptive praise and praise the effort not the results (focus on who they are not what they do or their results)
- Help them to tolerate imperfection
- Show appreciation for the quality work (don't dismiss what they are good at but balanced as above)
- Don't rush them to make decisions quickly
- Don't tell them their concerns or worries are stupid or not important
- Stick to facts when communicating
- Don't set standards too high - theirs are already high (c parent and child is often said to be the recipe for 'child prodigy')
- At bedtime allow them time to switch off their minds - they won't be able to just drop into bed and go asleep

Important!

We all possess elements of each style and some people are high in more than just one. More detailed work on the model highlights the combinations.

There is also a difference between our natural style (what we are born with and what we may revert to in a crisis or under pressure) and our adapted style.

Our adapted style is how we may have adapted to 'survive' or fit into the family, career, or environment we are currently in.

In the context of understanding ourselves and our child, this aims to just highlight that there are very different styles which have different priorities, pace etc. It shows the impact and challenges each style might have.

There is no 'good' one or 'bad' one. They are all just different.

It is not intended to put labels on us or them and it is important to state that they do not define or confine us. It is not about being judgemental or thinking we 'know' them.

It is a tool to help us be open to the differences and after that we must stand back (in whatever way you can do that) and start observing ourselves and them from a place of openness and curiosity. From that place we can celebrate who we/they are and not resist it. We can work to balance ourselves rather than try and 'fix' ourselves or them.

The following pages have some of the traits characteristic for High D, I S and C.

They are designed to help you identify what your predominant style might be but do not substitute for a full comprehensive profile which is offered separately by licensed providers.

Think about your behaviours and interactions with other people and highlight those you feel describe you.

The one which has the most highlighted will give you a good indication as to which might be the more predominant.

D Directive Parent - Determined Child

High self confidence, courageous, results-oriented, competitive, change-agent, direct and straightforward

- I am fast paced (talking, movement etc)
- I am outgoing
- Want to be the first to act
- I am direct and get to the point quickly
- I am able to make decisions quickly
- When I start a project, I finish it
- I have a lot of confidence in my skills
- When I talk with people and I get impatient with people who like to tell long stories, take a long time to get to the point.
- I set goals and work to achieve them
- I am more interested in getting the job done than in making people like me
- I enjoy leading a project
- I get bored when I don't have something to keep me challenged
- I don't like anyone looking over my shoulder. I like the freedom to do the job my own way
- I can come aggressive and determined under pressure
- I tend to have a low amount of tolerance for the feelings and opinions of others
- I feel energized by a problem that needs to be solved
- I don't like petty details when working on a project. I would rather delegate that to someone else while I look at the bigger picture
- I can sometimes project a cool or aloof style
- I am competitive - I want to win and hate to lose

I Interactive Parent – Influencing Child

People oriented, emotional, talkative, fun loving, optimistic, spontaneous, seek social acceptance and applause.

- I like to talk; I am never at a loss for words
- I feel comfortable at large parties
- I usually have no problem talking with new people
- I am fun to be with
- I like being involved in a project as long as I am doing it with someone else
- I am able to persuade others to join me in different activities and projects
- Being with other people energises me
- I dislike being alone for too long
- I always seem to be able to jump into activities with great enthusiasm
- I generally like to look at the positive side of things
- People have little problem guessing how I am feeling
- I have little trouble expressing what I think about things
- I enjoy being up front in a large group. I am comfortable with and enjoy recognition
- I have a lot of friends
- I am not always as organised as I should be
- Sometimes I have a problem completing a project. I tend to jump from one activity to another
- I like doing things differently; I am able to come up with creative and imaginative ideas.

S Supportive Parent – Soft Hearted Child

Steadfast, Team player, prefer familiarity, Helpful to others, humble, committed to people, Pragmatic (step by step approach)

- I like to help people when I see they need something
- I am a good listener
- I can calm people when they are upset
- It takes me a while to adjust to change
- I prefer things to stay the same
- I am generally an easy going person
- If I am upset, I usually hold the emotion inside
- I like to build solid lasting friendships.
- Friendships are important to me and I am a good friend
- I am good at short term planning
- People see me as patient and uncomplaining
- I usually find ways to avoid conflict and keep the peace
- Fast-paced people get frustrated with me because of my slower pace
- I don't like projects where I am expected to figure out how something is to be done. Show me how to do it and I will do it well
- People generally feel relaxed around me
- Sometimes I can be too soft hearted
- I will lead if I have to but prefer to be a follower
- I enjoy being part of a team
- I like sincere praise but I may get embarrassed if too much attention is focused on me
- I am a dependable worker and I take my job seriously
- I often have a difficult time making quick decisions
- People are more important to me than tasks

C Corrective Parent – Conscientious Child

Maintains high standards, Attentive to key details, Self-disciplined, Cautious, Analytical, Highly Intuitive, Does things the 'right' way

- I like to focus on doing things right
- I am good at organising my affairs
- Accuracy is important to me
- I have a strong respect for rules and authority
- I have high standards for myself – sometimes too high
- People see me as more formal, serious or reserved
- I think of myself as shy with others
- I don't say too much in a group
- Sometimes I am hard to please
- I need all the facts and information I can gather before making a decision
- I don't like to make mistakes
- I am a good planner and I am able to break down big projects into small parts
- I analyze things thoroughly in my mind
- Under pressure, I tend to avoid confrontation
- Some people see me as slow but I prefer to use the word methodical
- I hold my emotions inside and only let them out in situations where I feel comfortable
- Generally I am tactful, diplomatic and courteous