

THE PRESCHOOLER PERSONALITY



Preschoolers are some of the most misunderstood people around. They don't think twice, multitask, have emotional control, and can act brazen, noncompliant, and defiant one minute, only to turn around and light up a room with their infectious giggles and joy.



Preschoolers know much better than they behave, and their good intentions can be short-lived. There is no better test to adult maturity than the immature ways of the preschooler. The secret to taking care of them is to understand their immaturity isn't a mistake but part of their developmental design.



Preschoolers are immature for good reason – their brains are still under development and in the first three years of life alone, 100 billion neurons will develop 1000 trillion connections under ideal conditions. Their brains won't fully integrate until between the ages of 5 to 7, or 7 to 9 years for more sensitive children (defined as those more responsive to environmental stimuli).

LACK OF SELF-CONTROL AND IMPULSIVE

Preschoolers don't think twice because their brains can only focus on one thought or feeling at a time. They react instinctively and are unable to consider the consequences of their behaviour before acting.



EGOCENTRIC

It really is all about them because healthy development requires an understanding of the self and forming an identity before they can become a social being. The focus should be on helping preschoolers understand who they are before expecting them to understand others.



SEEK CONTACT AND CLOSENESS

Preschoolers seek to be close to adults because they cannot function independently. Being close is their greatest desire and they need to rest in the care of their adults, trust in them to lead, and not work for love and attention.



FEAR SEPARATION

A preschooler's intense need for connection means they will be full of missing and alarm when separated from their attachment figures. If we leave them in the care of other adults, they will need to be attached enough to these adults to feel secure. Bedtime is about separation which is why they often protest going to sleep.



PRONE TO RESISTANCE

Preschoolers are prone to resist when they feel coerced or controlled by someone they are not attached to in the moment. To reduce resistance, it is important to collect their attention and harness their desire to follow before making requests or to transition to another task.



INTEGRITY

Preschoolers tell it like it is and they report on the world as they see it. Political correctness and diplomacy is lost on a preschooler because they are just trying to figure out what they think and feel, thus ignoring social conventions and expectations.



PLAYFUL

Preschoolers love to play and come with instincts to discover, imagine, and explore. Play is where a child emerges as an separate being as they move to express and imprint themselves on their environment. Preschoolers need to play to discover their interests, release emotion, and develop creativity and problem-solving capacities.



LACK TRUE CONSIDERATION

Preschoolers see the world through a single lens and it is usually their own. When they can hold more than one perspective at a time (age 5 to 7), they will be able to consider someone else's feelings as well as their own. Until this time, adults will have to direct preschoolers to share and on how to get along.



PRONE TO FRUSTRATION AND AGGRESSION

The parts of the brain responsible for putting on the brakes and preventing a child from lashing out when frustrated are still under development in preschoolers. They are prone to aggression when upset and need adults close by who can step in to help them regulate their strong emotions.



SHY WITH PEOPLE THEY DON'T KNOW

Shyness is an attachment instinct that is meant to preserve the connection between an adult and a child. We don't need to talk preschoolers out of their shyness instincts, but we will need to introduce and match-make them to people who are part of the village that cares for them.



Dr. Deborah MacNamara – Excerpt from the book Rest, Play, Grow: Making Sense of Preschoolers (or anyone who acts like one)