

## Supporting Your Perceiving Preference Child

Does your child?

- Like to be flexible and spontaneous?
- Make decisions only when they have to be made?
- Like to explore and be curious?
- Play around while working or make work a “game”?

If so, your child may have a preference for perceiving. Judging and Perceiving describe a person’s orientation to the outer world. Those on the perceiving side prefer a spontaneous, flexible lifestyle. Perceivers are adaptable and curious. Perceiving does not mean “perceptive,” rather it refers to how a person deals with the outer world.

### Parenting a Child Who Prefers Perceiving

**Perceiving children have the gift of spontaneity.** Perceiving children tend to be naturally spontaneous and comfortable with the unexpected. Their natural curiosity causes them to jump at the chance to explore something new or different.

Chris, a judging preference mother, said she finds it a challenge to shop with her perceiving preference children because they are always investigating things in the store that are not on the list. Make shopping less stressful with a perceiving child by planning extra time for your child to be curious.

**Perceiving children are adaptable and flexible.** Perceiving children tend to live in the moment and often appear to be flexible. They view time as elastic and tend not to be concerned about deadlines and commitments. They often beg for “one more minute.” They tend to do things as the spirit moves them and are naturally impulsive.

Perceiving types view scheduled starting times as a guideline rather than a deadline. They wonder why others get upset over slight delays. Dave talked about getting Danyelle ready in the morning. If he takes a few minutes and goes into her room and makes getting ready “fun” Danyelle gets ready quickly. If he tells her to get ready and goes about getting ready himself, she gets distracted and is not ready to go on time. He has learned that her perceiving preference draws her attention away from getting ready in the morning, but if he engages her playfulness around the task, it works out fine.

Perceiving children need down time with no schedule. Cameron, who has a perceiving preference, needs less structure after preschool. His mom says he is exhausted by the tight schedule and needs time to just “chill.”

Perceivers may misjudge how long a task will take to complete. They need help learning to schedule their time by working backward from a deadline to determine the last possible minute to complete a task and still be on time. Remember though, often the last minute rush is when perceiving children do their best work.

### Perceivers may delay making decisions.

Having to make a choice for a perceiving child may cause anxiety because choosing means eliminating options by selecting one thing over another. It is not unusual for a perceiving child to struggle over buying a toy. Grandma had sent Jesse a money gift for his



birthday. When Mom took him shopping to pick out a toy, he had a difficult time deciding which toy to buy. Others in the family were getting impatient with Jesse's slowness in making a choice.

Decisions, for perceiving children, may be fraught with tension and that tension can be relieved when a decision can be postponed. Perceiving children often make passive decisions—they let the choice be made for them. Time runs out or opportunities are ruled out. Perceiving children may gain energy from being given a reprieve from deciding and letting things happen. Give them a deadline for deciding while allowing ample time to consider the options. More important issues may need more time.

### **Perceiving children play while they work.**

Perceiving children may have trouble finishing projects because their natural inclination is to play first and work later if there's time or have fun mixing work and play.

Most common conflicts between a judging parent and a perceiving child occur when the judging parent doesn't agree with the manner in which the perceiving child is completing a given task. When Jake helps with washing dishes, the task takes longer. He plays in the water pretending glasses are turtles and the dishcloth is a stingray; waterfalls and splashing are part of the process. Many of the conflicts we experience with our children have to do with the way things are happening. By insisting that our children do things the way we do them, we undermine their natural tendencies and communicate criticism rather than acceptance and approval.

A perceiving child was given the chore of getting clothes from the dryer and folding the basket of laundry. When Dad went down to the basement, the laundry was scattered from one end to the other. Some clothes were a pup tent. Others were a fort. The child had made "fun" out of the clothes. Instead of getting angry, Dad took a photo of his son peeking out of the tent. The picture and story have become a favorite family story. Of course, the clothes did have to be washed again.

Kris talked about how her son, with a perceiving preference, and she experienced raking leaves. She was focused on getting the "work" done. He played in the leaves jumping in them, rolling in them, laughing and enjoying the leaves. She said

she wanted to get the job done quickly; he wanted to play while he worked.

Perceiving preference children know they have to do work but want the work to be fun, too. They play around and make jokes while they work. It may take a little longer but adding the fun makes it worth it.



### **How Perceiving Children View Rules.**

Perceiving children are constantly pushing to the limits of acceptable behavior. They question the reason for rules and may simply forget rules altogether. Perceiving children see rules as barriers to exploring their world. With their easy-going nature, they are often able to wiggle out of discipline with charming or compelling excuses.

Parenting a perceiving child can be frustrating and fun. Being highly selective about which rules are important and will be enforced consistently helps both parent and child. Otherwise, as a parent, you might spend much of your time and energy correcting, reminding, and punishing.

Enjoy the fun a perceiving child can bring to the home while setting clear deadlines for work that must be completed.

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