



Understanding you and your child's temperaments can help with parenting. For example, melancholic children respond well to fairy tales describing hardships. The phlegmatic child likes comfort, to be kept warm and delicious food. Sanguine children respond well to calm parenting but enjoy social situations. Choleric children like to be leaders and you may find letting them be in charge of tasks helps to give them direction. In Waldorf schools teachers work with temperaments to help children grow and develop.

Children of these temperaments are often drawn to these colors:

- Choleric: [Fire & Red](#)
- Sanguine: [Yellow & Rainbow](#)
- Phlegmatic: [Greens & Blues](#)
- Melancholic: [Blues & Purples](#)

According to Rudolf Steiner- the founder the of Waldorf education - each phase of life has a temperament associated with it.

- Childhood: Sanguine
- Adolescence: Choleric
- Adulthood: Melancholic
- Old Age: Phlegmatic

A goal of adulthood is to bring all four temperaments into balance, to bring harmony into one's life.

Here's a list of animals associated with each temperament.

- Lion (Choleric/Dominance) Strengths— Visionary, practical, productive, strong-willed, independent, decisive, leader. ...
- Otter (Sanguine/Influence) Strengths— Outgoing, responsive, warm, friendly, talkative, enthusiastic, compassionate. ...
- Golden Retriever (Phlegmatic/Steadiness) ...
- Beaver (Melancholy/Compliance)

You can look at the characters in Winnie the Pooh to find the four temperaments - Eeyore is the melancholic; Rabbit choleric; Pooh phlegmatic; and Christopher Robin himself is the sanguine.

# The Four Temperaments

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In Waldorf Education, the four temperaments are seen as a tool to help us understand the child as a “whole” human being. The idea of the four temperaments was not new in Steiner’s time; it came about during the Greek times and again during the Middle Ages (some of you may remember hearing about the four humors or the four fluids).

Roberto Trostli writes in “**Rhythms of Learning**”: “Our temperament mediates between these two streams; it allows us to reconcile our hereditary characteristics with out destiny.”

Here are a few things to be aware of with the temperaments:

- You cannot always tell what temperament your child is before the change of teeth. You may see big or small glimmers here and there, but things do change over the years. So, if you have small children under the age of 7, please save this information for the future. I would even argue you can see the temperament of your child best as they approach the nine-year change.

- According to Steiner, each period of the lifespan has a temperament associated with it: childhood-sanguine (most sources say sanguine, some sources say choleric; I say sanguine); adolescents- choleric; adulthood-melancholic and old age-phlegmatic.
- As an adult, the goal is for all your temperaments to be in harmony with none of the temperaments. So if you see one thing predominating in yourself, then you may have to work to cultivate the other temperaments and bring yourself into more harmony.

The workshop I attended required some artistic work and rendering of the temperaments, so know that is an option for home. We worked with a color wheel and the temperaments and drawing. It was very interesting, and now, without further ado, let's talk about each of the temperaments:

**CHOLERIC:** (colors: black, reds). Cholerics are associated with fire, summer and a predominance of "I" for an adult... (in a child, the astral body is said to predominate in this temperament). Cholerics are people such as Napoleon (okay, he was a badly unchecked choleric), Nero, President Teddy Roosevelt, Donald Trump. They are strong people who "DO" – the leaders of our times. Some Waldorf teachers feel less of these cholerics are coming to us as we see less leaders and people wanting to step forth and lead during our times, as opposed to times such as World War II.

At any rate, these fast, fiery, strong-willed and quick-tempered individuals are also very fair and associated with the mathematical process of division. They can have great warmth and can be exceptional leaders. They are also very hard workers and are very goal-oriented.

From a physical standpoint, cholerics can be short-statured, with shorter necks. They also can be associated with having health problems involving the heart.

The challenges of an individual with a choleric temperament includes being bossy or stubborn, quick-tempered and then regretful afterwards, not listening to others well.

**SANGUINE:** (colors: yellows, the rainbow!) Sanguines are associated with spring, air, sweetness, and a predominance of the astral body for the adult (for children, the etheric body predominates). Sanguines are such people as President John F Kennedy and President Clinton. They are full of life, they have lots of ideas, they are the social glue of a classroom, the social movers and the shakers of society. They notice everything, they respond to everything and move quickly from one thing to another. They are personable, light-hearted people. Sanguines are often associated with the mathematical process of addition.

Physically, they are often have balanced, graceful body types and are beautiful or handsome. They can be drawn to smoking, and have health problems associated with the lungs.

The challenges of an individual with a sanguine temperament includes starting many projects but not finishing, being prone to social pressures, possibly one could see a teenager with this temperament being predominate that they would seek out inappropriate things in adolescence in order to ground them. They can also be seen as shallow, superficial and fickle.

**PHLEGMATIC:** (colors: greens and blues) Phlegmatics are associated with winter and water and a predominance of the etheric body (in children, the physical body predominates). Phlegmatics are slow, steady people who love their physical comforts, order, repetition. They have a hard time starting things, but once they get started, they become engaged and will stick with a project until it is

completed. They tend to be loyal, patient, dependable. They can be deep thinkers that come up with great ideas.

I always think of phlegmatics and digestion and inner bodily processes (due to being associated with water, like the tides going in and out and the inner rhythm of the etheric body. Physically, there is often a softness to how a person with a predominantly phlegmatic temperament looks. They tend toward obesity. They can be prone to such health problems as gout and problems associated with the lymphatic system.

The challenge of this temperament is to interest them in something besides comfort and food. They can be rather lazy – or are they just taking it all in and thinking deeply? Transitions can be a problem, for once they are started and caught up in something, they do not want to stop. But most of all, the phlegmatic individual can have a temper! A temper that makes a choleric look like a kitten. People who have a predominantly phlegmatic temperament are very patient indeed, but once they are angry – look out, because it all explodes.

**MELANCHOLIC:** (colors: indigo, purples, violets) Melancholics are associated with the fall and earth, along with the mathematical process of subtraction. They have a predominant physical body, although in children one sees a predominance of the “I”. A melancholic person is introspective, thoughtful. They tend to be insightful people and take everything to heart and are often sad or despondent. They can have a great capacity for sympathy and tend to be perceptive about other people’s pain. They typically can articulate their thoughts and feelings well.

Physically, a melancholic is often tall and thin and can be prone to rheumatism and arthritis. Due to their sensitivity, they often make good workers in the health care field.

The challenge of the melancholic is that they can become self-absorbed and feel their problems are like those that no one else in the world has ever experienced. They also can get lost in details and lose the big picture. They can be prone to perfectionism.