

Introducing the Choleric

These notes are taken from 'Understanding Yourself' by John Sparkes, a temperament manual which is written from the perspective of what a child needs as they are growing up. It is available as an [ebook](#) via Amazon.

1. Using strength

a. Strength to achieve his goals

There is always a drive to achieve - from the cradle onwards. He wants to go on to the next stage and will quickly learn to walk, talk, read and write. Harnessed properly such ambitions can be put to good use but there are dangers:

- i. He could miss out on important childhood experiences - and the fun of life!
- ii. The Choleric is strong. He gets his goal and goes for it but can be insensitive to others in the process. He has to be taught how to put other people and their needs first and to learn not to use others to gain his own ends. Unless his goals are motivated by love, the selfishness and strong will in attempting to reach his goals will make it difficult for others to relate to him.

b. Strength to do – rather than to be

A Choleric is very 'functional' so he feels his value to be in what he achieves. Because of this:

- a. his goals and ambitions matter to him
- b. he will be competitive. Coming second is no good to him. He has to be the best.

c. Strength to control

From an early age the Choleric learns to control himself and others. Emotions are a threat. Unless shown deep acceptance and taught how to be emotionally and spiritually strong, his means of protection is to repress his emotions. By repressing the Choleric emotions he is, of course, repressing whichever introvert temperament he has. By doing so he has closed down the means by which he can identify with others emotionally and he can therefore come across as being aloof, hard and insensitive.

His emotions run deep, and he is often not fully aware of them. Although normally in control of himself, when under internal or external pressure the emotions of the Choleric can be volcanic! He must share his achievements, disappointments, hurt, failures and disillusionments in an ongoing way - even if it means his need to always present a pleasing image has to be abandoned. Failure to do so could mean that he is a much admired but unapproachable person.

Getting things right and being right is important to him. In fact, if he is not secure in his introvert temperament this need becomes exaggerated:

- a. The need to be 'right', even when he is wrong, leads to craftiness as he strives to reach his goal without violating his need to be right!

- b. It is usually within our introvert temperament that we receive a sense of acceptance and oneness but if this is not functioning properly for the Choleric then he will feel the need to be 'right' in what he does and says. This leads to a continuous attempt to be pleasing to those around. That is why when he is told he did not get it right he is likely to fight the accusation (as he would see it). If the introvert were functioning as it should then he would cope with being wrong, as he would be operating from a place of deep acceptance.

d. Strength to defend – hostility and anger

His natural strength, pride, self-sufficiency, the need to be the best, to be right and the need to keep control, means that anyone getting in the way of his goal will most likely meet with hostility. This hostility may be expressed or unexpressed! He is likely to have a cavalier approach to authority and anyone who has to exercise authority over him can expect some interesting situations!

His primary response to anything that threatens to disturb or prevent his emotional satisfaction is frustration. This hostility, which is basic to his temperament, becomes locked into his strong mind and forms an almost impenetrable defence. His desire to please and ability to move on a mental level lead to repression of the anger, but behind the defence and cover is often a lonely person.

The combination of basic hostility, the need to be 'the best', independence and ability to repress his emotions leaves him feeling unaccepted. This shows itself in many ways, including:

- a. inhibitions
- b. lack of assurance of salvation and God's love
- c. guilt
- d. desire to please
- e. a need to prove himself
- f. an attempt to find excitement and fulfilment in endless activity
- g. exchanging of words and ideas.

e. Strength of mind

The Choleric has a good and active mind. When disciplined and harnessed into creative and constructive channels this can clearly be a force for good. His mind will work to 'get things right'. In a secure person that is fine but when the introvert temperament is insecure the mind will work overtime trying to cope with the confused signals coming from the introvert. Life will then tend to be lived at the 'mental level' with a disconnection between thoughts and feelings.

The Choleric child needs careful handling for even unintentional neglect can lead to a mind that never stops working. The repression of the emotions means that the Choleric's naturally active mind is left free to wear itself out on endless exercises. Anyone on the receiving end is also likely to get worn out. If there is Melancholic with the Choleric the thoughts are likely to be negative and he will turn them against himself - a mental self-punishment! How important, in such a temperament combination, that the parent identifies the Melancholic and encourages him to express his creativity positively. If there is Phlegmatic with the Choleric

then anxiety and self-protection will lead to 'fiddle' in areas where he feels safe. He will procrastinate and not venture outside of his own limited vision or face what he is not good at. He will create escapes by building ideal worlds and can retreat into fantasy or daydreaming to escape the challenge of relationships.

Meeting the needs of the Choleric

2. Recognising authority

In childhood a Choleric needs to come up against the wall of an emotionally and mentally whole person. He also needs to know God as Father - the ultimate authority. Failure to build this wall results in the child's forceful emotions spilling out and dominating the family. The wall needs to be strong to stand firm against the Choleric's ability to turn the tables and make the other person 'feel bad'. By learning to yield to authority the Choleric's strength can be channelled creatively.

3. Physical warmth

Warm embraces and cuddles are essential ingredients from babyhood. These help the child to trust and in this context he will be more open to share thoughts and feelings. However, this temperament finds it the most difficult to respond to this even in babyhood. The parent may have to work hard for a natural bonding with this child.

4. Fun

It is important that there is plenty of fun and physical contact within the family. This is where spontaneity is cultivated. Games and sports all provide opportunities to help the child not to take himself too seriously and to be aware of others. Board games in family times are also excellent opportunities to teach him that winning is not the only reason for playing!

5. Acceptance

This is a two-way issue:

- i. He needs to be accepted as someone with strong feelings and drives, both good and bad. Keep communicating the message that he does not have to be 'the best' to be accepted.
- ii. He needs to show this acceptance of others. Help him to be aware of his effect on other people as he expresses his feelings and goes for his goals. Unconsciously this self-controlled, successful person creates the impression of others being beneath him. Those who feel less able can hit out at him, possibly leading him to become a controlled, isolated, lonely and defensive person in later life.

6. Being transparent

Although generally he would not tell the 'bare-faced' lie, when put in a corner he will be able to use the 'truth' to suit his purpose. His able mind can always filter what he sees and hears so that he communicates only what is acceptable for his own self-worth and acceptance. This child must be consistently taught to hear and feel the thoughts and feelings of others. In this way he becomes transparent rather than 'closed shop'.

7. No repression

Squashing feelings must be recognised and dealt with immediately. Create the environment and opportunities for the child to share thoughts, and particularly feelings, on a regular basis. The more control or mental confusion present in adulthood the more neglect or damage has been done in childhood.

8. Dealing with laser-beam mentality

This narrow-visioned child with a seemingly inexhaustible mental appetite needs to be introduced to a fully orbed life by being taught:

- a. How to turn his desire for action into practical reality.
- b. The beauty of creation, art, music, etc.
- c. More skills than his limited ones.
- d. The value of people, time, and possessions.

9. Setting goals

- a. Help needs to be given in the setting of realistic goals and in the carrying of these through to completion. Unrealistic goals lead to a sense of failure. The Choleric can be over-optimistic and can engage in projects that have not been thought through properly.
- b. He will focus on one goal to the exclusion of other responsibilities. When that goal is achieved he is left with a vacuum. Help him to balance his time and commitment between all his responsibilities.

10. Fear of inadequacy

Although so capable, particularly mentally, this child's greatest fear is of inadequacy. Any insecurity will be shown in a deepening sense of inadequacy. Reassurance, being taught how to set realistic goals, and help in ventures foreign to his nature is essential in the overcoming of this fear.

10. Training a leader to lead

To achieve his vision he can build an empire with himself at the top keeping others at a safe distance to preserve what he regards as his by right. Although a Choleric is a natural leader it is vital that he take others with him rather than having his own individual success story. Teach this child to let go of his control and give himself away and encourage others to share in the achieving of this success. In so doing he will be investing his life in others.

Summary of the Choleric

1. By nature a Choleric is a born leader, often giving security in crisis situations and with a real determination to make things work.
2. This capacity for leadership, if mishandled makes it easy for him to become a proud, unemotional, self-sufficient person in adulthood.
3. The grace of God is needed, in depth, in every area of his life.

4. He needs to constantly relate to others at a deep level and benefit from their sensitivity and insight.
5. If he has a humble heart, his ability to set goals, go for what is right, strong will and mind can all be used as a force for good.