



## Temperament Parenting

Using temperament as a means to understand self. Work from blog posts and series we have done in the last few years.

I am often asked “how do I reach my child?” Many parents are looking for a magic bullet that will help them to better communicate with their child. Often that magic bullet is YOU. We have talked about rhythm being tied to you – parenting is the same. When we take the time to study temperament for ourselves as well as our children, then we can really work to understand what our parenting gifts and weaknesses are.

First, I recommend you work to understand temperament as a whole, we have a great description in our grade one curriculum, in our Coming to Waldorf Late guides and also [Steiner’s bit on temperament](#) is wonderful.

When examining our own temperament, we can see where we need to balance. If we are phlegmatic and are working hard to cultivate our will then we might be struggling with getting moving each day. It might be hard to get up from that computer or put that book down. Going for a walk might be a huge struggle for us each morning. Holding a boundary we have set might be hard if we are being badgered by a choleric or sanguine child or teen. We have to work to build up that will of ours. The will of a phlegmatic isn’t as strong as others, it should be our striving to find that happy medium. Where are you comfortable and really able to hold the space. You don’t have to become a choleric parent; you just draw on that part that lives in you. It takes practice. You know that once you get going on something you can put your all into it – find that place within you for your parenting. Practice giving firm boundaries and work to keep them. Recognize it when you do well.

If you are a sanguine parent, I sympathize! Kidding, I am partially there too. We have plenty of will and we are great planners, but sometimes we lack the follow through. The follow through is what we need in parenting – especially after the age of 9! Those pre-teens and teens will give

you reasons to set all sorts of boundaries, but what good are they if we forget them? I decided to start writing them down. I am working on my will with Steiner's exercises all the time (these are GREAT! We have a wonderful breakdown in our free inner work eBook Treasures from My Path.) I work to build up my memory by memorizing verses along with my kids, committing a new hymn to memory each week or by remembering to do the same action daily. Rhythm is great for us sanguines as it gives us a great boundary to keep for ourselves. We are working to tame that will as we seem to have an over abundance of it. Reading only one book at a time or working on only one handwork project at a time would be helpful – follow through! \*\*Now I proposed this to a dear friend the other day and she freaked, lol \*wink\* so we decided no more than 3 books at a time!\*\* Remember that you are striving for balance – do things that would help you in your weak areas – even if they don't seem fun.

Melancholic parents have another challenge, while they too can have a low amount of will; they have the added struggle of wanting to retreat. If this is you, my heart goes out to you. It can be so frustrating to have someone like me (Ms. Choleric/Sanguine) tell you to get up off your hiney and buck up! You just want to smack me when I recommend getting up before your children. You might often think that it works for everyone else but you and it is overwhelming to see everyone else do such a good job when you are struggling. Again, my heart goes out to you. This CAN work for you. I promise. Melancholic parents can often get blown over by their children because they are afraid to set too many boundaries and when they do set them, they are continually worrying they were too harsh. So what to do? Start with a conscious plan to work on your will. This might be a struggle if you have gotten out of balance or lived out of balance your whole life. Your natural state will be to get upset and give up and be angry. Work gently on yourself, but do work. Make a plan or contact me and let me help you make a plan. Your goal should be balance. It takes continual striving to get there.

Now choleric I can pick on a bit \*wink\* I spent a good part of my life as an unbalanced choleric. As I became a parent this blended with sanguine, now I can safely say I am striving daily toward balance. Not there totally, but a work in progress. I can chill with my husband, run shopping with my daughter, sympathize with my son and still make sure everyone gets fed and my house isn't destroyed. The choleric in me can keep all of that together and as I have balanced more, I find myself enjoying those things much more than even 5 years ago. The struggle of the choleric parent is to stay present and not get caught up in the idea that you can get it all done faster if they would just all move out of the way and let you do it! For you... bake with them. Play a board game with them. Bake some more. Let them have control over the flour – yes, the 3 yr old! Let them help you sweep. BREATHE. Your instinct is to take the broom and do it yourself. Remember, you were called to Waldorf for a reason. Take it all in. Let it soften you. Enjoy the experience. You might also struggle with boundaries that are too rigid. Firm boundaries are good; just make sure they are age appropriate.

Now what about your partner? This can be harder. You'll want to really think about what you love about your partner and remember that you are working to be on the same page. If your partner is phlegmatic or melancholic you could struggle with getting them to join in the family fun, pulling them from their book or the computer – they may be hard to help with the

boundaries so you'll for sure want to have a plan together. If your partner is sanguine then they may be quick to anger and quick to forget so you'll likely have help with boundaries but they won't want to stick to them over time so you'll have to work to balance each other. Now if you are married to a choleric... you may feel like you are constantly the peace maker. Helping your partner to release excess stress and find proper ways to parent will be the key in cultivating the home life you want. Remember that there are strengths in all the temperaments! Call upon the strengths when appropriate, work to build up the things that you'd like to see more of.

From our Temperament Parenting series

### *Part 1 - Introduction*

In our last series, I discuss mental health as an important aspect of having a healthy rhythm and home life for your family. Temperament is part of that mental health. Temperament isn't something that Steiner invented, although today his work and the work that goes with Waldorf education is probably the most popular use of it. When we read about temperament, we are usually reading about it for the children. Most resources are written for the teacher to apply in the classroom and therefore have us as parents focusing our work completely on the child's temperament. I believe this is very backward. My guess is that in Waldorf teacher training, they spend some time on this part of adult biography in their foundation studies, so the literature that is written, often assumes that the adult has done this work for themselves or is at the very least working on it. Most parents are not in this position and generally only come to temperament as a means of understanding the place their children are in. Today we are going to take some of the first steps in working on yourself.

*When we change how we look at things, things change.*

As you enter this work, you have to already decide that it is for your own understanding of how YOU should act and re-act rather than how you will fix everyone around you! It is VERY tempting to label everyone and then leave it at that. I think it is a backward practice to cater to children with different temperaments. Our job as parents is to raise balanced children. Helping a child balance their temperament is a gift we are giving them. A gift that they can treasure and also give to others that work with them in the home setting and beyond. Children don't balance overnight. Neither do adults. I like to live by the thought that when we know better, we do better. So keep this in mind, don't feel guilty over what isn't done, and let's just walk forward from here.

*Balance.*

When I talk about balance, it doesn't mean that we lose our true temperament in the process. Most people will always have one or two very dominant temperaments. The idea with

balance is that at the end of the day, you can go to a social party and enjoy yourself, sit and chill on the sofa and be content, have empathy for your child's plight AND be the bossy lady when needed. This series will be a big stretch for most of us. I am not 100% balanced all the time. (And after my stroke I found that my temperament changed a bit and it was a whole new balancing game.) When my melancholic teen son is whining for the 14th time about a math problem that I know he understands, then my empathy wants to run out the window and my bossy Mom hat wants to tell him just what I think about his lack of desire! It happens. Being balanced will make you overall a better parent, but it will by no means make you are perfect one. My hope is that it will help you be present more and ponder your actions and reactions more.

*When we know better, we do better.*

In general, in my study of temperament, I find it very safe to say that *Cholerics* and *Sanguines* have the most will - but their challenge is to tame it - while *Melancholics* and *Phlegmatics* have the least will - their challenge is to build it up and use it.

I also want to point out that there will likely be times in this series where you won't like me much! LOL, either you will not like something that I have said because it strikes a cord, or you will think my suggestions for remedy are too hard. Either way, please don't take what I am saying as a personal attack, this is a long process and inner work is not an easy road (in fact the HARDEST road I have ever been on!) This will be a journey. Hopefully you are taking it in conjunction with other inner work. I highly recommend our Beacon Series, these are available in our store and are free to our Thinking Feeling Willing members. If you have questions as we go through, please feel free to ask me via email or on our blog or on our Facebook support pages.

Over the last six years, I have worked with hundreds of families through our consulting work. We generally start with homeschooling topics, but it nearly always goes to a work of guidance with inner work. Inner work is where I believe my gifts lie. I know the curriculum and can carry on a great conversation about the wonders of Rome, but what I really love doing is helping families work to achieve their highest loveable, awesome, glorious SELF through inner work and casting off the parts of us that just don't serve that higher place. It is fun work at times but often very grueling work and sometimes it doesn't feel very rewarding as we are walking through it. When we start seeing the Light on our path though, those moments stand out and help us keep going.

As I was pondering this series in my own meditation this week, I came across something that I have found so very different for each temperament and may be one marker that will help those who are still struggling knowing which one they are personally. I was prompted to look at how we each deal with pain. I am not talking about physical pain only, but emotional pain. I thought maybe we could start here. Take some time to meditate on it and then next week I will launch into our first temperament... the even-tempered Phlegmatic. I am starting there in honor of my sweet husband and two of my sons, it is the temperament that occurs in my home the most.



## *Pain*

So in thinking about pain, I was drawn back to my divorce. Seems like forever ago and yet while the events are still strong in my mind, the choleric-sanguine that I am has moved past a great deal of the emotional trauma that came with it. It was nearly ten years ago. My big kids seemed so big to me then, but when I compare them to Sam, who still seems so little, my heart aches for what they went through. For many people, divorce isn't as ugly as it was for us. The very choleric parts of me, had been through a lot with my former husband and I was ready to be done. However, the very unbalanced

melancholic in him wanted it to drag out as long as possible. This refusal to move on, had him coming back two other times to fight, rather than move forward with his life and live in peace. How does that relate to our topic of pain? Well let me unfold it a bit.

When dealing with pain, emotional or physical, a balanced healthy choleric dominant person will generally recover fairly quickly and take on any pain from a very pragmatic "wrestle it to the ground" kind of place. A place of "this happened, I don't like not being in charge so I am going to manage it and then not let it control me." These people often have a very high pain threshold for emotional and physical pain. Emotionally they can appear to be stuffing their pain and in times of being unhealthy, they do stuff it or feed it with food, but often they also just want to get over it because feeling pain and being sad does not allow them to have the control they want to have over their lives. It is important for this person to acknowledge the pain and also find the lesson - if there is one in emotional pain so that they can learn from it and choose a different path the next time around. If you are choleric and struggling with inner work, step back and think about why. Do you have a tendency to just gloss over it? To not work on the pieces involving forgiveness? Asking for forgiveness and also giving it to others is a big weakness of the choleric. In the years when my own choleric went up balanced, I was very angry, not humble, rarely teachable, and just plain hot headed. Ask my children. Ask my mother. Ask my ex-husband. The choleric in me didn't want to feel the pain from my crumbling marriage so I often ignored it. Ignoring something never helps it. It was this ignorance on my part that probably let my first marriage carry on for about 15 minutes longer than it should have. I do remember the day when I realized my marriage was over. It was like someone smacked me in the head and I suddenly got it. From then on, the choleric me was on ONE mission. Get it over with so I could move on from the pain.

A balanced, healthy melancholic can have deep empathy, deep emotional ties and can be loyal. The hardest part for them is to know when to walk away and be done. Often, these are the people that should stay away from the news, stay off social media and be very careful of those drama creating relatives. I realized in my informal research, that when reflecting on those that I know who are melancholic, their challenge is to say NO. Their challenge is to not take on that friend's

child when you are having a bad day or to turn off the news when there are shootings or bombings. The melancholic isn't really interested in the event itself, but intensely worried about the people. The moms of this temperament tend to agonize over anything that involves children and it will stick with them for days or weeks. They don't feel more pain than say a choleric, but they EXPRESS more pain. This can be a gift but it can also be a warning sign. The weakness in not saying no, either literally by telling someone NO or figuratively by turning off the TV, is that this empathy that can be so beautiful, can also paralyze you and can lead to depression. I have been known to say some really controversial things about depression. I don't say them because I am callous I say them because I believe from the root that they are true. Let me clarify. When it comes to motherhood, I DO DO DO believe that depression exists. I believe that we are HIGHLY hormonal beings and that years of birthing, breastfeeding, pregnancy, etc can make our brains mush and leave us struggling to say NO and ask for help. Melancholics don't ask for help any more so than the bossy choleric. The difference is the choleric needs to learn to be teachable, while the melancholic doesn't want to put anyone out! A melancholic mom seems to be far more likely prone to bouts of depression while the choleric mom wrestles it to the ground and walks on. I wish that modern medicine would look at temperament when designing pharmaceutical relief!

*Temperament and sex.* Men and women should NOT be taking the same drugs! At least with herbs you are control things a bit better and with homeopathics you are approaching things from a different angle so a hormonally charged mom of 4 that has been nursing or pregnant for ten years isn't taking the same thing that a 40 year old man who is having a midlife crisis is! While of course there are exceptions, I generally believe that most depression in mothers comes from our wacky hormones. If you are in this spot and are taking treatment, do not feel like this is a weakness or like you are stuck! You will move beyond this place. A good first step is learning how to say NO and balancing your temperament. Not being able to say NO, isn't necessarily an issue that came from your childhood. It could have been cultivated in a bad way from a parent that took advantage of the empathetic nature of a melancholic child, but in general your temperament already predisposed you to having this challenge. When we come from a healthy place, we have well developed boundaries and we know that the people that need the most help are the ones within our family. It is so easy to feel the emotional pain of a friend that needs a sitter or the activism that you feel like you should be doing. Rest assured, that friend will survive and the planet (or whatever the cause) will still be ok without you participating. Boundaries will challenge you so keep in mind that your first turn to empathy should be with your family. Are you struggling to meet the needs within your own home? Look at your outer obligations and then work to turn that empathy toward your immediate family first. Not your sister-in-law. Not your mother. I am talking about your husband. Your children. Then thinking about boundaries within your home. These are harder and we will talk about them more in depth when we cover the melancholic mom. It took me many years to understand the pain of the melancholic. As a choleric dominant temperament, my impulse is to get on with it. This became very apparent in my divorce. My former husband is an unhealthy melancholic. I struggled so much with this. The healthier I became, the angrier he was. To him, his pain was his calling card. I dreaded it when people casually asked him how he was, he would tell them EVERYTHING from the pain in his big toe to the fact we were struggling in our marriage. The answers were often the same for the

teller at the bank or for his mother. The unhealthy melancholic wants an audience for their pain. To them the pain isn't just theirs, it should be everyone's. Everyone should be outraged by it. I give these examples as extremes, just like the unhealthy choleric isn't right with their dismissal of pain in others, the unhealthy melancholic isn't right in demanding everyone undertake their pain. Balance remember?!

Cholerics that are working on balance would do good to make a few healthy melancholic friends. For many years I avoided them like the plague! Now I find my friendships to be very edifying and humbling to me. We can learn from each other.

*Sanguines* feel pain differently than our two friends above. The sanguine often is very dramatic. While the balanced melancholic will shun away from asking for help, the unbalanced sanguine will shout for help off the rooftops. Their pain is quick, intense and then gone. Like the butterfly analogy for this temperament, it holds true in their expression of pain. My very sanguine clients that are learning to balance will send me an email full of drama and pain and then the next day send me one of peace and happiness! Often forgetting that they were in so much pain yesterday. This short term memory with pain can be a great thing, but again like our choleric friends, it can keep them from fully experiencing the lessons and then have them working through them over and over. I see this often in the frustration of moms that are struggling with rhythm. Sanguine moms tend to struggle with rhythm. Choleric moms tend to struggle with rigidity. Melancholic moms agonize about whether they are doing it right. Phlegmatic moms just don't know where to start and they may not really want to start anyway, at least not today. The sanguine mom has her strength in planning beautiful lessons and painting wonderful rhythm pictures for her home. Follow through is not her strength. Just like her pain, follow through can be very intense at first but then waning rather fast. She can have a great conversation with a melancholic mom about the horrors of the world one day and then totally forget to attend the peace rally they agreed to go to together. Balancing the sanguine in us can feel like this insurmountable task! Sanguine is my secondary temperament. As the years have passed, I have watched this part of me stand front and center much more often than it did when I was in my 20's or 30's. The challenges are in sticking to a task. Being the planner that the sanguine is can be a great strength. Use that strength to make yourself a plan you can really REALLY stick to. For you, the rewards have to be plenty and the tasks have to start out shorter and get longer as you get better at sticking with them. Lengthening our attention span is of great importance. One of the biggest challenges for the sanguine mom is often technology! Do you have a smart phone Sanguine Mom? Do you find yourself pulling it out when you are bored in a conversation? Or maybe you stopped reading this in the second paragraph \*wink\*. Do what you do best... make a plan. Make this plan though with yourself in mind. Don't make the same long plan that a choleric might make or the painstaking empathetic plan that a melancholic would. Make a plan that allows you to stop and change gears more often. If sticking to rhythm is hard for you, then break it up. Start with just getting up before your kids. That one won't be too hard for most sanguines. Vary what you are planning to do each morning so that you don't get bored. Make them things you are looking forward to. Perhaps one morning you are going to work on your painting alone, another you are going to dive into a book you have been meaning to start and another you are going to try some new yoga poses you had forgotten about. Changing things up

will be the most helpful for you. Write yourself notes to keep you from forgetting why you are on this path. The biggest challenge of the sanguine is being a jack of all trades but a master of none. This is not what you want to pass on to your children! I fully believe you can master MANY things and this is what will build your will!

The pain of a phlegmatic has been the most interesting for me. My oldest son is phlegmatic. He also has autism. There were many times when he was little that I brushed off behaviors thinking they were more autism than temperament, in fact, I had the hardest time decoding his temperament. Just like there are many markers of ADD/ADHD that are purely sanguine, there are also many markers of autism that are purely phlegmatic. The autism can trick us into thinking one is more choleric at times. I find that the phlegmatic will feel pain very deeply, much like their melancholic friends, but differently. The phlegmatic is concerned with comfort. Once they have been made comfortable, all talk of the pain subsides. I began to see the extreme differences between what I thought was my son's autism and his very phlegmatic temperament when I married my love Erik and we had Super Sam. Super Sam is a picture of phlegmatic. So is his daddy. They can be very even tempered, generally don't speak out of turn, fairly easy children, they tend to be slower... slow and steady. Another GIANT challenge for this choleric mom! Phlegmatics appreciate comfort above all. Warmth. Good food. Good company. A great TV show. I expect the saying "the way to a man's heart is through his stomach" was probably referring to a pretty phlegmatic man! The challenge of a phlegmatic is that they can appear apathetic and lazy. When unbalanced and not forced to rise, this can breed extreme entitlement and laziness. Someone should be doing this for them, why should they have to step outside their cozy zone? A balanced phlegmatic can enjoy being snuggled up in a warm bed with their little ones snuggled up to them, but also know that true comfort comes in a good work ethic. This balanced mom gets up and gets her work done so that she can enjoy the comfort. She struggles because those covers are SO cozy and warm. She just wants to stay wrapped up in them all day and sip cocoa and read a good long 500 page book or watch a really good TV series on Netflix, preferably something with 20 or so episodes so she can stay curled up in that blanket! The great parts about the phlegmatic mom is that once she lights her own fire - WATCH OUT - sing with me... this mom is one firrrreeee. Steiner described this temperament like the ocean. Calm and placid or raging waves. Both are good! The balance for you will be enjoying the good life, loving your body - even if it is slightly more robust than your melancholic friends, and knowing when it is time to get busy and work. You will struggle with discipline for your children, not because you can't be bossy like the choleric or because you are worried you will harm their spirit like the melancholic or even because you forget to like the sanguine... you will struggle because you wait too long to respond and then it will take longer to get things under control. I am confident that you can combat this!

The next segments will go much deeper into each of these temperaments and I will talk about ways that you can strengthen yourself AND parent a household full of different temperaments. I will help you be able to reach your melancholic child that wants to whine about lessons, your bossy child that calls for you to be a strong leader, your sanguine child that forgets everything



and your phlegmatic child that just refuses to write even. one. sentence. We will tackle this together!

## *Part 2 ~ The Cozy Phlegmatic*

When I sat down to start this piece, it was a lazy afternoon after a busy Saturday morning. We had our annual May Day with our local group and everyone was ready to relax a bit. My big kids settled in with books and talking to friends. My resident phlegmatic, Super Sam started begging for his piece of comfort. He would like a full belly and a good television show. (GASP! Yes, TV!) For the phlegmatic child, no amount of TV is generally enough. It isn't that they are lazy, it is that they seek comfort. Older phlegmatic children and adults will often want to curl up with a book or even a book on tape. As a mom with children of all temperaments, I have to say that the phlegmatic is probably the most calm, most pleasant, most even tempered child to parent. UNLESS. Unless you need to go somewhere. Unless you need them to hurry up. Unless you need them to eat their breakfast so you can get out the door. Unless you have to be across town in ten minutes and they can't find their shoes or worse they know where their shoes are but they haven't even started putting them on and you asked them to do it ten minutes ago and can't they see you are in a hurry?! Then they look up at you with the sweetest eyes and tears are welling up because they just want to please you. Yes. I have been that mom. Have you?

### *Parenting the phlegmatic child*

First let me say that if you are a choleric or sanguine mom, this will be no easy task. It will stretch you. As you work on yourself to balance, working with your phlegmatic child will get easier. Parenting the phlegmatic will take a great deal of planning on your part and also a lot of flexibility. When I am looking at my weekly rhythm (Sunday evening for the upcoming week) I am mindful to look at any appointments and errands and try to think about any places where my time can get sucked away. One of those time suck places is anger and frustration. When I have it in my choleric head that something needs to go one way but my beautiful SLOW son is just being his normal self... well \*I\* am the one that needs the adjustment. He is just doing what comes naturally to him. So if I see we have early morning errands on Tuesday, then I make sure the menu can support that. While my other children can slog down a smoothie and gobble up eggs and rush out the door... Sam. Just. Can't. Telling him to move faster is like telling paint to dry faster. He will be done when he is done. How do I get around this? I plan. When I get up on Tuesday morning, I make sure his clothes are all laid out, no itchy tags (honestly HOW did we all survive with tags as children??) I lay out his shoes or at the very least, I know where they are. Before we all sit down to eat, I make sure his meal is in a bowl that can go with him to the car and that his shoes are on his feet. This way, everyone can zoom on around him and I know he is all ready to go. This saves me so much frustration and it preserves our sweet relationship. On Sunday when we are rushing around trying to get out the door for church, it is far easier for me to pack snacks for him and our toddler than it is to get them to eat. It almost ALMOST seems like they go slower when we need them to go faster - I don't think this is really so, I think we are just

going faster so their normal slow speed seems insanely slow. Slow down Mama. (Author says to self.)

School work and a phlegmatic child is often fairly easy. UNLESS. Unless you are covering something that holds zero interest to them. Unless you want them to do it quickly. Unless there is something else that holds their interest much more so. How do you work with this? Well sometimes there is simply no way around it, you just have to require it. I say that, but I make sure that I balance requiring it with enough comforting activities. What is beautiful about homeschooling with a phlegmatic child is that once they have latched on to something, they will see it through, they want to know how the story ends. I have found that proper placement was most important with my sons that are phlegmatic. Pushing too early in any subject was met with resistance. Knowing when to back off and try later is a skill you will get good at honing. They are often resistant to doing something new, whether it be gaining a new skill or just starting a new lesson block, but if you are bringing the lesson at the right time, then you have a golden opportunity to cultivate learning. Be prepared for days when it feels like their heels are dug in and you can't do anything. These are perfect park days :)

"When a Waldorf class teacher notices that her phlegmatic students are beginning to lag, she will insert into her story a scene with the hero entering a magnificent banquet hall elaborately decorated and filled with many gustatory delights. She describes these wonders spread out on the serving table...the phlegmatic children, suddenly attentive, even entranced, lean forward in their seats, licking their lips." (Slow, Steady, and Even-Tempered by Thomas Poplawski, MEd.)

I do love this suggested approach of how to make things interesting for them. Just like my melancholic will love a good drama, the phlegmatic will love the bits of the story or lesson that are comfort and food related. For older phlegmatic children, those that are in the grades and studying cultures, you will have them enjoying any time where cooking and eating is part of your lesson!

Let's not forget that phlegmatics, for all their frustration, are also intensely awesome people! When I think about both of my son's that are phlegmatic, what I love about them is that they are loyal, happy, even tempered children. They are steady and strong. They will sit with me and enjoy a piece of cake for an hour and laugh and carry on. They will tell really dumb jokes and laugh out loud at themselves. Both of them would rather I take them to a movie than on a walk. They generally care deeply about those around them.

My oldest son that is phlegmatic is also on the autism spectrum and as he has gotten older, he has been extremely concerned about how he is acting. Spectrum kids can tend to be so much in their head and while my son is indeed in his head, he is also concerned that people know he is sincere. Just today, Harry and I were having a talk about an interaction I caught with a neighbor yesterday. I heard our neighbor ask Harry a question and rather than turning to the neighbor and giving him full attention, Harry mumbled the answer and kept walking. Thankfully our neighbor knows that Harry is on the spectrum and was easy going about it. This morning I mentioned that while he answered the question, the proper thing would have been to turn and look at the

neighbor, make eye contact, answer and then excuse himself. I watched him ponder it for a few moments and then he hugged me and thanked me. He is six foot tall, it is a little odd sometimes, as I wonder where my little boy went. During the cleanup from our May Day festival today, the same neighbor was talking to me and Harry entered the conversation. I watched Harry purposefully make eye contact before excusing himself. He is very concerned about offending others. These children are so loving, that they tend to be pretty pliable.

*Now let's explore mom a bit.*

"Phlegmatics strive for ease, comfort, and relaxation. They love good food, a comfortable chair by the fire, a beautiful room, and pleasant company. They are skilled at enjoying the good things of life and thus tend to be happy people. Humor and joy come easily to them... [they are] content to sit by quietly and to relish the fine pleasures the world has to offer." (Slow, Steady, and Even-Tempered by Thomas Poplawski, MEd.)

I am betting the stereotypical stay-at-home mom, the one watching soaps and eating bon bons came from this temperament! While that would be a crazy polarization of the phlegmatic, it describes two comforts that phlegmatics tend to crave. There are SO many positives to this temperament, it is easy to ignore the negatives! Phlegmatic moms may be slower to get going, once you are going, you generally stick it out - see it through. A phlegmatic mom may really struggle with a sanguine child that jumps from project to project because Mom wants to finish one thing before moving on. This can be such a great quality, be mindful of becoming too rigid. At the same time, don't allow your calm nature to take over all the time and get bullied into being done with something that you know needs proper attention.

With my edicts of getting up before your children, I would say the ones that fight me the most, especially at first, are the phlegmatic moms. They just love that comfort of that bed - especially if there are little people in it to snuggle with. I have noticed in my work that phlegmatics and melancholics tend to family bed longer than others. Phlegmatics crave that comfort - for themselves and their child, while melancholics are super worried they will damage their five year old if they sleep alone. I have found that they only doubt me for a while. When they are really ready to harness their rhythm because it is something they want, not what I want or what they *\*should\** do, then they are intensely committed and ready to go. They might email me and report that suddenly their children don't mind if they leave the bed, they are feeling so good getting up in the morning and that all that really needed to change was their desire and how they looked at it. Once the phlegmatic mom gets comfortable with the time, she will crave it and carve it out for herself.

Planning is not the strongest talent for most phlegmatic moms, however when she is carrying a strong desire to do it then she will plan and execute beautiful lessons for her children. Her struggles will be her choleric children that need her to set firm boundaries and sanguine children that want to flit about. As she balances herself, she will find the strength that lies beneath her watery temperament. Steiner called the phlegmatic, the sleeping choleric! It is in this mom to

be a strong, firm leader, she just has to remember to call upon it from a place of being in charge rather than waiting until her back is against the wall. As she balances, she will easily have the empathy of the melancholic, but it won't move her to act like it does the melancholic mom. The phlegmatic mom is a great listener, she will love to have a comforting lunch and a great dessert and she will listen to your troubles all day. The phlegmatic mom that struggles with planning and lessons usually only does so because she isn't really sold on her task. Phlegmatics must enjoy what they are doing or find a piece of it to enjoy or it will seem like drudgery. She will not be attracted to Waldorf for the cute fairies and gnomes, she won't be impressed by the graduated heads of state and the good test scores Waldorf students have, she won't be swayed by the benefits of it - she will be sold, hook, line and sinker from the beauty of the method, the slower pace of things, the relaxed atmosphere. She may struggle to actually get going, but once she does, again, she will stick with it.

### *Stretching the phlegmatic mom.*

If this is you, step back and take stock. What things do you love about your home, rhythm, lessons, marriage, etc? Those are the things you will find comfort in. As we find ways to magnify those things then you will begin to get better at those that you struggle with. Also take stock of what your major road blocks are. Is it getting up before your kids? Are you just convinced they will follow you out of bed? They may for a while. I am a firm believer of when Mom changes, everything changes. Mom has to change how she thinks about things. Perhaps you create a meditation space that you look forward to in the morning, or if a nice warm shower without interruptions is what you fancy then stock your shower with something yummy to bathe with so you look forward to getting out of bed. Think of your roadblocks and find ways around them. Maybe there is a wonderful bit of breakfast that you can't have with the children up and wanting to eat it off your plate! Make it for yourself. Remember that rising before your children has a lot to do with indulging yourself in time alone. Mama, meet self.

If rhythm and lessons are a struggle, then let's go back to the models of rhythm where I talk to you about how you want your flow at home to FEEL. Do not focus on how it looks, remember, you are all about comfort, how do you want it to feel? Do you want it to run smooth, as little fighting as possible, cooperative children? Then we have to work on that rhythm from those perspectives. If YOU want comfort, then YOU need rhythm. They will benefit, but you need it for your comfort. The same is true for lessons, meal planning, etc. Since your preferred mode is comfort and peace, then you will have to decide that being a good planner is something you are willing to harness. You MUST want it. Once you are there, this will not be such a struggle. You will value the comfort and peace it brings you and your family.

### *You can do this.*

In closing, I want to come back to my oldest son. He loves laundry. Yes, he is crazy. No, he really isn't. He loves that he can bring comfort to us. He loves the smile on our faces. He loves the time he gets to spend alone in the laundry room with his headphones on listening to good

music (his words, NOT mine!) He loves the comforting warmth of the laundry room. He loves the warm clothes as they come out of the drier. In our large family, we do three loads start to finish each day. He doesn't want help. He just wants his peace and quiet and the laundry. Phlegmatic children can be so wonderful if only we remember this when we are struggling. I would have never thought when he was nine that he would be where he is now!

If this is your temperament, embrace it! Love yourself. You are wonderful. Stretch yourself. Work to overcome that urge to sit at the computer. Go. Play. Enjoy the doing and the feelings that come from the doing.

### *Part 3 ~ The Sympathetic Melancholic*

Sometimes my parenting backfires. Does that ever happen to you? Do you ever just start talking and somehow the wrong words are coming out and you are not sure how to stop them? It doesn't happen to me often, but it did today. We have some stressful hurdles we are working through and because I didn't take care of myself like I normally do, things didn't go well. I know that there are different ways that I can talk to each of my children and sometimes I will admit as a bossy choleric, sometimes it is exhausting. Can't they just listen and do it my way? Haha!! I wish. One of the commitments I made to myself and to the Divine when I started this journey of conscious parenting, is that I would be the grown up and I would do better, since I know better. I am also not perfect. Thank goodness I am not perfect! That would be a lot of pressure! Now there are some of you reading this in horror - She just admitted she didn't want to be perfect! Yep. I don't need to be perfect to be a good mom. Neither do you. What I know is that this morning when the way it did because I wasn't in my balanced Choleric place, I was instead in my stressed out, I can't believe that you can't read my mind unbalanced choleric place. So what happens when I am in that place with my children? Well let's start with my two sweet phlegmatic boys... remember these guys love comfort... when things are rocky they just want it to go away. They will say anything or do anything to get the crazy lady to go back in her corner to pray and get her head screwed on right. So they were Johnny-on-the-spot... "Mom, what can I do?" "What can I clean?" "Should I just go to my room?" Their call to action was to get back to their comfy cozy happy place. Of course I should also mention it was the inaction of the oldest phlegmatic that set me going to begin with.... he was too cozy to do his chores... anyway, I digress. Then there is my teen daughter who is generally very sanguine but seems to be completely split between sanguine and melancholy. When she is backed into a corner by a barking dog... I mean by her mother... the melancholic comes out... oh and it can be ugly. All of this to bring me to the topic today... the life of the melancholic.

There are few things that mix worse than a really bossy unbalanced choleric and an unbalanced melancholic. Oil and vinegar... and not the good kind from the expensive oil shop in my favorite mall. I would normally classify my relationship with my daughter as the sweet, tangy 18 year traditional Balsamic blended with a beautiful Tuscan Garlic Olive Oil. Not today. Cheap dollar store oil... not even olive oil and white vinegar. Get the picture? So what makes the difference?

If I am the olive oil, I am the one that binds, that coats, that comforts, then how do we keep the vinegar sweet? How do we make our relationships all be as beautiful as a good meal? We have to always remember that they are delicate. All relationships have a delicate balance - just like the good expensive oil and vinegar. How do we balance? How do we become that sweet and tangy, beautiful Balsamic and stay that way? How do we keep from becoming our base weakness?

I had been a Waldorf mom for quite some time before I really began to dig into temperament. When I did, I noticed something... there are a lot of melancholic moms in Waldorf! That isn't a bad thing! I have so much more love and appreciation for melancholy than I did even five years ago. As I learned to balance myself more and more, I began to attract healthier melancholics, ones that were continually striving as I was, to be emotionally healthy and I began to see a lovely side that I had only gleamed before in bits and pieces.

Melancholics are often called "Bleeding Hearts" in mainstream culture. They are often so concerned with everyone and they struggle to balance so they can help themselves. As a mom, a melancholic is WONDERFUL at being an attached parent, but sometimes to the detriment of her marriage and herself! It can also happen that this mom is so worried she will do it wrong that she will opt to do nothing, believing that it is too hard or that she just knows she can't measure up. This same mom that is wonderful at helping Johnny with his skinned knee and truly wants to take away the pain can struggle when Johnny doesn't want to behave and won't follow the house rules. Like the phlegmatic, the melancholic will struggle to get going out of fear or stress and then continue to struggle if there is an obstacle that might seem too big, too frightening or overwhelming. Melancholics can lack confidence. Confidence is a hard one because someone can't just hand it to you, it is something you earn by doing, by learning and it can't come from a piece of paper - it has to come from climbing over those hurdles. It helps if you have a mentor that has walked the walk you are walking. Melancholics do better with a peer/friend figure than they do with a mothering figure. The mentor has to have overcome hardship, this gives the melancholic mom someone to really relate to (even if the mentor is another temperament.)

*Let's dig deeper... what ways do we gain confidence?*

More than once, I have gotten a frantic email from a mom that just couldn't watch her child in their current school situation anymore so she brought them home. While home they took time off and enjoyed the deschooling process, but then the mom realized that she had to take the next step and homeschool. Now she worries she isn't good enough, there is just so much information and what if she messes up.

**Attention Melancholic Mom.... We ALL mess up. Then we get up and keep going because that is what this commitment to being at home is all about.**

If you are melancholic, or you think you might be, this is for you. You will gain confidence through knowing and through doing. Baby steps. For you, you should never try to wing it, you will be uncomfortable and that will come across in your lessons. Drink deeply from the well of knowledge. You will thrive with planning. The choleric needs the plan so she can be in control,

you need the plan to help you take on tasks so you can be confident in your work with your child. I recommend starting planning in April... this is true for everyone, but especially so for phlegmatics that like to take their time and melancholics that have a lot to learn in order to gain confidence. Sanguines will by nature be able to pull together a big plan without much time, their weakness is implementation. The choleric was planned in January and likely has the next four years planned and can't wait to teach them so she can mark it off her list! So Ms. Melancholic, let's do an assessment of where you are with your knowledge base... make a list of the things you need to teach and make a note of the ones you feel good about, the ones you feel like you could use more work on and those that you just don't know anything about. It often happens that melancholic moms will do fine in the lower grades and then about 4th or 5th grade when the real work of history begins, then they start to get nervous. Remember that you can learn all the skills you need. Anything that you can't bring them, do not stress about! There will always be something you have to step away from, remember you don't have to be perfect. It is more important to slowly become a master of a few skills than it is to be a master of none. It is also good to know that with all the Waldorf school teachers I have known through the years - that is many - none of them ever get to all the material they want to teach. Everyone makes their planning based on what they want to happen. I always suggest doing a review midyear so you can evaluate if that plan is working for you. At that point you also evaluate your child and ask if they have stretched as you thought they would? Can they stretch more? Do you need to back off? These are all things that you won't know unless you have worked to gain the confidence, work the lessons and evaluate your child. You can totally do this! I promise.

Another way to work on confidence is to use ONE curriculum. When I talk to Waldorf moms, there is an even split between those who pull from several resources to build their own curriculum and those that stick with one voice because they like the detailed guidance. If you are a struggling melancholic mom, worried about your lessons, I would stick with ONE resource. Pick the one with the most support so you can get that peer help you crave. Once you have gained the confidence THEN you can diverge from the plan, get the confidence first.

*Continue to learn. Gain mastery!*

Mastery will help you so much. If you are committed to Steiner then my best suggestion is to get a good resource like *Rhythms of Learning* by Trostli and start reading. When you have read that, then pick lectures from the book you enjoyed and dig deeper into them. There is ZERO reason that you can't have the same level of knowledge that a class teacher has! MANY Waldorf homeschooling moms have MORE knowledge than the class teacher!

Be careful. It is very easy to read Steiner and then think you have failed your child because you didn't make sure they spent enough time crawling or they taught themselves to read at age 3 or insert your guilt here. Save guilt for sin. Take the information, transform it into knowledge. When we know better, we do better!

The melancholic mom will have her share of struggles. Being aware of struggles helps us work with them.

Your downfall will come in sinking into depression (too much inward thinking) and also in laying judgment upon others that don't have your view. While you are wildly sympathetic, you can also become overly concerned with your own plight. This can even be the plight of mothering children that you are so sure you are damaging daily. Steiner's wisdom would have you work to focus on the plight of others... you THRIVE at serving. Find ways to serve. Again, be careful. If your choice of service is a planet saving one, it is VERY easy to become fixated on the plight of our planet and have it cripple and depress you. I am not saying to avoid it, just be mindful. I would suggest your main service be one on one with someone else that could use your help or that needs you. My son that is melancholic can be in a black mood and then go help our elderly neighbor in her garden and he will be filled with joy for days. This is the kind of service you should strive for.

To avoid the depression place, you will have to be very mindful of your daily feelings. Give yourself a time frame. Maybe you surrender to the feelings for a couple days - YOU make the determination... make it now, don't wait for depression to come knocking... maybe two days? Allow yourself two days to mope or eat chocolate, or otherwise wallow in your sadness. Then light a switch, you commit to making the choice to do something productive, service oriented or uplifting. Most people with mild to moderate depression can work with this. If you need medication, then get some! Whether it be herbs or a prescription from your doctor, if you are having bad bouts of depression, get some help. Melancholics can become martyrs and that isn't healthy behavior.

You might also struggle with resentment. While all temperaments can have this issue, melancholics can get kinda mean. All extreme temperaments can lead to personality disorders - yeah, let's avoid that! Our culture seems to breed these extremes in recent years - maybe always? To stay away from that place, we have to work to stay present. We have to communicate. We have to learn to balance. If you find yourself resenting your children, your partner, your parents... stand back and try to take a healthy look at your own part in it all. Then don't wallow... instead SOLVE. Remember your mentors, look to them and find out how they overcame hardships and frustration. Work on forgiveness. Forgiveness is a gift you give yourself. Along with forgiveness, work on boundaries. Boundaries and forgiveness go together.

Boundaries begin at home. If you came from a family that didn't have boundaries then you will likely either be really good at them or really bad at them. Often, it is the latter. The melancholic wants to help, wants to rescue, and wants to serve. This can allow you to become unbalanced and put yourself second - which is fine in some instances but never where mental, physical or emotional health are concerned. Discipline at home can be one of those tough boundaries. My guess is that you have read every attachment parenting book from Dr. Sears to *The Continuum Concept*. You had a natural birth (or wish you did), cloth diapered, extended nursed and co-slept - okay, those aren't necessarily melancholic traits - all temperaments can be AP, but the melancholic is often taking these concepts much more internally than others. That is OK! Remember, I said that sympathy and empathy were two of your best strengths! There will



be a time in your parenting where you will have to say NO. It may be redirecting a very high needs toddler or helping with the will development of a three year old, whatever it is, the word NO will be needed. That of course doesn't mean you can't be attached! I just means you have to look at boundaries, the situation, how you are holding the space, etc. It means you have to plan and you have to stick to your plan. If Johnny acts up in the grocery store, are you going to beg him to stop? Or are you going to just pack him in the car and leave. I like to have an escape route in every situation. Before I get out of the car, no matter where I am, I am thinking to myself "If I have to leave, I will....." this keeps it fresh and lets me set the boundary with the children. I set boundaries by saying things like "You may walk, but if you run then you will get in the cart." Then my job is to put them in the cart when they run. That sends the message that I am holding the boundary and I am willing to step up. If we allow 14 chances, then they will not think we are serious. What seems like cute silliness in a young child, will not seem so cute at 8, 10 or 15! Decide when they are young how you want them to behave. That of course doesn't mean they are in a strait jacket, but it means you have set boundaries for what is appropriate in your home and what isn't.

### *The melancholic mom and her children.*



Life would be easy if we only dealt with our own temperament! Easy and worth it though are two different things. We learn so much from interacting with others and home life can become a wonderful proving ground... if you doubt, see my opening paragraph! The melancholic mom will likely bristle the most at her choleric children. They will be bossy and they need YOU to become the bossy leader when working with them. Remember they need a parent to lead - it is NOT enough for that parent to just be Dad. Your challenge will be to develop a Ms. Bossy Pants when you need to. Your sanguine child will likely frustrate you because she is jumping from one thing to the next and you are very concerned about her developing will and how will she ever do anything with that temperament, etc. For her, you will need to have periods of will building but also of changing scenery. That doesn't mean you are on outings

each day, but it does mean that you will need to keep their lesson work flowing and lively, this will help them gain a desire for depth. Also, it is likely that while this child may frustrate you, you also have a deep, loving connection. Strengthen that and always keep in mind to preserve the relationship. You will likely be most at home with phlegmatic children, although their appearance of laziness may sadden you and also with other melancholics, although if you are balanced at all, their bouts of wallowing may be more than you can handle. The trick is to observe them and take care of you.

Inner work for the melancholic mom can take place in many ways... it often doesn't work for people to be frank with you about cheering up, so your focus could be more on those that have hardships. As I mentioned above with a mentor that has been through hardships, it is also helpful to think about religious figures, historical favorites, etc. to draw some good inner work from. Be sure that you aren't going overboard, for instance, don't pick Christ as your focus if you are Christian... while YES, you should seek Christ like attributes and Christ like living, aligning yourself completely with a being that is thought to be perfect will only frustrate you. I like Paul. He was a bossy apostle, but also introspective. He had many struggles and through his life was wanting people to see the Christ in him, rather than to be Christ. Paul's desire was to cast off his natural man and be more Christ like. There is that fine line....because remember we don't want to sink into judgment of others. Others might choose historical figures, feminine figures - there are two prophetesses in the Old Testament to focus on - Debra and Miriam, both strong women that had many obstacles to overcome. For those of different faiths, pick something that you connect with - for goddess religions, there are many faces of the Goddess, and Lilith is one, as she was cast out... Ostara... find someone that you connect with for your inner work, this will help you in times of sorrow and struggle.

Your biggest asset will be building your will through mastery, observing and simply doing. You will get stronger, more balanced and become a better mother and teacher in the process.



#### *Part 4 ~ The Flitting Sanguine*

Reading more than 3 books right now? More than 4 handwork projects going at once? How about those piles of clutter? Do you have 14 things on your to do list and you are struggling to get through them all because you start one and then forget and then move on to another? Are you a curriculum collector? Do you lay a great plan but then get overwhelmed by it so you just scrap it and fly by the seat of your pants...all the while knowing you could do better if only.... if only the house was clean, your mom would stop calling, you didn't have to take your kids to so many lessons.... fill in your excuse here. Yes, I said that... excuse. Now, now... don't hate me or step away from the computer. I

can say excuse because I know how it is. I am Choleric with a very heavy dose of Sanguine. Being sanguine means we are awesome at allowing ourselves to be distracted - especially if the distraction seems to be an answer to all our problems. Like that awesome Waldorf co-op that you enrolled the kids into so that you didn't have to teach main lessons or the book cases full of curriculum.... the baskets full of crafting and handwork. It is exhausting. I will tell you a secret. Ready? There will ALWAYS be something more fun, easier, and not so hard that you can turn your attention to. If you have allowed yourself to be pulled into a dramatic situation with loved ones or your community, then you may have the struggle of it isn't just distracting, it is negative.

*Been there.* In fact I was there years ago, climbed out of that hole, and vowed I would never go back. I did. It happens. Sometimes it sneaks up on us. Sometimes it sneaks in because we want to be helpful. Our well-meaning intentions (or Facebook) pull us away from our family, our partner, our home.

The sanguine mom has some great strengths! She can put together a beautiful school plan. It is probably in a binder with pretty paper and decorated with colored pencils... you are really good at this! You probably love to travel and really enjoy a change of scenery. It is likely you rearrange your furniture often. If you can get on top of clutter, then you likely enjoy a cleaning program like Fly Lady because the tasks are short and you feel like you can accomplish something in a short time. You are generally pretty happy and love being around others that are happy. Your secondary strength is probably either Choleric or Melancholic.... both are good pairings.

Areas you struggle... those lessons... they looked so pretty when you wrote them out and now they just don't seem as fun so you are hunting for a solution. Or you realize that planning the school year and executing it takes effort and so you may hop from one curriculum to the next trying to find the right fit. Spending money and wasting time. You might really struggle with discipline because you can't stick with punishments or you become permissive, cloaking it as positive parenting and dismiss anyone that suggests your child needs a bit of work.

As a mom you might be frustrated that your children rarely complete things, not realizing that you are their biggest role model. You might be the queen of "Jack of all Trades, master of None."

ADD is an extreme sanguine. Sadly, our culture medicates, often without therapy to help the imbalance be more manageable. I am not saying that medication is a bad thing, but without the coping skills, the medication is just a band aid.

*How do we get you to balance? The things that are helpful to build your child's will also are great for helping you tame your own :)*

Let's start with simple, small will building activities. I recently challenged a struggling sanguine client that she take the very next day and purge her dozens of started but not finished handwork projects. At first there was a pause on the phone line. Then we talked it through... "what exactly is in that stash of projects?" She thought for a moment about knitting that had been started for a projects that she knew wouldn't be finished, at least not now. I suggested that she rip out any knitting project that wasn't at least half done and set the yarn aside. Then I suggested that she pick ONE project and set herself a deadline to finish it. She later reported that it was so freeing to wind up the yarn from those ripped out projects and put them away. She later began setting small daily goals for herself - and they were getting accomplished!

*You can do anything you set your mind to.... just don't try to do everything all at once.*

You have this wonderful overabundance of will we just need to help you learn to use it. Think about your week. Do you get bored at home or overwhelmed by the mess, the laundry, or the dishes? If it is really bad, then you may need to enlist some help to get it under control. Do IT. Do not wait another

day living in a situation that is not conducive to a fun family life. If you are really struggling with this, I want you to stop right now and make a plan. Once it is made, I want you to email me. Tell me that you made your plan. Or go to our Facebook group and let's talk about your plan. There is NO shame in it. You likely just need a bit of accountability! Remember the old saying "how do you eat an elephant?" Well the answer holds true here..."one bite at a time." You will need to reward yourself regularly as you work on your projects... those rewards can NOT be more stuff. Tell yourself that you will not buy more clothes, more toys, more ANYTHING that isn't edible until your project is done. Once you are caught up, make it part of your daily rhythm to keep it that way.

*I promise, your day has the same amount of time in it that mine does!*

Order will actually give you MORE time. More alone time, more time with your partner, more time with your kids. More time. When we run from one spot to the next, then we have chaos, chaos is the killer of time.

If you are struggling with the artistic elements of the curriculum because they seem overwhelming, then pick ONE to master. Work only on one. Like our friend the Melancholic Mom, you can get overwhelmed, but not because of lack of confidence, you will just wing it and then feel bad.... for like ten minutes and then you are on to the next project. TAKE THE TIME. Become the master, it will be so worth it. THEN you can move on. "But Melisa," you might be saying, "my summer is already a month gone, how will I do it all before school starts?" You won't. It is ok. What you will have are some really great lessons that you are the master of. Then you can move on to the next piece. If you start this week, you can easily get good at knitting AND drawing or painting before school starts. Pick something and focus. Repeat after me.... focus.... work... reward. Repeat.

Reduce your to do list. I learned long ago to have a daily to do list and a longer, ongoing one. Each morning (or night before) pull SIX things off the bigger list. ONLY SIX. Trust me. Get through those six and then if you have more time then you can add more, two at a time. This will help you not get overloaded.

Delegate. If you have children ages 7 and up, put them to work. They can help you get through all the chores that need to be done each day. If they make messes, they get to have the joy of helping you clean up!

Be firm. You can be a good, positive parenting, attached mama and still have children that don't act like they came from Lord of the Flies. If you are struggling holding the space, then work through our rhythm series for starters. I want you to know that you can heal your issues with authority and have happy, healthy kids that obey without beatings \*wink\*

Like any temperament, the goal is a good deal of balance. You are easily the life of the party, but you can also learn to be the boss, to have lasting empathy for a good friend and to relax with your husband.

## Part 5 ~ Mrs. Bossy Pants

Well Mrs. Bossy Pants... how are you doing today? I can poke fun at Mrs. Bossy Pants, because she is my base temperament. As I have gotten older, I have mellowed a LOT. However... back me up against the wall and I will become Mrs. Bossy Pants to protect myself!

Mrs. Bossy Pants generally likes to be in control... prefers complete control, but will settle for partial control if she must. She doesn't often work well with other Mrs. Bossies unless the other ones are completely competent and know what they are doing. Then this mama can kick back a bit because she can trust another leader. Mrs. Bossy Pants probably started planning for the new school year at least six months early and if she didn't, she will make it a priority to take a weekend and get it done. She knows how to get things done. She is a doer. Being a doer is a GREAT thing! She loves check lists and gets glee in marking things finished.

Mrs. Bossy Pants likely came to Waldorf because it just made sense. More about the benefits than the pretty. The pretty is a great side piece, but she is really all about how the curriculum meets her child. Or can meet her child if... IF she can get over herself! Yes... I just said that. See we have a tendency to want to control so much that we forget to let others take part in the *doing*. The *doing* is what the children need. The *doing* is how their will grows. Without the *doing*, it only looks good on paper.

*How do we step back and let others DO?*



Being a choleric mom is no easy task! We want to take things on and really get busy. We can do that in Waldorf, but it is better if we focus that kind of energy on ourselves and let the natural unfolding energy come forward for the children. Listen, your choleric, bossy self will be a WONDERFUL asset when you hit the changes that occur at age 9 and above... those children need that stable, balanced authority, but when they are little, they need space. Space to unfold. How does that look?

A few days ago, Ellie and I were watching YouTube videos on hatching chicks. Some were great fun, the chicks were hatching out naturally, and it was beautiful to watch. There was one though that disturbed us both. The person with the camera was cracking open the egg for the baby chick. The baby didn't look at all like the others did at birth. It didn't get up and get moving as quickly as the others. The forced birthing stunted it a bit. It made me reflect on what I have learned as I have been transforming myself through the years. With my oldest, I was very much a toe tapping, finger snapping, get it done mom. While I am still pretty bossy, I have worked hard to let my secondary temperament come out to play and also to find the other temperaments within myself. It is really easy for choleric to get so caught up in doing that they forget to relax like a phlegmatic can or have empathy for others in the way a

melancholic is talented. While I am nowhere near perfection, lol, I am seeing within my 40+ year old self the fruits of my own labor. There are many things I have learned about just *allowing* that took me time to learn. It is all part of the journey.

*As you work through stepping aside and letting your child unfold, start with things that are easy...*

*1. Let them help you bake, clean and anything else that you tend to just DO because it is quicker, cleaner and you are just plain better at it.*

*2. Consciously realize that you need to let them DO. Make it part of your morning prayer work.*

*3. Take the time to really understand your children. As choleric, it is really easy for us to just expect that everyone conform to us. That is not realistic or logical. We are all different. Take time to realize that you will have to talk differently to them than you would someone that works for you. They are not the hired help. They are unfolding little beings that can't read your mind Mrs. Bossy Pants no matter how badly you want them to!*

*4. Find things about all the temperaments that you can appreciate - this is HARD. For years I struggled with the other temperaments. I had some really unhealthy examples in my life of them all. I made up my mind that I would find healthy specimens! It takes work, but you can do it. When you put it out there then you can attract it.*

*5. Take the time to really ponder and map out the kind of parent you want to be. Do you enjoy being Mrs. Bossy Pants? Can you see yourself letting go a bit? What would it take to let go? For many of us, we hold on because we don't feel like there is someone as competent to step up. This is so HARD! When I was a single mom, I HAD to be Mrs. Bossy. It took me a long time after marrying my awesome phlegmatic/sanguine husband to let go and let him do his thing. When I did, there were SO many blessings. It took me realizing that I did not have to be in charge. It also made me see that in my marriage to my ex, there were plenty of times when I just didn't give him the chance to rise because I was so mad at him. This stuff goes deep. Letting go is hard if you are constantly worried that you will be disappointed. You have to ask yourself hard questions like "is his way OK with me?" Or "is it enough for the task to be done, does it need to be done MY way?" Once we can get a handle on some of these things, it can make our lives so much easier. If the problem is that our partner won't rise, then we have to evaluate that... won't and can't are two VERY different things. Work together.*

*6. Remind yourself regularly WHY you are on this journey. Waldorf homeschooling is a GREAT journey of will discovery for all moms, but the choleric mom especially because she must learn to trust. Trust nature. Trust the child. Trust Steiner's work. Trust the crazy lady that wrote this. Trusting is no easy task. You must remind yourself daily that you do not have to do it all.*

When planning your lessons Mrs. Bossy Pants... keep in mind that you can't cram water into a jug with a lid. Remind yourself that these beings are not sponges or vessels to fill up. They have all



this within them... they just have to remember it. Can you remember something if someone is yelling at you? Likely not... take your time. The process is just as important... if not MORE important than the product. Such a struggle for you since it is in your nature to focus on the product. Start looking at the process as the product and that will help.

So what now? Well your school year is probably all planned so get out of here! Get up and go have some fun with those kids! Let them spray you with the hose or make mud pies or go to the water park or make cupcakes together (let them control the flour!)



### *Part 6 ~ Management Mom or Engaged Mom?*

Some of our most popular questions come from those on the path trying to figure out where they stand. Often they feel like they are experiencing burn out and they don't know why. They are frustrated at this inner work path and things seem to be repetitious and dull. A few moms even tell me that outwardly they act happy but they aren't and while it worked for a while, everyone is starting to notice it is just an act.

Somehow, somewhere along the path, you went from being Engaged Mom to Management Mom. It happens to us all. It typically happens most to moms that have either a big family or a child with special needs, but not always, I have observed it in smaller families. You are walking along being Engaged Mom and then a crisis hits or you move house or we have to take a job or there is an extended sickness... something... something that flips you into Management Mom mode and you stay there. While it isn't comfortable to be this mom at first, things are managed - not as beautifully as you would want, but they are being held together and you can get from one day to the next. At first you may not notice that you went to this place. It feels off but you can't pin point it. You are meeting everyone's needs but you are grumpy and so are they. You feel like you can't get enough rest or enough time. You aren't meditating or praying because Management Mom only has enough time to take care of others, not herself (at least she has convinced herself of this.) You are squabbling with your husband more. Probably haven't been intimate in a long time. You just don't have the time.

The truth is, ALL moms flip into this mode when they have to. We have all been there to some degree, the trick is coming back from there. The temperaments all handle Management Mom differently. Choleric tend to step up their bossy... Ms. Bossy pants knows that most of the time, loud and overbearing gets the job done. Sanguines tend to feel the spiral out of control but figure if everyone is fed and they have clothes to wear then she is good, she often has a crazed look in her eyes, she is late more than normal, she can't seem to finish anything and her kids are probably out of control. The melancholic mom is likely in full blown depression. She is overwhelmed with the amount of managing that needs to be done, she feels inadequate and is saddened daily, she feels trapped by a cycle that she can't seem to end. Phlegmatic mom is mad. This isn't how her life was supposed to be. She is frustrated

and angry but quiet about it unless you engage her, then be careful. She will come after you. She probably spends too much time on line but you can't tell her that. She will get mad.

How do we step away from this place? Often it gets here before we realize that we have been reduced to the cook, the grocer and the librarian. Don't forget the maid. Management Mom mode happens when we skip those important planning steps, we go just a few times without being on the same page as our partner and we skip our rhythm because we just have to get XYZ done instead.

I am about to share. I know I share personal things a lot, but there are many things I keep to myself. Most not relevant, this one probably is. In August 2012, we moved into our dream space. We became co-housers. I came to it with full knowledge and with giant rose colored glasses on. It was going to be awesome. Perfect. Finally MY kind of people. We jumped right into community life and assumed that everyone was emotionally healthy. Kids were busy, Erik and I were busy. We jumped on some committees and did all we could, because you know... we had so much extra time on our hands (tongue firmly in cheek.) We are all service oriented and this place needed service so we stepped up. In November, they announced needing a book keeper and property manager and they followed it with "we don't have much in the budget." So being who I am I volunteered and I only asked that our homeschool group could meet in the common space in return. In the first few weeks I noticed being out of my Engaged Mom place more than normal. Then suddenly I stopped thinking about it. I was in full Management Mom mode. Bossy. Grumpy. By January, Erik and I re-evaluated and tried again. No luck after a few short weeks I was back to Management Mom. My husband has the patience of Job! My two year old does not. Things were really suffering. Including our business. I noticed things that were never a problem before. I had a panic attack. Then another. Daddy put his foot down. It wasn't just the extra work, it was people without boundaries that contributed to it all. In May I walked away. Withdrew. Remembered what hanger I put Engaged Mom on and got her out. Repented. Spent a lot of time with God. Trimmed parts of our business. Hired more help. Found my center. Put Rescue Remedy in all the rooms of the house so I could easily get to it. Proud to say no more panic. Also happy to say that this was the single biggest learning experience of my life. I have had many learning experiences, but this one does indeed take the cake. Of course there are details here that I am leaving out - it would be really long to explain the entire sorted mess, but... the point is... Management Mom has no fun and often neither does her family.

**\*\*I will update a bit. I moved in October 2013 to San Diego. We had to leave that mess. With my body able to relax, sickness began to present itself and in April of 2014 I had a stroke. I believe it was from years of wearing the Management Mom hat far too much. Be safe. \*\***

Being in Management Mom mode is exactly what we need to get some tasks done. Sometimes we need to Woman Up and do the hard stuff and tell ourselves that it is a short time. What we need to not miss is when to step back. If you find yourself in Management Mom mode for longer than a couple weeks then press pause for a day and ask yourself how you got here, why you came here and start looking for Engaged Mom. If the computer has become a problem then unplug it and send the cords with your husband to work! Just for a day or so! You can go that long without the computer. Get out in nature. Take off your shoes and stand in the grass. Go swimming. Pack a picnic. Read books to your kids that you really get into (vs. just reading.) Engage. Drink some tea. That laundry can wait a day. So can that clutter in the corner. Engage.

Engaged Mom is pliable. Engaged Mom is ready to work and remembers why she chose to be at home with her kids. She knows that a certain part of her day she has to put that Management Mom hat on but



the majority of the day she can stay engaged. When she gets really good at rhythm and holding the space then she can manage and engage simultaneously. It feels good. She feels strong. She has hope. Engaged Melancholic Mom will never be the same as Engaged Sanguine Mom, but they both carry the same love and desires positively for their children. There is peace.

Once back in Engaged Mom mode, you can begin to take stock of what needs to be done. Rebuild a realistic rhythm. If you have a big family or are managing special needs, you can make note of what you know works and what doesn't. You can ask for help (HUGE!!) You can enjoy your husband. Most of all you can remind yourself that it doesn't all have to be done today. Being engaged doesn't mean you play all day, but it does mean that you are present. You hold that space. You don't mentally check out when you need to be ON. You don't reach for your smart phone and Facebook or Instagram constantly. You reach for cute little cheeks and tickley tummies and eyes that are like oceans and teen age banter and well, you get it. You get back to having more fun. More peace. More laughter. More intimacy. More prayer. MORE. We are here to have joy in our posterity... not just manage them.