



Monthly Parenting Tip from the ACFC

February 2020



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Taming the Spirited Child

We all know the story of Seabiscuit, the spirited horse that no one could control or tame. With the right nurturing and “taming,” he became a winner and a champion. The same philosophy that was used to “tame” this wild horse can be applied to the spirited child. The goal is to tame and direct the creative spirit of these children, not to break it. A good first step to understanding this process is to identify the unique characteristics of spirited children. This can be done using the acronym “CAPPS*.”

C - Spirited Children Are More Curious - Spirited kids often get so fixated on something of interest to them that any distraction will be unheard or ignored. Their curiosity and focus can be profound. The upside is that spirited kids often use their heightened curiosity to make great contributions later in life.

A - Spirited Children Are More Adventurous - Spirited children yearn for adventure. They want to travel to distant lands. They want to create something new and different. Of course, in their adventures they can push the limit of their parents' sanity.

P - Spirited Children Are More Powerful - Spirited kids seem to have more energy and power than most kids. It is as if they view the universe as their personal playground on which they should be able to romp, play and explore. When channeled effectively, such power is the stuff that creates leadership.

P - Spirited Children Are More Persistent - To some, spirited children can seem spoiled, but because they have a high capacity to focus on a goal and not give up until they achieve it, it's really frustration that they are expressing. This persistence can be a great asset. The ability to keep going when others quit, to refuse to take no for an answer, will play a big part in their future success.

S - Spirited Children Are More Sensitive - Spirited children have often been described as thin-skinned, high strung, and sensitive. This can mean they are physically sensitive to textures, noises and other stimuli that do not bother others. They can also be emotionally sensitive to criticism, to losing, and to failing. On the positive side, they are often highly attuned to the sensitivities of others, and often have a heightened ability to read other people.

Parenting a spirited child requires patience, understanding and energy that can be difficult to maintain. Remember that these are special children, with special talents and energy that will frustrate you and then at the next turn, amaze you. Remember the story of Seabiscuit and find ways to “tame” this unique spirit. Remember to encourage them with phrases like, “You are doing well,” and “I am glad you are my child.”

The art of taming a spirited child requires time. It cannot be done overnight, and it cannot be done without continued effort and energy to the process. But the payoff comes from knowing that you have made a huge contribution to your child—and to every person the child will come in contact with throughout the rest of his/her life.

* Excerpts from “Taming the Spirited Child; Strategies for Parenting Challenging Children Without Breaking Their Spirits” - Dr. Michael Popkin

To learn more about how you can become an “active” parent, go to [vimeopro.com/activeparenting/acfc](https://www.vimeopro.com/activeparenting/acfc) and enter Access Code: ACFC150630 (case-sensitive) when prompted. You'll find a library of informative videos for parents of children of all ages. These helpful videos are offered free of charge by the ACFC in partnership with Active Parenting.