

Hand-out for Parents

ORCHID CHILDREN

DO YOU HAVE A CHILD who seems more sensitive or who reacts more strongly to stressful situations than other kids? Does he dislike unexpected change? Is she bothered by tags on clothing, loud noises, or strong smells? Do small setbacks cause a big upset? Your child may be an “orchid child.”

Orchid children are more sensitive to stress. They can't help it – it's just the way their brains are wired. Children at the other extreme, who adapt more easily to stress, are sometimes called “dandelion children.” Like dandelions, they seem to grow well in almost any situation. Orchid children, on the other hand, are more strongly influenced by what goes on around them. But research shows that orchid kids can do very well, even better than normal, when they get lots of love and support.

The Do's and Don'ts of Raising Orchid Children

Do accept your child as she is and help her learn how to live happily as the person she is.

Don't think that you will be able to change your child's personality or sensitivity through discipline or training.

Do help your child cope with stress and teach him stress management strategies. This is important for all children, but especially for orchid children.

Do learn to manage your own stress. This will help you be the best parent you can be and also sets a good example for your child.

Don't overparent or overprotect. Like other kids, orchid children need to experience and learn to cope with the ups and downs of life.

Do set up family routines. Having some predictability to their day-to-day life helps orchid children cope.

Do teach your child life skills. Developing skills gives children a sense of control and confidence. This



includes simple skills, like being able to tie your shoes, and complex skills, like making a step-by-step plan.

Do get lots of support, especially from people who will understand and accept your child. Try to ignore advice from people who think they know how to “fix” your her. If you need help, don't hesitate to ask.

Don't rely on punishment to teach your child. Punishment is not the best teacher for any child. Orchid children, especially, learn better from gentle correction than strong punishment.

Do your best to enjoy your child and have a good relationship. Good relationships with parents and other adults help children feel safe and secure. That relationship will also help you to understand, support and teach your child.

Don't give up hope, even when things seem difficult. It's a long-term process: look for small signs of progress rather than big changes. And remember, orchid children don't need “super parenting,” just normal amounts of love, guidance and support.