

## Your Strong Willed Child

Strong willed children are a source of confusion, frustration and anger for parents. These children are typically very forceful in expressing their feelings, preferences, likes and dislikes as well as acting on these in a forceful fashion. Parents find these children nearly impossible, if not impossible to control. Often parents have tried every intervention they can think of with little or no results. This leaves them befuddled and frustrated.

Strong-willed children drive their agendas over that of parents. Frequently, work with a strong-willed child can be designed to assist the child in utilizing their driveness in more productive ways. This serves to maximize those energies. Sometimes however, the child is simply disobedient and unruly.

### Directed, Not Destroyed

Most parents want to meet the oppositional behaviors of the strong willed child head on. This usually includes firmer and increasingly rigid discipline, the taking away of privileges and other more aggressive means of shaping the child's behaviors. This usually only escalates the strong willed child's behaviors.

Rather than drive the child into submission, one is better advised to direct the behaviors. The energy or drive behind the strong willed child's behavior can be used as a force to move the child forward both now and in the future. Like a surging river, directing the energy is more productive than destroying it. There are several ways to do this. Many books can be helpful as well as the guidance of a mental health professional.

### Is My Child Strong Willed?

The first step is determining if your child is strong willed. The following assessment will provide some very general direction in making this determination. This assessment is not designed to replace more detailed assessments, nor is it suited

to substitute for the expertise of a mental health professional with experience in this area. The following assessment simply provides a very basic point of departure in helping your child. Each of the following nine headings contains three options. Choose the option that best describes the behavior of your child.

#### Quality of Mood

1. Child is usually pleasant and happy.
2. Undecided. Child shows neither trait more than the other.
3. Child frequently cries and often has a "cranky" attitude.

#### Adaptability

1. Child seems to like changes, is quickly comfortable with switching to a new activity.
2. Undecided. Child shows neither trait more than the other.
3. Child tends to get angry or "throw a fit" when stopped from continuing an activity.

#### Sensory Threshold

1. Child quickly "soothes" or responds to touch.
2. Undecided. Child shows neither trait more than the other.
3. Child is not particularly cuddly, seems to not "warm up" to touch.

#### Regularity

1. Child is relatively easy to work into a schedule of bedtime, naps, meals, habits, etc.
2. Undecided. Child shows neither trait more than the other.
3. Child tends to be erratic in schedule and is difficult to work into a routine.

#### Reaction Intensity

1. Child rarely speaks loudly or spontaneously interrupts conversations.
2. Undecided. Child shows neither trait more than the other.
3. Child often spontaneously is loud and tends to verbally interrupt in conversations.

#### Distractibility

1. If asked to do so, the child can pay attention to

something he or she is not particularly interested in.

2. Undecided. Child shows neither trait more than the other.
3. Child has a hard time focusing attention on something unless he or she is really quite interested in it.

#### Activity Level

1. Child is active on occasion, but usually not noticeably so, nor disruptive
2. Undecided. Child shows neither trait more than the other.
3. Child has a lot of "monkey-like" energy and is generally very obviously active.

#### Approach-Withdrawal

1. Child easily "takes to" new people emotionally; seems to like even strangers when smiled at.
2. Undecided. Child shows neither trait more than the other.
3. Child not comfortable with new people; "sticks" to parents; doesn't like unanticipated changes.

#### Stubbornness

1. Is flexible in changing a decision or adapting to a change of plans.
2. Undecided. Child shows neither trait more than the other.
3. Will stick persistently to an idea or a preference, even when parents try hard to persuade the child otherwise.

A score of 17 to 20 suggests the presence of strong willed traits, meaning that your child has some of these tendencies, but would likely not be fully identified as strong willed. A score of 21 or above suggests the likelihood of a strong willed child. If indeed your child scores significantly on this assessment, professional assistance is recommended.

This information is presented for educational purposes only. It is not a substitute for informed medical advice or training. Do not use this information to diagnose or treat a mental health problem without consulting a qualified health or mental health care provider.

*Everyone experiences difficulties in life.  
We have been helping people find solutions since 1988.*

## **HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOU WOULD BENEFIT FROM COUNSELING?**

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These conditions or situations are widely experienced and may indicate the need for professional counseling:

- Depression, discouragement
- Lack of motivation, apathy
- Anger, bitterness, resentment
- General dissatisfaction with life or relationships
- Difficulties in handling life events
- Marriage and family conflicts
- Sexual dysfunction
- Difficulties in decision making
- Physical ailments for which no medical cause can be found, such as headaches and lower back pain. (Medical consultation may be required in conjunction with therapy.)
- Difficulty in building and maintaining satisfying relationships
- Job stress, inability to keep jobs
- Inability to deal with a child's misbehavior or school problems
- Compulsive behaviors (eating disorders, spending, sexual issues)
- Issues related to low self-esteem or lack of self-worth
- Excessive dependence upon the approval or validation of others

**CRAIG LOUNSBROUGH, M.Div., LPC**  
LICENSED PROFESSIONAL COUNSELOR  
19284 Cottonwood Drive, Suite 202  
Parker, Colorado 80138  
(303) 593-0575  
craig@drtrathen.com  
www.craiglpc.com

*Many People,  
Every Journey,  
One Mission*

# THE STRONG WILLED CHILD



*An Assessment  
For Assessing a  
Strong-Willed  
Child*