

# The Abstract Sequential Learning Style

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I have a child who is dominantly abstract sequential and have enjoyed and admired her for nearly 30 years now! I have to admit that for a long time there were aspects of my daughter's make up that I didn't know how to interpret, but after reading [The Way They Learn](#) when she was in 9th grade, a lot of the pieces suddenly dropped into place. It was amazing! *There are always personal traits that can be perceived negatively by others when in reality what is going on is positive.* For example, the AS child may seem to be aloof at times, may seem opinionated, may even seem argumentative on occasion, and when rushed, may come to a complete stand-still. But if we take the time to delve beneath the surface with the goal of mining the gold in the child, the rewards will be great. Best of all we will be equipped with the knowledge we need to relate beautifully to him.

## What They Need

- **Proof.** To AS learners, gathering facts from recognized experts in their field is critical, so if you express an opinion, be prepared to back it up with some verifiable data. This is one child you don't want to say "Because I said so" to unless that is all you have left! My daughter and I butted heads frequently over my habit of relying heavily on my instincts while my daughter needed to see tangible proof of the facts. "How do you know that?" is a question an AS might vocalize on a regular basis.
- **To solve problems.** While dominant AS people can imagine and create, they are firmly based in fact, logic, and expediency. What they create will likely be a system that will be useful and solve problems. They are less likely to create simply for enjoyment, making things up out of thin air. Their creation will meet a need and solve a problem.
- **Time.** They do not trust emotion and feelings unless they have had time to evaluate whether or not those feelings and emotions are completely justified. At times it will take the AS child some time to even figure out WHAT they are feeling. AS children have an inborn sense of how much time will be required to complete tasks they are asked to do – and complete them thoroughly. If they sense that they have too much to complete in the amount of time they have, they can become very distressed to the point of shutting down and refusing to do the work. While their more random counterparts might be ok with doing a rushed job just to call it done, AS children would rather not do the work at all than to do it in a haphazard manner.

## Sources of Stress

Sources of stress at school for AS dominant children include

- busywork for homework
- too many assignments for the time allotted
- timed tests or quizzes in which they are to complete as many answers as they can in a given amount of time (but are not allowed to complete ALL the questions)
- and unclear questions or directions

- The AS child does poorly with tests that are true/false or multiple choice where the best answer is one that is true most of the time
- and excels on tests that allow for variables in the answers. If the question allows any room for situations in which that particular thing might not be true, AS learners will not know how to answer. My daughter performed outstandingly in classes in which she was able to share her reasoning, but did less well in classes that were more concrete in their approach. The only thing I knew to tell her was to answer the questions anyway, but use asterisks and write her comments by the questions that to her seemed to present more than one answer. (Then I prayed the teacher would read and consider her comments!)

## **What They Are Good at**

AS learners are wonderful at

- evaluating situations or needs
- creating systems or procedures that are efficient and which meet those needs
- learning from observation of others and the choices they make
- creating systems and procedures, both spatially and procedurally
- in emergency situations, evaluating the problem and arriving at workable solutions quickly
- sensing what will work well and what will not work well

## **Who They Are & What They Do**

- Analyze a situation before acting
- See the big picture and imagine a solution
- Are admired for their intellect
- Are exact and precise and logical
- Are factual and can back up what they do or think
- Solve problems efficiently
- Are logical and structured in their thinking
- Like to discuss and debate controversial topics
- Need a quiet environment in which to think and work
- Admire intellect and ideas
- Tend to ask amazing questions

- Remember details and can relate them back to you

### **What They Prefer**

- Listening to lectures or lessons and reading
- Following logical, accepted procedures
- Data to back up statements
- Teachers who are experts in their field
- Seeing a project through to the end

### **What Is Hard for Them**

- Being rushed
- Not having their questions answered
- Being asked to express their emotions
- Being governed by someone who is governed by sentiment
- Working inside a system that is not efficient or effective
- Illogic
- Lack of clarity as to the task or question

If you have a child who is AS and he is upset, rather than making him verbalize what is bothering him, play 20 questions like this.

“Was it something that happened at school?”

“Yes, I think so.”

“Was it something in class?”

“No.”

“On the playground?”

“Yes!”

If you are lucky enough to finally guess correctly, your child will likely smile with relief and say, “Thanks! I feel a lot better!”

Abstract sequential learners are in the great minority. If you are the parent of an AS, any time you invest in becoming attuned with her will pay off in huge dividends to both of you. The best piece of advice I can offer is to take the time to notice the little things – don’t become too busy to be in tune with him. Notice body language, pay attention to his frustrations, and listen to him talk. The AS child will usually not demand the acceptance and support he needs.