

BUILD-UP GUIDE:

Words to Fill a Melancholic's Needs

Melancholic children are wired to need space and silence, safety, sensitivity, and support.

If you have a Melancholic child in your family, in your classroom, or on your team, consider this your action cheat sheet—a list of things you can do to fill those needs and show them how much you value their innate wiring.

BUILD UP A MELANCHOLIC CHILD BY...

Noticing when they need support.

- › Toddler: “That’s tricky to do all by yourself. What if we work together?”
- › Tween: “I’ll show an example to make sure everyone understands.”
- › Teen: “You must be slammed. How can I help?”

Keeping their secrets.

- › Toddler: “I’m here to listen no matter what you want to say.”
- › Tween: “Thanks for trusting me enough to share that.”
- › Teen: “You can trust I’ll keep this between us.”

Encouraging their creativity.

- › Toddler: “What a great picture! Will you tell me about it?”
- › Tween: “If you want to take lessons, I’d be happy to look into options.”
- › Teen: “I love watching you perform.”

Being sensitive to their emotions.

- › Toddler: “I can totally see why that made you sad.”
- › Tween: “That sounds like a tough day.”
- › Teen: “I’m so sorry that happened. It must have been stressful.”

Helping them feel safe.

- › Toddler: “I promise to stand right here so you’ll know where I am.”
- › Tween: “You can tell me anything. I’m always here for you.”
- › Teen: “Call if you want a ride home and I’ll come right away.”

Believing in them.

- › Toddler: “I knew you could do it. I’m so proud of you!”
- › Tween: “You are totally prepared. I believe in you.”
- › Teen: “They are going to be so impressed by your research and detailed work.”

Helping them formulate a Plan B.

- › Toddler: “If you start to feel overwhelmed, who could you ask for help?”
- › Tween: “Okay, if that happens again, what can you do instead?”
- › Teen: “If you don’t get this position, what is your Plan B?”

Respecting their privacy.

- › Toddler: “I’ll make sure your sister stays out of your room.”
- › Tween: “You can tell me as much or as little as you’d like.”
- › Teen: “I didn’t want to do anything without asking you first.”

Making eye contact when they’re talking.

- › Toddler: “Let’s move to a quiet spot where we can sit together.”
- › Tween: “I want to give you my full attention so I don’t miss any details.”
- › Teen: “Do you want to come get coffee with me and we can chat?”

Giving them time to process.

- › Toddler: “You can tell me your answer at the end of the day.”
- › Tween: “If you decide you want to talk about it, I’m here to listen.”
- › Teen: “Let’s revisit it next week and see how you think and feel then.”

Caution!

Saying or doing things that deprive a child of their innate needs—intentionally or accidentally—won't bring out their best. So, consider this your cheat sheet of words and actions to avoid if you have a Melancholic child in your family, in your classroom, or on your team.

YOU MAY TEAR DOWN A MELANCHOLIC CHILD BY...

Dismissing their emotions.

- › Toddler: "There's no reason to cry about this."
- › Tween: "Don't let it bother you. I'm sure she didn't mean it that way."
- › Teen: "You're still not over that?"

Making them feel guilty.

- › Toddler: "Your cranky mood kind of ruined the day."
- › Tween: "You never want to come with me."
- › Teen: "We paid a lot of money and now you don't want to go?"

Not knowing or giving them all the details.

- › Toddler: "Don't worry about the day's plan. I'll let you know what's next."
- › Tween: "I'm not sure what time it starts. I guess we'll find out if we're late."
- › Teen: "I haven't decided yet whether this will count toward your final grade."

Changing the schedule—especially without notice.

- › Toddler: "I've decided to make one more stop."
- › Tween: "I told them you could play after school today."
- › Teen: "You can do your homework later. I've decided we're all going to the store now."

Allowing them to isolate or withdraw.

- › Toddler: "Go be sad somewhere else. The rest of us are having a good time."

- › Tween: "Tell me what's wrong or don't, but I'm not playing 20 questions."
- › Teen: "Fine. Stay in your room as long as you want. I give up."

Ignoring or interrupting them when they're talking.

- › Toddler: "Let's talk about something other than trains."
- › Tween: "Here's what I think you should do..."
- › Teen: "I can't stop to listen right now. If it's important enough, you can wait."

Not being prepared or having a plan.

- › Toddler: "I didn't think to bring any with me. Oops!"
- › Tween: "I'm not sure what to do. I didn't expect this."
- › Teen: "We can just wing it. I'm sure it will be fine."

Overwhelming them with social obligations.

- › Toddler: "I invited your entire preschool class!"
- › Tween: "Today's busy! You have piano, then softball, then a sleepover."
- › Teen: "The Jacksons are coming on vacation with us. Won't that be fun?"

Trying to cheer them up or pressuring them to have fun.

- › Toddler: "Go run around with the other kids. You'll feel better."
- › Tween: "Would it kill you to smile? This is supposed to be fun."
- › Teen: "It's no big deal, just look on the bright side..."

Pointing out their mistakes.

- › Toddler: "It's almost perfect, but these two pieces are in the wrong place."
- › Tween: "Remember, this is the question you missed on the practice test."
- › Teen: "You played a good game... except for the four missed free throws."

BUILD-UP GUIDE:

Words to Fill a Phlegmatic's Needs

Phlegmatic children are wired to need harmony, a feeling of worth, a lack of stress, and respect.

If you have a Phlegmatic child in your family, in your classroom, or on your team, consider this your action cheat sheet—a list of things you can do to fill those needs and show them how much you value their innate wiring.

BUILD UP A PHLEGMATIC BY...

Asking for their thoughts, opinions, and feelings.

- › Toddler: “Your sister asked for pancakes this morning. How does that sound to you?”
- › Tween: “What project topic would you like to choose? You know better than I do what you’re interested in.”
- › Teen: “Your opinion matters. What do you think about all of this?”

Showing curiosity about their interests.

- › Toddler: “Wow! You know so much about trains. What else can you teach me?”
- › Tween: “I noticed you’re on the last few pages of your sketch pad. I’m so interested to see what you’ve drawn.”
- › Teen: “Tell me more about this game. It looks like you just reached a new level.”

Giving them time to process.

- › Toddler: “Our class will have free-choice time later this morning. Start thinking now about what you’d like to play.”
- › Tween: “There’s no rush to decide right now. You have time to think about it. Sign-ups close on Thursday.”
- › Teen: “I value and respect your input. Think about it and we can talk more later.”

Handling conflict calmly and quietly.

- › Toddler: “I cannot let you ignore your brother. Let’s sit on the couch until we can both name our feelings.”
- › Tween: “Since it’s just us, is now an okay time to talk about what happened after school?”
- › Teen: “I have something I want to mention to you. Will you wait for me after practice?”

Revisiting past successes.

- › Toddler: “You zipped your coat all by yourself yesterday. I believe you can do it again today.”
- › Tween: “You got so much praise for your performance last time. Your practice really paid off.”
- › Teen: “Remember how you came through in the clutch earlier this season?”

Being flexible yet clear about timelines.

- › Toddler: “The sooner you get dressed, the sooner we can leave for Grandma’s. She’s so excited to see you!”
- › Tween: “Please clean your room. Anytime before dinner is fine.”
- › Teen: “Can you please help your sister with her homework? It will take less than 20 minutes.”

Listening completely, without interrupting.

- › Toddler: “Then what happened?”
- › Tween: “Tell me more, I’m interested.”
- › Teen: “I’m curious. Go on...”

Focusing on one task (or step) at a time.

- › Toddler: “Let’s start by just putting away the dress-up clothes. Then you can choose what’s next.”
- › Tween: “Cite three sources in your final paper. I’m here if you require some help.”
- › Teen: “I know you want a summer job. I suggest sending Mr. Collins an email asking if he’s hiring. What’s your idea?”

Caution!

Saying or doing things that deprive a child of their innate needs—intentionally or accidentally—won't bring out their best. So, consider this your cheat sheet of words and actions to avoid if you have a Phlegmatic child in your family, in your classroom, or on your team.

YOU MAY TEAR DOWN A PHLEGMATIC BY...

Expecting things done at your pace, not theirs.

- › Toddler: "Dinner is over. I'm sorry you didn't have time to finish."
- › Tween: "I thought you'd have this done by now."
- › Teen: "You still haven't started? It's due tomorrow!"

Pushing their involvement or interaction with others.

- › Toddler: "Don't just watch. Go ask if you can play too."
- › Tween: "You have to go. I already signed you up."
- › Teen: "Why won't you at least try out?"

Not giving them time to recharge.

- › Toddler: "We have two more errands to run. Then we're meeting the Millers at the playground."
- › Tween: "I need you up early to help me with yard work."
- › Teen: "You have too much to do to be laying on the couch."

Mistaking their quiet for apathy.

- › Toddler: "I guess you don't care."
- › Tween: "Are you even paying attention?"
- › Teen: "Clearly this isn't important to you, or you'd say something."

Forcing them to make quick decisions.

- › Toddler: "They're only pajamas. Just pick a pair."
- › Tween: "I need to let her know right now whether you're going or not. You're so indecisive."
- › Teen: "Do you want to come? I'm about to buy the tickets. Make a decision already."

Taking advantage of their kindness.

- › Toddler: "She wanted the pink plate, and I knew you wouldn't mind the blue one."
- › Tween: "Mrs. Garcia needs help this afternoon, so I told her you'd come over."
- › Teen: "You don't mind dropping your sister off on the way, do you?"

Allowing loud or unsettled conflict.

- › Toddler: "NO!"
- › Tween: "Do I have to do EVERYTHING around here?"
- › Teen: "We'll have to talk about this later. I don't have time right now."

Stressing them with expectations.

- › Toddler: "You don't need my help. I know you can do it alone."
- › Tween: "I'm sure you'll love piano as much as I did."
- › Teen: "There's no reason you can't be a starter on the varsity team."

BUILD-UP GUIDE:

Words to Fill a Choleric's Needs

Choleric children are wired to need loyalty, a sense of control, credit for their work, and appreciation.

If you have a Choleric child in your family, in your classroom, or on your team, consider this your action cheat sheet—a list of things you can do to fill those needs and show them how much you value their innate wiring.

BUILD UP A CHOLERIC BY...

Giving them something to be in control of.

- › Toddler: “Do you want to play school? You can be the teacher.”
- › Tween: “How would you like to redecorate your bedroom?”
- › Teen: “You lead warm-ups at the beginning of practice.”

Recognizing their work.

- › Toddler: “I love your painting. Let’s hang it on the fridge.”
- › Tween: “I know how complicated the recipe was—the cookies you baked are delicious!”
- › Teen: “I can tell how much work you put into writing this paper. Great job!”

Encouraging their intellect.

- › Toddler: “Can you help me finish this puzzle?”
- › Tween: “For this project, you can choose your own topic—anything that interests you.”
- › Teen: “Where did you learn how to do that? Will you teach me?”

Having their back.

- › Toddler: “I told Dad what a big help you were today with your sister.”
- › Tween: “If you decide not to stay the whole time, I’ll be happy to pick you up early.”
- › Teen: “You have a lot going on today. I’ll take care of that for you.”

Letting them decide.

- › Toddler: “What do you want to wear today?” “What would you like in your lunch box?”
- › Tween: “What activities do you want to participate in this year?”
- › Teen: “We’ll support whatever choice you make about college. We believe in you.”

Keeping communication short and to the point.

- › Toddler: “It’s time to leave. Meet me at the door with your shoes on.”
- › Tween: “This is due on my desk by noon tomorrow.”
- › Teen: “Homework, laundry, dinner. Then we’re out the door by 7:00 for the game.”

Promoting their leadership.

- › Toddler: “Will you be the line leader this week?”
- › Tween: “What an original idea for a business! I know you can make it a success.”
- › Teen: “I think you’d make a great student council president. Have you considered running?”

Speaking logically and realistically.

- › Toddler: “If you touch that, you’ll burn your hand.”
- › Tween: “You’ll have an after-school obligation three days a week if you decide to sign up.”
- › Teen: “Yes, if you leave in the next 10 minutes, you’ll get there on time.”

Caution!

Choleric children are wired to need loyalty, a sense of control, credit for their work, and appreciation.

Saying or doing things that deprive a Choleric child of their needs—intentionally or accidentally—won't bring out their best. So, consider this your cheat sheet of words and actions to avoid if you have a Choleric child in your family, in your classroom, or on your team.

YOU MAY TEAR DOWN A CHOLERIC BY...

Making decisions for them.

- › Toddler: "This is the bedtime book I'm going to read you tonight."
- › Tween: "I told Sam's mom you could play after school."
- › Teen: "I signed you up for tutoring on Thursday afternoons."

Not doing what you say you'll do.

- › Toddler: "I know I said we could go to the playground, but I have one more errand to run first."
- › Tween: "Change of plans. Mrs. Thomas is going to bring you home from practice instead."
- › Teen: "Don't worry about turning in your paper. I decided not to count it for extra credit."

Embarrassing them in front of others.

- › Toddler: "Someone picked out their own outfit today. Can you tell?"
- › Tween: "Remember that time you..."
- › Teen: "Math has never been your best subject."

Not listening to their ideas or opinions.

- › Toddler: "That's not how this game is played."
- › Tween: "Let me show you the right way to do it."
- › Teen: "I said no. End of discussion."

Not recognizing their accomplishments.

- › Toddler: "You wrote three of the letters backwards."
- › Tween: "Here's what I think you should work on at practice this week."
- › Teen: "What are you going to do next? Don't slow down now!"

Not believing in their abilities.

- › Toddler: "Ask for my help next time."
- › Tween: "Maybe you should wait and audition next year."
- › Teen: "You can apply if you want to, but..."

Leaving them out of a decision.

- › Toddler: "Your brother wanted macaroni for lunch, so that's what I made."
- › Tween: "We decided you needed a break, so we didn't sign you up."
- › Teen: "I didn't ask because I didn't think you'd care."

Not standing up for them.

- › Toddler: "This is not worth getting upset over."
- › Tween: "I'm sure she didn't mean it that way."
- › Teen: "You got yourself into this mess. Figure it out."

BUILD-UP GUIDE:

Words to Fill a Sanguine's Needs

Sanguine children are wired to need approval, acceptance, attention, and affection.

If you have a Sanguine child in your family, in your classroom, or on your team, consider this your action cheat sheet—a list of things you can do to fill those needs and show them how much you value their innate wiring.

BUILD UP A SANGUINE BY...

Listening to and engaging with their stories.

- › Toddler: “That sounds like it must have been so silly!”
- › Tween: “When he said _____, what did you say?”
- › Teen: “That sounds so exciting! Tell me all about it.”

Making (and keeping) eye contact when they're talking.

- › Toddler: “Come sit on my lap and tell me about your day.”
- › Tween: “Let me put this down so I can give you my full attention.”
- › Teen: “Why don't we FaceTime this afternoon so you can tell me how tryouts went?”

Being positive/matching their enthusiasm.

- › Toddler: “Yes! That's a great idea. Let's do it!”
- › Tween: “It sounds like you and your friends had an awesome time!”
- › Teen: “How exciting. That's an incredible opportunity!”

Promoting their creativity.

- › Toddler: “What special picture can we draw for Grandma today?”
- › Tween: “Let's cook something new for dinner. Any ideas?”
- › Teen: “I heard about this photography contest and immediately thought of you.”

Laughing with them.

- › Toddler: “You are the funniest kid I know!”
- › Tween: “When you laugh, it makes me laugh more!”
- › Teen: “I just love your laugh. It's contagious!”

Showing interest in their friends.

- › Toddler: “Who did you play with on the playground today?”
- › Tween: “Would you like to invite them for a sleepover this weekend?”
- › Teen: “What's new with ____? I remember you telling me...”

Approving of them.

- › Toddler: “You're so good at writing your letters.”
- › Tween: “You have the most beautiful singing voice.”
- › Teen: “You stayed true to yourself. I admire that.”

Taking them seriously when needed.

- › Toddler: “Oh, no! You sound angry. Can you tell me why?”
- › Tween: “I'm so sorry that happened. You have every right to feel down.”
- › Teen: “I can see this is a big deal to you. Tell me everything.”

Caution!

Sanguine children are wired to need approval, acceptance, attention, and affection.

Saying or doing things that deprive them of these needs—intentionally or accidentally—won't bring out their best. So, consider this your cheat sheet of words and actions to avoid if you have a Sanguine child in your family, in your classroom, or on your team.

YOU MAY TEAR DOWN A SANGUINE BY...

Shaming them.

- › Toddler: “Shhhhh! You're being too loud.”
- › Tween: “Please stop. People are staring at you.”
- › Teen: “You're too old to be acting like that.”

Keeping them from friends or fun.

- › Toddler: “We don't have time for that today. Put on your shoes and let's go.”
- › Tween: “I think you have enough going on without signing up for that too.”
- › Teen: “You'll have to tell him you can't go. I need you to watch your brother tomorrow.”

Not listening or giving them your full attention.

- › Toddler: “I'm busy right now. Go find something else to do.”
- › Tween: “Hold on. I just got a text message. Let me see who it's from.”
- › Teen: “Can you cut to the chase? I need to get back to my work.”

Requiring them to always be “on.”

- › Toddler: “Cheer up! It wasn't that big of a deal.”
- › Tween: “Show everyone that dance you were doing the other day.”
- › Teen: “What's wrong with you? Why are you being so serious?”

Burdening them with details.

- › Toddler: “Here's what we're going to do today before nap time.”
- › Tween: “Next weekend we have a lot going on. We have to...”
- › Teen: “Read every part of the directions.”

Being too serious.

- › Toddler: “I shouldn't have to sing a song just so you'll brush your teeth.”
- › Tween: “Does everything have to be a game?”
- › Teen: “Please focus so we can get this over with—not everything in life is fun.”

Dwelling on the bad or sad.

- › Toddler: “It was a pretty good day, except for...”
- › Tween: “I think you baked these cookies for too long. Next time, try...”
- › Teen: “Let's review the game film so you can see what went wrong.”

Demanding perfection.

- › Toddler: “This is looking kind of sloppy. Why don't you start over?”
- › Tween: “This room is not clean yet. I still see...”
- › Teen: “Are you sure this is the level of work you want to turn in?”