

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."