

DIFFICULT PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE ¹

This questionnaire contains 40 problem behaviors in six categories. Circle each behavior that applies to your parent and add them up. If your score is 10 or less, your parent is slightly difficult, if between 11 and 20, moderately difficult, and 21 or above, very difficult.

A. Dependency Behaviors:

1. cannot tolerate being alone, wants you all the time.
2. becomes ill or hostile when facing separation.
3. makes irrational demands on children and others.
4. attaches to someone, leaning on that person (daughter/son).
5. can't make decisions, even trivial ones.
6. cannot allow self to depend on others even when help is needed.

B. "Turn-off" Behaviors:

7. tends to view others as all good or all bad, sometimes changing from day to day.
8. is extremely negative and complains of unhappiness.
9. is hypercritical of others and hypersensitive to criticism.
10. is tactless.
11. has to be "right" all the time.
12. is angry and hostile, while blaming others for the same characteristics.
13. has temper tantrums, throws things, or uses abusive language.

14. is distrustful and suspicious, sometimes to the point of paranoia.
15. pushes people away, or even cuts off the relationship.

C. Self-centered Behaviors:

16. has a distorted self image, viewing self as "something special" at one end, or inadequate at the other.
17. sees events solely as to how they affect self, not others.
18. is insensitive to needs of others, thinking of self as generous.
19. guards own turf.
20. is jealous of others.

D. Controlling Behaviors:

21. manipulates using guilt or flattery.
22. antagonizes others by behaving passively or withdrawing.
23. elicits feelings in others that reflect own helplessness or rage.
24. cannot tolerate differences, whether great or small.
25. becomes angry and hostile when people don't behave as desired.
26. makes demands so excessive that the opposite effect is achieved.

E. Self-destructive Behaviors:

27. ever been addicted to alcohol, drugs, or medicines.

28. ever had eating disorders.
29. ever behaved compulsively by gambling, hair-pulling, washing, etc.
30. ever been accident-prone.
31. behaved masochistically, e.g., doesn't comply with dietary restrictions or refuses to take medication.
32. ever been suicidal or threatened suicide.

F. Fearfulness Behaviors:

33. is a worry wart, anxious over real or imagined occurrences.
34. is subject to panic attacks.
35. has phobias, fear of crowds, germs, etc.
36. has sleep problems.
37. behaves ritualistically and superstitiously.
38. has magical expectations, e.g., goes doctor shopping seeking a cure.
39. tends to deny the obvious, e.g., symptoms of illness.
40. is preoccupied with physical problems, real or imagined.

¹ ©1994. From: Coping with Your Difficult Older Parent: A Guide for Stressed-Out Children, by Grace Lebow and Barbara Kane with Irwin Lebow (Avon Books, 1999). This questionnaire may be reproduced with the inclusion of this footnote.