

In Conversation with Dr. Robert Keith Wallace and Dr. Frederick Travis authors of DHARMA PARENTING

1. What inspired you to write Dharma Parenting?

We were fortunate that knowledge about Ayurveda body types was coming to light when our children were born. We had both been studying the brain and learned how the brain is completely transformed from birth to adulthood. These two streams of information were extremely helpful for us in understanding our children. We teamed up to share this knowledge with other parents.

2. What are the different “Brain/Body Types” and how were they established?

Dharma Parenting draws on the time-tested knowledge of Ayurveda’s mind/body types and combines it with the latest understanding of how the brain is shaped by its natural maturation and by experience. These two factors— natural patterns of response and ongoing brain changes—contribute to what we call brain/body types, which are enormously useful for understanding your child’s behavior. The three main types from Ayurveda are:

- Vata body type— sensitive, always changing, and creative.
- The Pitta body type—dynamic, strong willed, and inquisitive.
- The Kapha body type— is calm, steady, and kind.

The brain/body types also take into consideration the transformation in brain circuits occurring during development. For instance, the frontal connections are the last to mature, and are not yet fully developed in teenagers, which helps explain their sometimes erratic behavior.

3. Is there science behind the Brain/Body Types?

The science of body types from Ayurveda has been investigated in terms of cardiovascular functioning and DNA expression. We have published a paper that predicts patterns in brain functioning that characterize each state. We are currently conducting research to test these predictions.

4. How can understanding their child’s Brain/Body Type help parents connect better with their children?

Knowing your child's brain/body type allows you to understand why one child quickly gets their clothes on, while the other seems to just stand around. It allows you to understand how one of your children is academically brilliant in school and the other can barely keep up. Knowing your children's brain/body type—their natural tendencies and changing brain connections—allows you to better understand what your child needs to be happy and successful.

5. How can understanding their own Brain/Body Types allow parents to improve their parenting skills?

Dharma Parenting incorporates six parenting tools to help you refine your parenting skills, and they apply to children of all ages. They're easy to remember using the word "dharma" as an acronym:

- a. Discover your child's, and your own, brain/body type
- b. Heal yourself
- c. Attention and appreciation
- d. Routines to improve family dynamics
- e. Manage meltdowns and cultivate better behavior
- f. Anticipate and adapt

Knowing your child's brain/body type is the first tool of *Dharma Parenting*. Heal Yourself is the second. You need to get as much sleep as you can; eat nourishing food; and practice meditation so that you can be more effective as a parent. If you are balanced, you will be the best parent you can be. This is key, and it's often overlooked in parenting books.

6. Why should parents offer children of different Brain/Body Types different afternoon snacks?

Each of the Brain/Body types reacts differently to food.

Vata Types – Need easy-to-digest snacks like fruit, yogurt, and most toasted nuts and seeds. Avoid crisp dried food like potato chips and popcorn because they aggravate Vata and cause imbalance. Vatas do best with warm foods like warm muffins or cookies, and hot liquids like cocoa and soup.

Pitta Types – Have a strong digestion and need sizeable snacks. But avoid hot and spicy. Go for yogurt and granola, muffins and milk, and a sandwich with juice.

Kapha Types – Have a slower digestion and don't need a large snack. Stay away from cold heavy foods such as yogurt, ice cream, and cheese. Offer a crunchy apple, crisp carrot sticks, or a muffin and fruit juice.

Don't worry, *Dharma Parenting* gives you charts to easily keep track of what's best for each type of child!