

Eagles, Parrots, Doves, and Owls

A simple guide to your child's natural style — and how to reach each one

“To be fair, I treat all my kids the same.”

It sounds right. It even sounds noble. But it may be one of the most common mistakes a loving parent makes — because treating four different children exactly the same isn't fair at all. It's like buying everyone in the family the same size shoe.

Fair isn't *identical*. Fair is giving each child what *that* child actually needs. And to do that, you have to know who's standing in front of you.

Here's the good news: kids come in a handful of recognizable types. Once you can spot your child's natural style, a hundred little mysteries start to make sense — why one child argues every single bedtime while another never makes a peep, why one falls apart over a spelling mistake while another forgets the test was even happening.

One of the clearest ways to picture these styles is with four birds — a framework made popular by Merrick Rosenberg and Daniel Silvert in *Taking Flight!* (you may also know it as the DISC model). Most children lead with one of them. Let's meet the flock.

The Eagle — Your Determined Leader

From the jump, Eagles take charge. They often walk early, talk early, and start running the household shortly after. They're bold, decisive, and full of drive — give an Eagle a goal and stand back. They'd rather do it themselves, do it now, and do it their way.

That same drive has a flip side. It can look like bossiness. Eagles bristle at the word “no,” push against authority, hate to lose, and can bulldoze gentler kids without even noticing. When an Eagle melts down, it's usually because something got between them and their goal.

What an Eagle needs to hear:

- “I trust your judgment.”
- “You're a strong leader — and kindness makes you even stronger.”
- “Even when you slow down, you're still powerful.”

How to reach an Eagle: They respect strength, not speeches, so keep it short and direct — the long emotional lecture just gets tuned out. Give them real choices and a little control over their world; it satisfies the need to lead without a power struggle every hour. When you have to correct, stay calm and firm, then move on. And coach the kindness piece on

purpose. An Eagle who learns that strong and kind belong together grows into the kind of leader people actually want to follow.

The Parrot — Your Expressive Explorer

Parrots are sunshine with legs. Social, funny, imaginative, and always up for an adventure, they light up a room and pull everyone into the fun. They make friends everywhere and remember every compliment they've ever been given.

They also forget every rule they've ever heard. Parrots wrestle with focus, follow-through, and details. They'll stretch a story for the sake of a good laugh, and because they live for connection, a harsh word or a public embarrassment lands like a slap. Left unchecked, they can start tying their worth to applause.

What a Parrot needs to hear:

- “Your ideas matter.”
- “You light up the room just by being you.”
- “It’s okay to pause. You don’t have to perform to be loved.”

How to reach a Parrot: Lead with warmth, always — and never shame them in front of others. Keep correction quick, gentle, and private; a heavy tone shuts them down fast. Give them structure, but make it playful — a checklist becomes a game, a chore becomes a race against the clock. Praise out loud and often. And help them cross the finish line on what they start; Parrots have a thousand brilliant beginnings and just need a loving nudge to reach the end.

The Dove — Your Heartful Helper

Doves are the gentle, steady heart of a family. Calm, kind, loyal, and dependable, they love peace and routine, bond deeply with a few people, and are usually the first to share and the last to complain. They feel everything — and they notice your tone long before they notice your words.

Because they hate conflict, Doves struggle to say no, give in just to keep the peace, and quietly swallow stress until it leaks out somewhere else. They're slow to warm to change, easy to overlook because they don't demand attention, and a louder sibling can run right over them.

What a Dove needs to hear:

- “You’re safe. I’ve got your back.”

- “It’s okay to say no.”
- “Your quiet strength makes a big difference.”

How to reach a Dove: Tone is everything. A sharp word an Eagle would shrug off can wound a Dove for days — and they won’t tell you it hurt. Keep your voice gentle and your routines steady, and give them a heads-up before any big change. Praise their kindness and loyalty, not just their finished chores. Teach them, gently, that disagreeing with someone doesn’t end the friendship. And never read their quiet as “everything’s fine” — go check.

The Owl — Your Thoughtful Thinker

Owls watch before they leap. Observant, careful, and deep, they ask “why?” and “what if?” until you run clean out of answers. They love order, routine, and getting things exactly right. Hand an Owl a problem to solve or a system to organize and they’re in heaven.

Their high standards have a way of turning inward. Owls can be perfectionists who melt down over a single mistake, worry about everything that might go wrong, and freeze up for fear of getting it wrong. They can seem reserved or hard to reach, they dislike being rushed, and they don’t enjoy being teased.

What an Owl needs to hear:

- “You are more than your mistakes.”
- “You think deeply — that’s a gift.”
- “Done is better than perfect.”

How to reach an Owl: Give them the *why*. Owls follow reasons, not orders — explain the logic and they’ll cooperate. Don’t rush them; they need time to understand before they act. Correct with calm and facts, never with heat. Praise effort and progress, not just flawless results, and gently reframe failure as part of how learning works. Go easy on the teasing, respect their need for order, and you’ll have a thoughtful, capable partner for life.

A Few Honest Cautions

You have a style, too. Here’s a quiet trap: we tend to parent the way *we’d* want to be parented — which works beautifully if your child shares your wiring, and backfires if they don’t. A take-charge parent can steamroll a gentle Dove without meaning to. An orderly, logical parent can be baffled by a free-flying Parrot. Knowing your own style is half the battle, because it shows you where your instincts will help your child and where they’ll quietly get in the way. (That’s a whole topic of its own, and one I’ve written about separately.)

It's a map, not a cage. Two more things worth remembering. First, most kids are a blend — they lead with one or two birds, not a single pure type, and their style can shift as they grow. Second, a style describes a child; it never excuses one. “That’s just how I am” doesn’t get an Eagle out of kindness or an Owl out of trying. Use the four birds to *understand* your child, not to box them in.

The Sky Needs All Four

None of these birds is better than the others. An eagle soars, a parrot delights, a dove comforts, and an owl sees what the rest of us miss — and a healthy world needs every one of them.

Your child didn’t get their wiring by accident. They were built a certain way, on purpose. Your job was never to turn them into a different bird. It’s to figure out which bird you were handed, and then help them fly.

So this week, do one small thing. Picture each of your children and name their bird. Then pick the one line from their list they most need to hear — and say it to them, out loud. Watch what happens.

If it's helpful, I've also written companion pieces — one on building your child's self-image and one on strengths-based parenting — that pair closely with this one. Happy to share them.

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