

Understanding your child's temperament is one of your most valuable tools as a parent.

Temperament is the individual behavioral style that is the first and most natural way of reacting to the world. Temperament is inborn, stable across time and part of who your child is and how he or she responds. It cannot be changed. Adults should adapt their interactions and expectations to the temperament of each child.

Recognizing and understanding your child's temperament plays a major role in successful parenting, and minimizes power struggles and frustrations.

Once you understand that every child is an individual with his or her own unique temperament, then you can come up with the most effective parenting skills for him or her.



Trying to change your child's temperament is like trying to put a square peg in a round hole. You will be more successful matching your parenting style to your child's temperament.



About the Author

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Additional Resources

Kinderplatz of Fine Arts has many books written by experts in the field of child development. They are available for you to check out any time. We have a file full of articles helpful to the issues of parenting.

We also have a Kaiser-Permanente video series on understanding temperaments available to check out through the office.



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Recognizing and Understanding Your Child's Temperament

PARENT EDUCATION SERIES

You can see by comparing the differences in each temperament how one parenting style would not work with every temperament. Parents who are



strong disciplinarians are sure to have battles with the feisty child. Parents who ignore the slow to

warm temperament of a child and expect them to rush or make sudden and unpredictable changes are sure to hear lots of crying and unnecessary power struggles.

Once you realize your child's temperament is as unchangeable as his or her eye color, skin color or hair color then you can accept it as part of who he or she is. Changing your parenting style according to a child's temperament is vital to helping your child develop a healthy sense of self-worth. Trying to get your child's temperament to change is a losing battle for you and very damaging to your child.

Recognizing The Slow-to-Warm Temperament

Adapts slowly to new situations—this child does not care for surprises. He or she likes routine predictability and needs to know what is about to happen.

Withdraws at times—noise, activity and business can be overwhelming to this child, causing him or her to withdraw.

Appears shy until he or she gets warmed up—because of the need to predict what is happening this child will tend to lay low or pull back and watch before jumping into a new situation.

Does not like to be rushed or hurried—because of the need to move slower, do things at a slower predictable pace, this child will become upset and anxious if hurried and expected to move quickly and unexpectedly.

Upset by not knowing what is about to happen—advance warnings and time to prepare for what is ahead is essential to this child's temperament.

Because this child thrives on the predictable, and likes routine, he or she is thrown once everything is settled in his or her mind and someone changes the plan.

Care giving techniques:

Draw the child in slowly without too much attention, allow time for him to feel comfortable and see what is going on, prepare him for change. He will prefer one care giver. Separation will be eased by allowing him to hold a toy to talk about it, rather than make him the focus of attention.

Recognizing The Easy Going Temperament

Regular Rhythms—fairly predictable because he or she will most likely awaken the same time each day and get sleepy the same time each day. You will notice he or she gets hungry at the same times. This child has a built in predictable rhythm and routine.

Positive Mood—happy, easy going disposition and rare upset (except when he or she is hungry, tired or ill) is normal.

Adaptability—he or she rolls with the punches. Whatever happens seems just fine.

Low intensity—reactions are mild and relaxed.

Low sensitivity—low reactions to noise, heat, cold and new situations.

Care giving techniques:

Check in on your child regularly and set aside special time for him or her because he or she will not demand attention.



Recognizing The Feisty Temperament

Active—activity is fairly constant.

Intense—reactions and actions are usually fairly intense, loud and noticeable. You may even classify them as dramatic.

Distractible—because this child enjoys moving, doing, touching and being into things, he or she is likely to be distracted easily by another interest.

Sensitive—moods can be sensitive. There may also be a sensitivity to light, sound, movement and changes. Where an easy-going child may not react to any of these, a feisty child will notice and react to them quickly.

Irregular—You may find it difficult to find a predictable routine to sleep, awakening and hunger patterns. This child tends to have no predictable rhythm that drives him or her.

Moody—emotions can be quick, reactionary, unpredictable and a fairly big part of life for them.

Care giving techniques:

Use redirection and choices rather than making demands. Be flexible. Prepare the child for change. Provide opportunities for active play. Make the most of quiet moments and pay attention to diet triggers. This child may have difficulty making a quick transition from very active play to slower activities. He or she will need a care giver who helps him or her wind down. He or she may also need a quiet place to defuse and calm down.

