A Temperament Treasure Hunt

Rules Of This Game:

• Walk around and find someone who fits each description.
• Have the person sign your form on appropriate line. (Each person can only sign one line.)
• When all lines have a signature, yell “Temperament”.
• First person to yell “Temperament” wins the treasure!
Temperament
Early Research


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Temperament

Refers to much more than a child’s having an intense reaction or throwing a tantrum
JEFFY'S LOSIN' HIS TEMPERATURE!
Key Concepts

- Researchers have identified 9 temperamental traits
- Most US children fit into 1 of 3 combinations of traits or “styles”
- Temperamental traits are a person’s natural tendency to respond
- These traits remain fairly constant throughout life
- Traits begin to appear in the first few months of life
- Each of us learn techniques to help us moderate our “extreme” traits
- Adults need to handle each child in ways in which child can meet demands. This is called “goodness of fit”
- “Poorness of fit” is when the adult expects a child to adjust too quickly or at a level that the child is unable to meet
- Adults should not insulate or protect the child from events that are distressing
PETER WAS A BORN WORRIER...

Although many aspects of temperament seem to be inborn and largely hereditary, people's behavioral styles can and do change over the years, often in reaction to special experiences or to parents' handling.

CHAPTER 7  •  PERSONALITY AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN INFANCY AND TODDLERHOOD
Definition of Temperament

• “...early-appearing patterns of observable behavior that are presumed to be biologically based and that distinguish one child from another.”

Rothbart & Derryberry, Zero to Three, March 2004
Impact of Temperament:

- Can determine caregivers’ reactions to the child.
- Affect how the child interprets and makes sense of life experiences, and
- Shapes the child’s choices of activities and environments (which in turn may reinforce the child’s temperamental way of being).
Nine Temperaments Traits

- Activity level
- Biological Rhythms
- Approach/Withdrawal
- Mood
- Intensity of Reaction
- Sensitivity
- Adaptability
- Distractibility
- Persistence
Individual differences

“The causes of individual differences in temperament can be classified into two major categories: (1) biological influences, and (2) environmental and other influences.”
Genes...

The child’s experiences play a significant role in shaping temperament-based behaviors.”

Source: Theodore Wachs, Temperament and Development: The Role of Context in a Biologically Based System, Zero to Three, March 2004
Environmental Chaos & Temperament

“Research has shown that children living in more chaotic homes—that is, homes that are noisy, crowded, and poorly structured, where nothing has a time or a place—are more likely to be easily irritated and have more intense negative moods than children living in less chaotic homes.”

Children who were initially highly inhibited became less so over time if their parents set firm age-appropriate limits on their children’s behavior, helped their children practice appropriate coping skills, and responded less frequently, or were less solicitous when their child exhibited stress.

Impact of Nutrition

“Researchers have linked iron deficiency anemia to lower levels of alertness and increased amounts of negative emotionality in both neonates and older infants.”

(Wachs, Pollitt, Cueto, Creed-Kanishiro & Jacoby, 2003 and Lozoff et al., 1998)
Flexible, Fearful, or Feisty

The Different Temperament Styles of Infants and Toddlers

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Flexible Temperament

• As many as 40% percent of all children fall into this group.

• Flexible children tend to have regular feeding and napping routines, are toilet-trainer easily, and are generally cheerful.
Flexible Temperamental Traits

- Regular Rhythms
- Positive Mood
- Adaptability
- Low Intensity
- Low Sensitivity
Flexible Children

• Seldom make a fuss.

• Want attention from his caregiver, but may only communicate his need with an occasional glance or wave his hand.
Caregiving Techniques for Flexible Children

• Check in with the child regularly.

• Set aside special time.

• Needs intimate contact.
Fearful Temperament

- About 15% of all children have a fearful or cautious temperament.
- They need more time and attention to warm up to a new situation or new people.
- Fearful children tend to:
  - Adapt slowly
  - Withdraw
Caregiving Techniques for Fearful Children:

- Draw the child in slowly.
- Allow independence to unfold.
The Caregiver’s Role

The caregiver supports the cautious child with a new experience by:

- taking the child to the activity,
- stepping back,
- remaining available,
- and moving on.
Caregiver’s Role for Fearful Child

- Set up the environment so things are in the same place.
- Assigning one principal caregiver.
Feisty Temperament

• About 10 percent of children fit into the feisty, fussy, or active category.

• Tend to live with zest and let everyone know when they are pleased or displeased.

• Tend to be intense, they can be a handful.
Feisty children are:

- Active
- Intense
- Distractible
- Sensitive
- Irregular
- Moody
Caregiving Techniques for Feisty Children

• Use redirection when a child has an intense reaction.

• The key to dealing with feisty children is to be flexible.

• Anticipate transitions by letting them know ahead of time that a change is coming.
Caregiving Techniques for Feisty Children

• Maintain peaceful, calm surroundings.

• Making the most of quiet moments.

• Provide opportunities for active and vigorous play.
In Summary

For feisty children caregivers can:

– Use redirection

– Be flexible

– Prepare the child for change

– Make the most of quiet moments

– Provide for vigorous play
Temperament: Differing Cultural Views
Differing Views of “Ideal” Traits

• In China, teachers viewed shy, sensitive children as socially and academically competent.

• In North America, teachers viewed shy, sensitive children as lonely and depressed.

• In Sweden, shy, socially reserved behavior was not consistently associated with any negative long-term outcomes, yet in North America, such behavior was found to hinder careers.

Vivian L. Carlson, Xin Feng, Robin L. Harwood
Zero to Three, March 2004
Nuclear Family

“…most American parents are intensely concerned with early self-regulation in feeding and sleeping routines because such routines enable the accomplishment of necessary adult/family tasks in a single caregiver environment.”

Vivian L. Carlson, Xin Feng, Robin L. Harwood
Zero to Three, March 2004
Final Comments
Each child requires individualized caregiving strategies.
“Fairness to Infants Is not Treating each child the Same”

J. Ronald Lally, Ed.D.
Thank you for all you do

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