

Understanding Your Child's Temperament



*What characteristics cause you the most difficulty?
How are you and your child alike or different?
How does your temperament “mesh” or “fit with your child’s”?
How can you help your child manage those parts of her temperament that are most challenging?*

There is no “good” or “bad” temperament and regardless of what kind of temperament a child has, he can be successful.

When there is a “good fit” between parent and child, the child has a higher probability for healthy development and a successful outcome.

Parents can help children learn to **manage** their temperamental characteristics. Once we understand “how” children are we can help them learn ways to cope with those challenging parts of their personality.

Contact Us:



www.strengtheningfamilies.alaska.gov

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Most parents recognize that every child is different. What many parents don't understand is WHY and HOW they are different.

Why are some children easier than others to parent?

Why do the same parenting strategies work with one child in the family but not the other?

Children come into the world with their own “temperament” or approach to things. Temperament is “how” a child reacts to various situations as opposed to “why”. Temperament is partly genetic is also shaped by experiences.

TEMPERAMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS

Complete the following questionnaire on your child's characteristics. Then review it again and consider your own temperament.

ACTIVITY LEVEL. How much does your child wiggle and move around when you read to him, at the table, or playing by himself?

1	2	3	4	5
active			quiet	

REGULARITY. Is your child regular about eating times, sleeping times, amount of sleep needed, and bowel movements?

1	2	3	4	5
regular			irregular	

ADAPTABILITY. How quickly does your child adapt to changes in his schedule or routine? How quickly does he adapt to new foods and places?

1	2	3	4	5
adapts quickly			slow to adapt	

APPROACH/WITHDRAWAL. How does your child usually react the first time to new people, new foods, new toys, and new activities?

1	2	3	4	5
initial approach			initial withdrawal	

PHYSICAL SENSITIVITY. How aware is your child of slight noises, slight differences in taste and differences in clothing?

1	2	3	4	5
not sensitive			very sensitive	

INTENSITY OF REACTION. How strong or violent are his reactions? Does he laugh and cry energetically or does he just smile and fuss mildly?

1	2	3	4	5
high intensity			mild reaction	

DISTRACTIBILITY. Is your child easily distracted or does he ignore distractions? Will he continue to work or play when other noises or children are present?

1	2	3	4	5
very distractible			not distractible	

POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE MOOD. How much of the time does your child show pleasant, joyful behavior compared with unpleasant crying and fussing behavior?

1	2	3	4	5
positive mood			negative mood	

PERSISTENCE. How long does your child continue with one activity? Does he usually continue if it is difficult?

1	2	3	4	5
long attention span			short attention span	

Taken from: Without Spanking or Spoiling: A Practical Approach to Toddler and Preschool Guidance by Elizabeth Crary.