

## **Temperament – Zero to Three Magic of Everyday Moments**

### *Magic of Everyday Moments: Temperament*

Did you ever wonder how 2 kids with the same parents can be so different? How about why some children are so easy going and others, well, are simply more challenging. One major factor is temperament.

### *Early Experiences Matter*

#### *Zero to Three*

### *Magic of Everyday Moments: Temperament*

#### *Emotional Intensity, Activity Level, Persistence, Sensory Reactivity, Adaptability*

Temperament shapes the way we experience the world and interact with others. It is the collection of characteristics that makes each of us unique. Temperament is biologically based. The result of our own unique wiring in the brain and nervous system. So, your child did not choose his temperament and it's not the result of something you did or didn't do.

Temperament is the reason why some of us love a crowd and others prefer a cup of coffee in a quiet place with a friend. Thinking about your child's temperament can help you tune into the meaning of his behavior and why he acts the way he does. Take for example your child's emotional intensity. Is he a big reactor who may squeal with delight when happy? But then have a knock-down, drag-out tantrum in reaction to a seemingly small problem? Or is he a more easy going, go-with-the-flow kind of guy?

What about your child's sensory reactivity? How she responds to sensory experiences. Does she thrive on lots of stimulation? Lights, sounds, action? Or does she get overwhelmed easily by these kinds of sensations?

Activity level is another important trait to tune into. Does your child always want to be moving and on the go? Or does he prefer quiet, less active play?

Then there is adaptability. Does your child easily adapt to new experiences such as new friends or new places? Or is he slower to warm up, needing time and support to feel comfortable?

PARENT ENGAGEMENT MODULES SERIES  
Module 2: Using Positive Discipline to Support Your Child's Development

Finally, we have persistence. Does your child show patience to work through a challenging task? Like rethinking her plan to make the boxes fit together. Or is he more likely to get frustrated and give up easily? Temperament may explain why 2 children can react quite differently, even in the same situation. They feel and experience things differently due to their temperaments. What is important to remember is that every child is doing his or her best. They aren't trying to be challenging. Children who are easily overwhelmed by the world really do feel overwhelmed. And when they feel overwhelmed inside, they act overwhelmed on the outside. During these times, your child needs you more than ever.

So why is tuning into your child's temperament so important? Because understanding the meaning of your child's behavior helps you respond in ways that are sensitive and that foster her healthy development. So, being flexible is important. This means that you keep your child's temperament in mind when you make parenting decisions. For example, if your child is very active, you might take her outside to run around before having to go to the doctor's office where she will have to wait.

Last but not least remember, the goal is not to change your child but to help her adapt and help her thrive. Letting your child know that you accept him for who he is helps him develop good self-esteem.

How you parent really matters. Whatever your child's temperament. Whether your child is easy-going or more intense and challenging, your thoughtful responses help your child build new skills and experience more joy in the world and that's what being a mom or dad is all about.