

Tip Sheets

Temperament

Everyone has a unique personality and temperament. This influences how they manage their interactions and how they think. Even though individuals have unique combinations of temperament traits, they can be influenced, modified, or completely changed. This happens through influences by family, experiences, and even the culture around them. The tables below explain the nine types of temperament, tips for supporting positive behavior, and the typical traits and characteristics associated with different temperaments.

Types of Temperament	Behavior Tips
Activity Level <i>How active a person is</i>	Allow children time for movement throughout the day; let an active child step away if they have the wiggles; and have a place for children to do table activities outside.
Biological Rhythms <i>The regularity of someone's body processes</i>	Have consistent times for routine activities in your schedule, but make sure to allow for flexibility.
Sensitivity <i>How people react to stimuli of the senses</i>	<p>Create spaces and activities that let children be boisterous. Set up the environment in a way that avoids interfering or overrunning quieter activities and areas.</p> <p>Be aware of the intensity of stimuli and how it affects the senses. You can change the intensity by looking for alternative materials.</p>
Insensitivity of Reaction <i>How strongly people react to situations</i>	Prepare children for meeting new people and trying new things, and stay near cautious children to offer a sense of security.
Adaptability <i>How easily someone adapts to change</i>	Inform children about upcoming changes. Be prepared to address any reluctance and to give extra time to make a smooth transition.
Persistence/Attention Span <i>How long someone is able and willing to stick to a task</i>	Offer activities that vary in length and complexity.
Distractibility <i>How easily someone is distracted</i>	Limit distractions in the environment.
Mood <i>Overall tone of a person's feelings, interactions, and behaviors</i>	Get to know what children like and use their likes to turn around or lighten their mood.

Temperament Traits	Characteristics
Active/Feisty	Active, fussy, intense positive or negative reactions, irregular schedules
Easy/Flexible	Happy, calm, adaptable, easy-going, and follows a regular schedule
Slow to Warm/Cautious	Hesitant, fearful in strange situations, slow moving, won't join into new situations right away, difficulty adjusting to change

Additional Resources

CECMHC | Temperament Traits

<https://www.ecmhc.org/temperament/traits.html>

Head Start ECKLC | Temperament Traits Chart

<https://ecklc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/mental-health/article/temperament-traits-chart>

MSU Extension | The nine traits of temperament

https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/the_nine_traits_of_temperament

Penn State Extension | Temperament – What is it? (Better Kid Care)

<https://extension.psu.edu/programs/betterkidcare/early-care/tip-pages/all/temperament-2013-what-is-it>

The Center for Parenting Education | Understanding Temperament: Activity Level

<https://centerforparentingeducation.org/library-of-articles/child-development/understanding-temperament-activity-level>

ZERO TO THREE | Temperament: Intensity of Reaction

<https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/67-temperament-intensity-of-reaction>

For more information, visit

<http://www.inclusivechildcare.org/>.

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