



Feisty, Lively, and Tenacious! Working with Difficult Temperament Traits to Help All Children Succeed.



Course Objectives:

- Identify one child's unique temperament makeup
- Pinpoint a strategy to individualize and adapt care to help that child succeed in your care

“ Every child is a different kind of flower. All together, they make this world a beautiful garden. -Rumi ”

Temperament Overview:

- ✓ Temperament is simply reaction to stimuli
- ✓ Each person has a temperament that is wired from birth
- ✓ Temperament is one piece of the puzzle
- ✓ Temperament traits are consistent over ages, times, and settings (not development)
- ✓ Traits can be more challenging depending on the caregiver's temperament
- ✓ Power struggles can occur when you have a clash of traits
- ✓ Every child can succeed! But, they will need a "good fit".

*The "Fit" refers to when demands and expectations are compatible with the child's temperament and abilities

*"Goodness/poorness of fit" was a strong predictor of social skills & negative behaviors



Case Study: What is the trait that is not fitting well for Laura in Ms. Neil's Childcare?

- Intense reactions
- High persistence
- High sensitivity
- High distractibility
- Negative first reaction
- Slow adaptability
- High activity
- Serious mood
- Very irregular

Twenty-month-old Laura just began care in Ms. Neil's family childcare home. Ms. Neil is having difficulty integrating Laura into her program. Laura's **schedule is unpredictable, she becomes tired or hungry at different times each day**, and she always seems to want to run, climb, and jump on everything. Laura also gets extremely upset when it is time to transition from outdoor play to lunch, or when Ms. Neil interrupts an activity in which Laura is engaged. It is not uncommon for her to tantrum for 10 minutes or more at these times. Ms. Neil has had many years of experience working with young children, and attributes Laura's lack of a consistent schedule to her recent enrollment and need to get used to the program. She is also struggling with the fact that her favorite activities—quiet games, book reading, and sensory experiences—are ones that Laura doesn't seem to enjoy. After several weeks of observing little change in Laura's behaviors, Ms. Neil is frustrated.

Laura's unpredictable napping and feeding times, as well as her constant need for physical activity and intense reactions during transitions, are making responsive care for all the other children difficult. Ms. Neil meets with Laura's family, and learns that Laura's parents haven't had difficulty with the issues she describes. When she asks specifically about her schedule, her parents describe Laura as being a good eater and sleeper, but do report that she doesn't have a consistent schedule for eating or napping. They also share that Laura's need for active physical play is typically not an issue because they have a large backyard and Laura has several older siblings who often include her in their active play. Still, all of the adults are concerned about Laura's success transitioning into Ms. Neil's program, and want to find a way to help her.

Resource:

https://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/briefs/wwb_23.pdf



- ✓ Our messages and expectations influence outcomes
- ✓ All children will thrive if they feel loved and valued as they are and learn the skills they need to succeed



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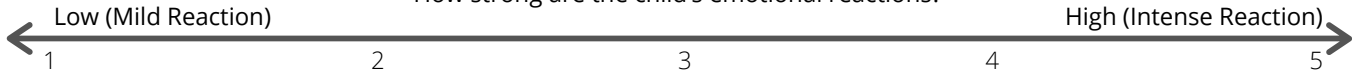
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Temperament Chart

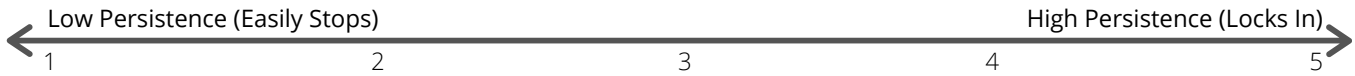
Intensity of Reactions

How strong are the child's emotional reactions?



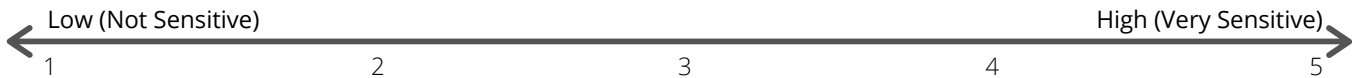
Persistence

How persistent is the child? How committed to his/her goals?



Sensitivity

How sensitive or aware is the child to sights, sounds, smells, textures, and emotions?



Distractibility/Perceptiveness

How easily is the child drawn away from an activity? Does the child notice details in the environment?



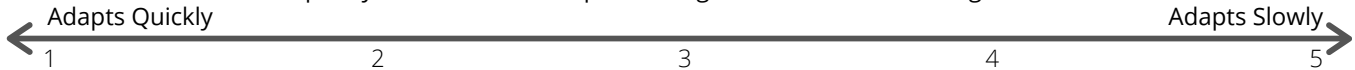
First Reaction/Initial Response (Approach/Withdrawal)

What is the child's first reaction to new people, activities, ideas, or new places?



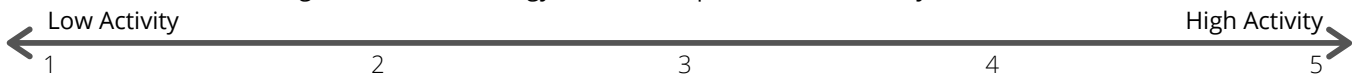
Adaptability

How quickly does the child adapt to change or shift from one thing to another?



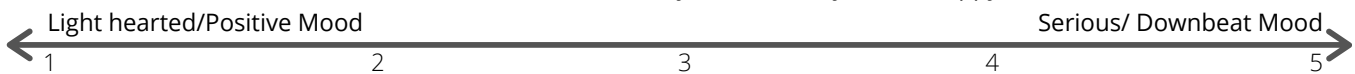
Activity Level/Energy

How high is the child's energy level; more quiet and still or busy and on the move?



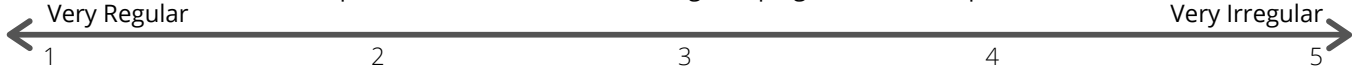
Mood

How often does the child feel serious, analytical or cranky versus happy and content?



Regularity

How predictable are the child's eating, sleeping & elimination patterns?






Which traits are more difficult for you to work with?



Working with Difficult Temperament Traits to Help All Children Succeed.

"...This was not something she was going to magically grow out of. It became clear to me that it is not my job to change her, but rather to help her learn to predict and plan for circumstances that might be hard for her?"
-Laura Davis

Temperament Trait	Triggers	Modifications to Provide a "Good Fit"
Slow to Adapt 	Triggers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too many changes in a day • Being rushed • Surprises • Expectations not met • Unexpected changes 	Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help the child "warm" to new ideas, giving space and time to adapt with low pressure • Provide a predictable routine <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Sing the same transition song ◦ Show the same picture from a visual schedule ◦ Use "First-then" prompts
High Persistence 	Triggers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Told what to do • Hurried or rushed • Quick transitions • Being forced to quit • Told "no" • Not being listened to 	Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer a choice • Plan extra time • Provide warnings • Pick your battles • Validate their feelings • Find the "yes" within the "no" <div style="border: 1px solid #00AEEF; border-radius: 15px; padding: 10px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>“ Having respect for the world is when you allow people to be what they are. -Magda Gerber ”</p> </div>
High Intensity 	Triggers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being ignored or told not to be so intense • Intensity of others • Big feelings such as disappointment • Being rushed • Fatigue and hunger • Stress 	Strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay calm • Avoid reacting with the same intensity • Watch for rising stress hormone in their body • "Name it to tame it" • Help the child soothe and calm, adjusting as needed • When older, teach the child to manage stimulation levels and get breaks when needed

Your links to top resources and information to share



- **Main page with links to top resources on this topic (and ways to contact us for professional development):** <https://www.thriving-together.com/temperament>
- **Resource Blog with master list of resources and temperament information:** <https://www.thriving-together.com/post/from-timid-to-tenacious-working-with-difficult-temperament-traits-to-help-all-children-succeed>
- **Blog "Helping Children with a Feisty Temperament" (Includes "How big a Deal" Freebie):** <https://www.thriving-together.com/post/working-with-children-with-a-feisty-temperament>
- **BLOG: "Working with Persistent Temperaments":** <https://www.thriving-together.com/post/no-you-can-t-make-me-working-with-children-who-won-t-listen>



What is one takeaway? What is a strategy you will implement to help a child with a difficult temperament trait "fit" in your caregiving environment?

