



SCIENCE MINDED

Temperament

Understanding your child's behavioural style and how it determines their expression and regulation of their emotions.

What is Temperament?

We all have different temperaments. We can think of temperament as the building blocks of personality. Differences in temperament influence how we handle emotions, regulate behaviour and feel around new people.

Your child's temperament can affect how easy it is to soothe them, how they respond to other people and how often they smile. It can also affect how active or reactive they are, how they respond to scary or surprising information and even how long they spend looking at things.

We can nurture our child's development by being aware of their and our own temperaments and using parenting strategies that work best for us and the family unit.

There are three general types of temperaments in children. About 40% of children are easy or "low key", between 5-15% are slow-to-warm or "spunky", and 10% are 'difficult' or "spirited". A further 40% of little ones don't fit simply into any category; and are have a combination of these qualities.



Temperament Questionnaire

| DIMENSIONS | TYPICAL BEHAVIOUR | SCORE |
|--|--|-------|
| ACTIVITY LEVEL Rate from 1-5 how active the child seems to be. | Quiet children tend to stay in one place when asleep, sit still quietly for extended periods of time, are quiet and relaxed while being dressed (score = 1). Active children move around a lot in their sleep, are always on the move, kick and squirm while being dressed or changed (score = 5). | |
| ALERTNESS Rate from 1-5 how alert the child seems to be. | Mildly alert children are not bothered by crowds and are happy to eat, play or sleep anywhere (score = 1). Very alert children require soothing in crowded places, stop eating if there is a commotion and need a lot of help to fall asleep (score = 5). | |
| INTENSITY Rate from 1-5 how strong the child's emotional reactions are. | Children who have relaxed responses rarely get upset, cry more subtly when they do and are more easily soothed (score = 1). Very intense/reactive children often go from 0-100, cry louder than other children and can be challenging to calm (score = 5). | |
| REGULARITY Rate from 1-5 how predictable the child seems to be. | Predictable children are hungry at regular intervals and have predictable nap times & bed times (score = 1). Unpredictable children are hungry at different times each day and nap times always seem different day to day (score = 5). | |
| SENSITIVITY Rate from 1-5 how sensitive the child is (how aware/affected they are by their environment). | Mildly sensitive children sleep through noise, do not need to be held to sleep, don't seem to notice a dirty nappy (score = 1). Very sensitive children must have quiet to sleep, wake if put down, fuss when their nappy is dirty (score = 5). | |
| APPROACH Rate from 1-5 how the child reacts to new people or places. | Eager children tend to approach new things easily, are calm when they meet new people and enjoy new places (score = 1). Cautious children are distressed by new things, get upset when approached by new people and often fuss in new places (score = 5). | |
| ADAPTABILITY Rate from 1-5 how adaptable the child tends to be during transitions. | A more adaptable child easily starts & stops eating at mealtime, falls asleep quickly, wakes up happily or quietly (score = 1). A less adaptable child cries or is upset when mealtime begins or ends, struggles to fall asleep or wake up, usually crying or upset (score = 5). | |
| PERSISTENCE Rate from 1-5 how persistent the child can be. | Less persistent children are distractable, even when hungry, they do not get upset if a toy is taken away. They are capable of being redirected (score = 1). Persistent children, when hungry need to eat immediately, get very upset if a toy is taken away and are not easily redirected (score = 5). | |
| MOOD Rate from 1-5 how serious or happy the child tends to be. | A more often positive child is typically in a good mood, even when hungry or tired (score = 1). A more serious child appears thoughtful, focused and is often seen as more of an 'old soul' (score = 5). | |



Temperament Questionnaire

9-18 = A "LOW KEY" CHILD

CONGRATULATIONS YOU HAVE A "LOW-KEY" CHILD

Your child, most of the time, is a chiller. Raising 'low-key' children is 'relatively' easy because they respond favourably to various child-raising practices. They readily adapt to different parental approaches and styles.

These little ones tend to be quiet calm and happy, and often adjust easily to new situations and environments. They tend to be more predictable and are flexible, adaptable, and generally accommodating to changes of environment.



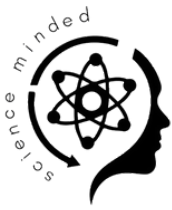
Temperament Questionnaire

19-28 = A "SPUNKY" CHILD

CONGRATULATIONS YOU HAVE A "SPUNKY" CHILD

Your little one is often slow-to-warm up but once they do, they sure are spunky. These bubs are often calm, cautious and take their time getting to know their surroundings, which is smart, right? Why jump straight in when you can get the lay of the land.

Slow-to-warm-up children are often sensitive to their own emotions and the emotions of others. What they feel, they feel intensely. With guidance, they can become people of great compassion and empathy, helping them establish close and strong friendships.



Temperament Questionnaire

29-45 = A "SPIRITED" CHILD

CONGRATULATIONS YOU HAVE A "SPIRITED" CHILD

These children often get a bad rap. Regularly described as having colic, being 'stubborn', 'difficult' or 'high needs' these children are a little... extra, in almost all the ways they can be: more intense, more persistent, more sensitive, more energetic, and more perceptive than their peers.

Between the boundless energy and the unbreakable persistence, life with a high-spirited little one can be super intense and exhausting. While their meltdowns can be intense, their joy and exuberance can be just as full-on meaning that life with them is never dull.



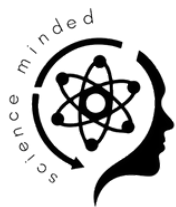
Goodness of Fit

Goodness of fit refers to how well a child's temperament matches the expectations of their environment and the temperaments of the people in that environment.

When there is a match between the demands and expectations of the environment and the child's temperament and abilities, this is a "good fit". This makes success and high self-esteem more likely. When there is not a good fit, there is a greater risk of difficulties for the child.



Just like children, adults have their own behavioural styles or temperaments. Environments where we all understand and respect one another's unique way of viewing, experiencing and reacting to the world are ones where we can feel safe and calm. This of course is easier said than done!



Temperament Questionnaire

Goodness of Fit

| DIMENSIONS | TYPICAL BEHAVIOUR | I AM... | MY CHILD IS... |
|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| ACTIVITY LEVEL | Highly Active | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| | Less Active | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| ALERTNESS | Very Alert | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| | Less Alert | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| INTENSITY | Intense Reactions | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| | Relaxed Responses | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| REGULARITY | Highly Regular | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| | More Spontaneous | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| SENSITIVITY | Highly Sensitive | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| | Less Sensitive | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| APPROACH/ WITHDRAW | Happy to approach | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| | Takes time to approach | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| ADAPTABILITY | Highly Adaptable | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| | Takes time to adapt | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| PERSISTENCE | Highly Persistent | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| | More curious | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| MOOD | Positive Mood | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| | Serious Mood | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |



Goodness of Fit

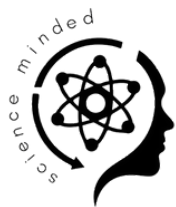
Examples

Picture a toddler who is very active and lives in a small apartment. They may have more difficulty getting out all of their energy than a similar child who lives on a farm. In this situation the environment isn't a "good fit" and can make things harder for both child and parent.

Imagine a parent who rates high on "regularity". They wake at the same time each day, eat lunch at the same time and generally have a predictable schedule. Their child is also highly regular, eats, sleeps, is playful and curious at around the same time each day. This is a "good fit" between parent and child temperament, meaning that life may feel 'easier' in this scenario.

AS A PARENT IT CAN BE HARD TO UNDERSTAND A CHILD WITH A VERY DIFFERENT TEMPERAMENT FROM YOU.

You may have less patience to deal with a temperament you don't understand. Alternatively, some parents find it difficult to accept traits that they recognise in themselves that they do not like or that have caused them trouble in their own lives.



Reflections

Reflect on the following questions and respond to each one. Consider how your temperament might influence your child's experience and/or behaviour.

If you have a high activity level, how might that influence your relationship with a child with a similarly high activity level? What about a child who has a lower activity level?

If you do not mind loud noises or crowded environments, what might you need to think about if your child reacts intensely to loud noises or is easily overstimulated?



Reflections

If you are a spontaneous person who enjoys new and surprising experiences, how might that influence your child if they thrive in a carefully planned and predictable environment?

If you see yourself as someone who is more cautious, preferring to observe for a while in new situations, how might that influence your child who is outgoing, interactive and loves meeting new people?

What did you learn from these reflections? What changes can you make in your interactions with your child?

How might you share some of these insights with others who interact with and care for your child?