



Fairfax County
O F C Office for Children

Natural Temperaments: Infants and Toddlers

For more information on Natural Temperaments, please visit the website for the Center for Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation, Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development.
www.va-itsnetwork.org
The Virginia Infant & Toddler Specialist Network is a part of Child Development Resources, www.cdr.org, and is supported by the Virginia Department of Social Services (Grant #01-377, with funds made available to Virginia from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services).

www.ecmhc.org



Temperament refers to personal characteristics that are generally consistent over time.



Natural temperament affects a child's reactions to and interactions with situations, people, and the environment.



Temperament describes the way people approach and react to others and to the world.



Temperament is an important part of understanding social and emotional health.



Basic Temperament Styles

Easy-going • Slow-to-warm • Active

General Temperament Styles

EASY-GOING

- Generally happy
- Active from birth
- Adjusts easily to new situations, new people, and new environments

SLOW-TO-WARM

- Generally observant
- Calm
- May need extra time to adjust to new situations, new people, and new environments

ACTIVE

- Generally approaches life with "zest" (enthusiasm)
- Often have varied routines (e.g. may be hungry at different times of the day)

Nine Common Temperament Traits

- | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| • Activity level | • Regularity | • Adaptability |
| • Distractibility | • Sensitivity | • Persistence |
| • Intensity | • Approachability | • Mood |



Activity Level

The general level of motor activity when one is awake or asleep.



Distractibility

The ease with which one can be distracted or conversely, the level of concentration or focus.



Intensity

The energy level of one's emotional response, both positive and negative.



Regularity

The predictability of biological functions such as eating, sleeping, and other bodily functions.



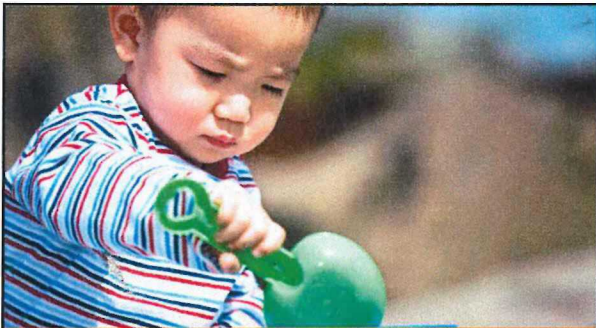
Sensitivity

How sensitive one is to physical stimuli such as light, sound, and textures.



Approachability

One's initial response to new places, situations, or things.



Adaptability

How easily one adjusts to changes and transitions.



Persistence

The length of time one continues in activities in the face of obstacles or challenges.



Mood

The tendency to react to the world primarily in a positive or negative way.

Center for Early
Childhood Mental
Health
Consultation,
Georgetown
University Center
for Child and
Human
Development

www.ecmhc.org

In the online temperament trait
chart, we can see what each trait
might look like - the behaviors
we might see - in an adult and in
a child.

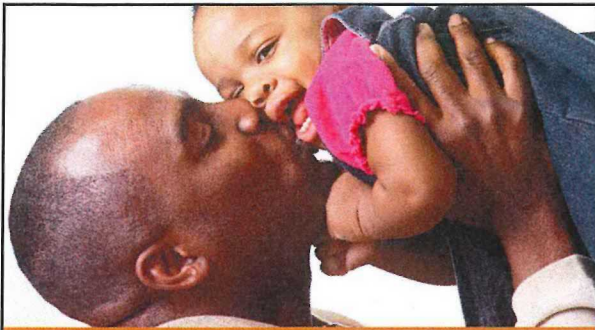
<http://ecmhc.org/temperament/traits.html>



CENTER FOR
Early Childhood
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Goodness of Fit

The compatibility between adult and child temperaments.



The Goodness of Fit concept provides insight to help us realize that adults and children can have different temperaments and still interact in positive ways.



There are many ways for an adult/caregiver to adapt to a child's natural temperament traits.

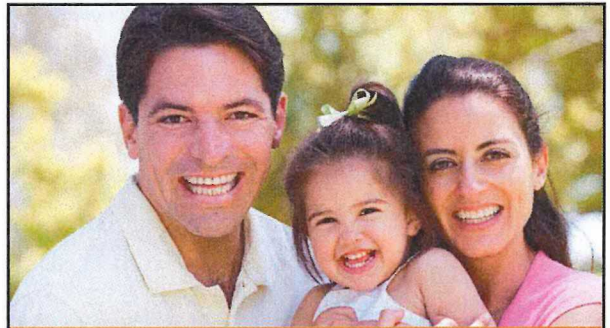


Infant-Toddler Temperament Tool (IT³)

<http://ecmhc.org/temperament/index.html>



Why is understanding natural temperament styles important?



Infants and toddlers, like adults, are unique individuals with unique temperaments, needs, and desires.



Important Considerations Related to Goodness of Fit



Avoid Making Comparisons or Labeling Children



Slow Down and Create Flexibility in the Schedule



Empathize with Young Children



Focus on the Positive



Understanding natural temperaments and goodness of fit are extremely important as we create positive social and emotional experiences for young children.