

Types of Temperament Problems

(categories of temperament)

- High activity level
- Distractibility
- Impulsivity, Self Control
- High intensity of emotions
- Irregular body rhythms
- Negative persistence
- Abnormal sensory threshold
- Rigid response to new situations
- Poor adaptability to change
- Negative mood

TEMPERAMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Date: _____

Child's Name _____ D.O.B./Age _____

Completed by _____ Relat. to child: _____

The purpose of this questionnaire is to understand *your child's temperament* (the inborn part of the personality). Ten categories are listed. Behaviors commonly associated with each trait are rated on an easy-difficult spectrum. Look for long-standing features, sometimes present in infancy, but certainly evident by the age of 3. If you are concerned about *new* problem behavior do not include it.

Most parents are upset and worried about their child when they first complete this questionnaire. Because of this they usually exaggerate the difficult behavior. Try to be objective. If a characteristic is long-standing but is now increased, rate it as it is now but put an * next to it.

Use the following rating scale:

- 0= Not at all or just a little (not a problem)
- 1= Sometimes (mild to moderate problem)
- 2= Often (clearly a problem)
- 3= Very often (very much of a problem)
- 4= Nearly always or always (a severe problem)

I. ACTIVITY LEVEL

General statement about degree of movement.

- On the go, can't sit still
- Fidgets, squirms, taps
- Trouble playing quietly
- Resists if confined (eg. seat belt)

II. SELF-CONTROL

Ability to delay action or demands.

- Impulsive, acts without thinking
- Easily overstimulated
- Loses control - can become aggressive
- Does not wait turn, Interrupts
- Easily frustrated, impatient
- Behavior is unpredictable

V. REGULARITY

Predictability of physical functions.

- In infancy was hard to put on a sleep schedule
- Erratic sleep patterns
- In infancy was hard to put on a feeding schedule
- Erratic appetite patterns

VI. PERSISTENCE

Single-mindedness, which may be positive or negative.

- Strong-willed
- Stubborn
- Relentless, doesn't give up
- Gets stuck, 'locked in'

VII. SENSORY THRESHOLD

Sensitivity to physical stimuli - sound, light, smell, taste, touch, pain, temperature.

- Sensitive to noise
- Sensitive to lights
- Clothes have to feel right; bothered by tags, belts, socks, etc.
- Foods have to smell, taste or feel right (circle one or more)
- Refuses to dress warmly/dresses too warmly (choose one)

III. CONCENTRATION

Ability to maintain focus in the face of distractions.

- Trouble staying focused
- Easily distracted
- Quicky loses interest unless very involved
- Disorganized, loses things
- Forgetful

IV. INTENSITY

The way emotions are expressed.

- Forceful
- Loud
- Overwhelming
- Strong emotions, whether happy, angry, or sad

VIII. INITIAL RESPONSE

Characteristic first reaction.

- Holds back in new situations
- Shrinks from new people
- Doesn't like to try new things
- Seems 'unfriendly'

IX. ADAPTABILITY

Tolerance of change.

- Has trouble with transitions
- Doesn't like change, 'creature of habit'
- Wants the same clothes or foods
- Inflexible
- Notices if details are not in place

X. PREDOMINANT MOOD

Basic disposition.

- Serious
- Doesn't show excitement openly
- 'Glass is half empty'

Go over your answers and make sure they reflect your child's innate nature, not new or recent behavior.

FAMILY QUESTIONS
Please Answer Yes or No

Temperament Chart (2014)

Trait	Description	Label	Intervention
Activity Level	On the go, can't sit still, fidgets, trouble playing quietly	"You are my child who gets too revved up"	-Blow off steam -Cool down
Distractibility	Trouble concentrating, paying attention if not really interested, doesn't listen well	"It is hard for you to pay attention"	Establish eye contact, keep instructions brief, don't compete with exciting stuff
Impulsivity, Self Control	Doesn't think before acting, repeats mistakes, little self reflection or self talk	"You are my child who acts first and thinks later"	Cue correct behavior before event happens (learn what these situations are from experience)
High Intensity of Emotions	Loud and forceful whether happy, sad, angry	"you are my child with big emotions"	Try not to react to their emotions, calmly remind them that they do have "big" emotions and that they will feel better in a little while, don't add fuel to their emotion
Irregular Body Rhythms	Can't tell when they are hungry, tired, or bothered (little self observation), appetite is irregular, difficulties falling asleep	Try to label the area of discomfort "I bet you are/aren't hungry right now"	Establish eating time and sleeping time, but don't fight about the actual eating or sleeping
Negative Persistence	Stubborn, goes on and on, argues, negotiates, relentless, tantrums	"It is hard for you to give up"	End struggle ASAP, limit number of repetitions
Abnormal Sensory Threshold	Sensitive to sounds, smells, tastes, textures	"I know things feel, smell, taste funny to you"	Accept their sensitivity, work around it
Rigid Response to New Situations	Shy and reserved or overly outgoing in ways that do not respond to the situation	"I know new things are hard for you"	Introduce new things gradually, allow (or force) them to stay near in new situations
Poor Adaptability to Change	Trouble with transitions, change, shifts of schedule, notices minor differences, gets used to things	"I know it is hard for you when things change too quickly"	Prepare in advance, verbal rehearsal, warnings, no sudden surprises
Moodiness	Basically serious or cranky, doesn't show pleasure openly, not a "sunny" character	"I know you are a little grumpy in the _____"	Realize the mood is part of her make up, adjust your expectations

-paraphrased from Stanley Turecki, MD

CATEGORIES OF TEMPERAMENT

Temperament refers to the part of the personality that is constitutional in origin - a child's innate nature. Temperamental traits are long-standing, and relatively stable by early childhood. The qualities listed under "easy" are often personality strengths. Those listed under "difficult" are potential problems, in that they may cause conflict between the child and those around him. The two represent the extremes of a spectrum, and any characteristic will fall somewhere on the continuum.

TRAIT	DESCRIPTION	EASY	DIFFICULT
Activity Level	General statement about level of motor activity; the actual amount of physical motion during play, eating, sleep, etc	Low to moderate	High, "hyperactive"
Self-Control	Ability to delay actions or demands	Good, patient	Poor, impulsive
Concentration	Ability to maintain focus in the face of distractions	Good, stays with task	Poor, distractible
Intensity	Energy level of responses; how forcefully or loudly reactions are expressed, whether positive or negative	Low, mild, quiet	High, loud, forceful
Regularity	Predictability of physical functions such as appetite, sleep-wake cycle, and elimination	Regular, predictable	Irregular, erratic
Persistence	Single-mindedness, may be positive (focused when involved) or negative (stubborn and doesn't give up). Positive and negative persistence co-exist	Low, easily diverted	High, stubborn, but also gets very involved when interested
Sensory Threshold	Sensitivity to physical stimuli - sound, light, smell, taste, touch, pain, temperature	High, unbothered	Low, physically sensitive
Initial Response	Characteristic initial reaction to new persons or new situations	Approach, goes forward	Withdrawal, holds back
Adaptability	Tolerance of change, ease with which gets used to new or altered situations	Good, flexible	Poor, rigid
Predominant Mood	General quality of mood; basic disposition	Positive, sunny	Negative, serious

DIFFICULT TRAITS

Difficult temperamental traits are part of a child's nature. The behaviors may be exaggerated under stress, but a child cannot *become* temperamentally difficult.

TRAIT	CHILD'S BEHAVIOR
High Activity Level	Restless, squirmy, fidgety; always into things, "hyper", makes you tired; "ran before he walked"; easily overstimulated; trouble sitting still or playing quietly; "motormouth"; hates to be confined; easily gets wild or "revved up".
Impulsivity	Acts without thinking; quick hot temper, easily frustrated; impatient, excitable; interrupts, calls out, doesn't await turn; grabs or pushes; can lose control and become aggressive; can suddenly take off.
Distractibility	Has problems focusing and paying attention, especially if not really interested; trouble following instructions; doesn't "listen", tunes you out, daydreams; disorganized, forgetful.
High Intensity	Loud voice; forceful, overwhelming; strong emotions whether miserable, angry, or happy.
Irregularity	Unpredictable body rhythms; can't tell when he'll be hungry or tired, resulting in conflicts over meals and bedtime; wakes up at night; erratic toilet habits.
Negative Persistence	Very strong-willed, stubborn; goes on and on nagging, whining or negotiating if wants something; relentless, won't give up, wears you down; gets "locked in"; may have long tantrums.
Low Sensory Threshold	Physically, not emotionally sensitive; highly aware of color, light, appearance, texture, sound, smell, taste, or temperature (not necessarily all of these); "creative", but with strong and sometimes unusual preferences that can be embarrassing; bothered by bright lights and loud noises; particular, picky; clothes have to feel or look right; doesn't like the way many foods look smell or taste; feels too cold (or too hot) when no one else does.
Initial Withdrawal	Shy and reserved with new adults and/or children; doesn't like new situations and unfamiliar settings; holds back or protests by crying, clinging, or tantruming if forced to go forward.
Poor Adaptability	Has trouble with transition and change of activity or routine; inflexible, notices minor details; gets used to things and won't give them up; can want the same clothes or foods over and over; "creature of habit"; even after initial response takes a long time to adapt.
Negative Mood	Basically serious or cranky; doesn't show pleasure openly; not a "sunny" disposition.

MANAGEMENT OF DIFFICULT TRAITS

Management is the term used for dealing with those aspects of difficult behavior that the child, to a large extent, cannot control. The adult's attitude is kind and sympathetic, although firm when necessary. The techniques should be introduced to the child at a calm time in planned discussions. These discussions, which can be held with a child as young as four, enlist his co-operation. The eventual goals are for the child to learn about her own temperament and develop self-management methods.

TRAIT	MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUE
High Activity Level	Establish routines and structure. Build in planned breaks during meals or classes. Include periods of active play as an outlet for energy. Don't rough-house before bedtime. Avoid stimulating situations, especially when the child is already over-excited.
Impulsivity	Learn to identify early signs of overexcitement and of escalation. Intervene promptly with a planned (not punitive) time-out. Leave quickly if misbehavior occurs in a public place. Teach the child methods of self-control.
Distractibility	Establish eye contact (not angrily) before speaking to the child. Seat near teacher in classroom. Keep instructions brief and simple, and use reminders. Help the child with organization and avoid clutter.
High Intensity	Explain to the child that his outer voice (what others hear) is much louder than his inner voice. Strive for tolerance.
Irregularity	Establish evening routine ending with bedtime. After saying good-night insist the child stays in bed, but provide night light, book etc., and don't force him to go to sleep. The child can join you for meals but should not be forced to eat. If old enough, teach her to serve herself simple snacks when she is hungry.
Negative Persistence	Avoid power struggles and long explanations. Try to say "yes" more often, otherwise take a firm stand early on. Set a limit on the number of repetitions. Avoid getting "stuck" yourself.
Low Sensory Threshold	Try to accept the child's strong preferences even if eccentric. Avoid struggles over food and clothing. Seek compromises. Check with the pediatrician if you are worried about health issues.
Initial Withdrawal	Introduce new things gradually. In unfamiliar situations allow the child to stay close (but not cling), and to go forward at her own pace.
Poor Adaptability	Prepare the child in advance by describing the sequence of events to come (but don't warn repeatedly). Don't surprise the child with sudden transitions. Teach her to use a clock to anticipate changes.
Negative Mood	Realize that the child's mood reflects her temperament. Adjust your expectations. Accept seriousness but limit whining.

THE EXPERT RESPONSE

A Decision Tree for Parents

PROBLEM BEHAVIOR

1. CAN I DEAL WITH IT NOW? — No —→ MINIMUM RESPONSE
Disengage

Yes

2. BECOME THE LEADER
Stand back
Get neutral
Think and evaluate

3. FRAME THE BEHAVIOR
Recognize the pattern
Focus on behavior, not motives

4. IS IT TEMPERAMENT? — Yes —→ MANAGEMENT
Sympathetic
attitude
Establish eye
contact
Use a label
Apply a
technique

No

5. IT IS RELEVANT? — No —→ MINIMUM RESPONSE
Disengage

Yes

6. EFFECTIVE PUNISHMENT
Stern attitude
Be brief
Be direct