

The
Temperament
Project




Dear Parent,

This booklet will help you interpret the traits described and how the traits might affect your child's behavior. I have marked the traits that range in a particularly high or low level on your child's profile. There are also ideas of parenting techniques that might work best with your child's unique temperament.

Other services that are available to you through The Temperament Project include:

- **Classes:** There are classes offered through the Family Life Education Office. While each class offers information about parenting, several deal specifically with temperament, explaining the traits more thoroughly and discussing the implications in child behavior and parenting techniques. A list of Hot Topics classes is enclosed. Call Avera Health Systems at: 1-877-282-8372 to register. Any class designated as a temperament class is free of charge (you will still need to register.) Our next temperament class is _____.
- **Additional printed materials:** A number of specific, temperament-related behaviors have been identified. Additional materials that explain the behaviors more completely and provide ideas for parenting intervention are available. Use the enclosed order form to check off the items you are interested in and return in the enclosed postage paid envelope.
- **Phone consultations:** Our Certified Family Life Educators are available to answer your questions. Call (605) 322-3662. Sometimes there are no difficult behaviors to deal with at the time the profile is done. But as your child grows and develops, behaviors may become more challenging. Call any time with questions.
- **One-to-one consultations:** Certified Family Life Educators are also available to meet with you to discuss your parenting concerns. To arrange for a consultation, call (605) 322-3662 or check the appropriate box on the materials order sheet. There is no charge for this service.

Being a parent is not an easy job. That's why we are here to help you with experts and information to make your parenting decisions easier.



Activity Level

Refers to how active a child is or how much physical energy is used.

Highly Active Characteristics:

- Vigorous and energetic.
Tip: Build in extra time for activity breaks during prolonged car trips or other low movement activities (note: be sure the car is stopped before the child is allowed out of safety restraints).
Tip: Avoid unnecessary restrictions of activity, such as sitting through a movie.
- Large muscle developmental milestones such as crawling, standing or walking may be achieved earlier than less active age-mates.
- Increased mobility can increase the chance of accidents.
Tip: "Baby-proof" your child's environment as he becomes more mobile. Be extra cautious in situations where your child might roam or wander into danger. He has little or no ability to judge these situations himself.

Moderately Active Characteristics:

- Child rarely has difficulty adjusting to overly active or inactive situations.
- May enjoy some active pastimes.
- May sit quietly at times.
Tip: Follow your child's cues as to her need for activity.

Less Active Characteristics:

- Needs encouraging opportunities to incorporate physical activities into a healthy lifestyle.
- May leave some tasks undone or need extra time to do them.
Tip: Set realistic time limits. Looking at the steps the child has completed rather than at the whole process can help us encourage the child toward completion.

Rhythmicity

Refers to the predictability of a child's sleep-wake cycle, hunger and eating and toileting from day to day.

Highly Irregular Characteristics:

- Lack of predictability may cause difficulty in toilet teaching.
Tip: Waiting until your child is developmentally prepared to manage her toileting needs will increase success for the irregular child.
- May be hungry between meals or refuse to eat at meal time.
Tip: Bring along healthful snacks, just in case.
- Bedtime struggles may occur due to irregularity in sleep patterns.
Tip: Even though your child might respond unpredictably to them, regular mealtimes and bedtimes should be established and the child encouraged to follow them. This doesn't mean punishing your child for failure to comply, but rather firm consistency in maintaining routines.

Moderately Regular Characteristics:

- Sometimes consistent, other times not.
- Has little difficulty staying on schedule.

Highly Regular Characteristics:

- Usually maintains a consistent routine and may become upset when routine is disrupted.
Tip: Warn child of impending disruptions to schedule. Recognize child's need to be regular.
- Predictability may increase the chance of earlier success in toilet learning.



Adaptability

Refers to how much time a child takes to adjust to changes including intrusions, restrictions, expectations, transitions or abrupt shifts in plans.

Highly Adaptable Characteristics:

- Are usually compliant with changes that occur.
Tip: May be readily led by others to unacceptable behavior; may need help learning or practicing assertiveness.

Moderately Adaptable Characteristics:

- Adjusts to changes fairly easily in most situations.
- There may be specific situations in which the child has a more difficult time adapting. For those situations, follow the “less adapting” techniques below.

Less Adapting Characteristics:

- May have difficulty adjusting to changes of any kind.
Tip: Provide advance warning and gradual introduction of new activities. A “sink or swim” approach may lead to future difficulty for this child. Gradual introductions to new things are necessary.
- Behaviors may be interpreted as being stubborn.
Tip: This negative interpretation can be unnecessarily judgmental of your child. If you realize his need to think things through before acting, your approach to him will be more positive and helpful to him.
- Less likely to be led by others into negative behaviors.



Sensory Threshold

Refers to how much stimulation is needed to evoke a child's response.

Highly Sensitive Characteristics:

- Keen senses may cause sensitivity to the flavors, texture and temperature of foods.
- May be picky, finicky or particular about touch, noises and lighting.
Tip: Avoid exciting activities just prior to bedtime. Provide child with comfortable, well-fitting clothes. Visits to grocery stores and malls will need to be modified to accommodate the child's increased sensitivity to all the different sensory stimulation at these places.

- May be very sensitive to how others treat him and may get his feelings hurt easily.
Tip: Support and encourage the child. Talk with your child about different ways of thinking about the situation.
- Tend to be "people pleasers" and fear making mistakes.
Tip: Look for valid opportunities to support the child's self-esteem. Be sure to point out to him those occasions when he is right. Acknowledge when you make a mistake, letting the child know that everyone makes mistakes and that is how we learn to do things better.
Tip: Allow opportunities for sensory play like using play-doh, splashing in water or finger painting. Often just drawing offers the sensitive child an outlet for the tensions that accompany increased sensitivity.



Moderately Sensitive Characteristics:

- Usually has a balanced reaction to light, touch, taste, sound and temperature.
- There may be specific situations where reactions are unusually strong, as well as situations where child doesn't notice minor changes.

Less Sensitive Characteristics:

- Relatively unaffected by sensory stimuli, such as bright lights, strong tastes or different textures.
- May not always display how she feels emotionally.
- May not complain of pain or anxieties.
Tip: Parents need to be careful with children who are low in sensitivity as it may be easy to miss cues or implied messages about situations over which the child may be distressed.
- Tends not to worry about what others think of him.
Tip: While this is generally a positive thing, we also need to help child to develop an awareness of others' feelings. This can be done through conversations in situations where the child would be receptive to this information. For example: "Look at Suzie's face. She is crying. I think she feels very sad. Remember when you felt sad about dropping your ice-cream cone? I wonder what made Suzie feel so sad today? Shall we go and give her a gentle hug? Let's tell her we hope she feels better soon."



Ordering Printed Information on Temperament: If your child scored high or low on any of these traits, you might be interested in ordering additional printed information to help you learn techniques to interpret and direct your child's behavior in more positive ways. Some material deals with specific behaviors and is listed with the trait(s) most often associated with it. Just check the box by the material you'd like to receive and return it to the Family Life Education office in the enclosed envelope.

ACTIVITY LEVEL

Highly Active

- Risk of injury
- Wild behavior
- Planning a road trip
- Misbehavior in church
- Wakes early in the morning
- Can't get to sleep at night
- Doesn't like to nap in the daytime
- Has trouble sitting still for meals
- Won't always stop when told to
- Getting rid of stored up energy
- Managing temper tantrums

Low Active

- Dawdling
- Stalling
- Physical fitness

Highly Adaptable

- My child never met a stranger

Slow Adapting

- Tough transitions
- New situations
- Different people
- The rules are changing
- Won't nap during the day
- Clings to parents
- Fighting with others
- Temper tantrums
- Learning to take "No" for an answer
- Resists being dressed
- Refuses to go to sleep at night
- Using choices
- Wakes up at night, unable to get back to sleep
- Wants only one person to provide comfort
- Won't sit for meals
- Won't stop when told to

DAILY BIOLOGICAL CYCLES

Highly Regular

- Upset by changes in routine
- How to deal with regularity on vacation
- Planning for changes

Highly Irregular

- Responding to irregular cues
 - I never know when my child will be hungry
 - Naps unpredictably naps
 - Establishing a regular bedtime
 - Fitting an irregular child into our regular routine
- ## FIRST REACTION
- ### Highly Approaching
- My child never met a stranger

Highly Withdrawing

- I know he'd have fun if he'd just get involved
- Introducing new foods
- Preparing for new situations
- First response isn't the only response
- Resists getting dressed
- Clings to parents

PREDOMINANT MOOD

Negative Mood

- Baby's mood affects parents (and vice versa)
- Techniques for moving toward a more positive mood

INTENSITY OF EXPRESSION

Highly Intense

- Pitfalls of high intensity
- Learning to modulate
- Temper tantrums
- Fighting with others
- Wants to feed self
- Wants only one person to provide comfort

Low Intensity

- Parents learn to read cues
- Keeping others informed

ADAPTABILITY

PERSISTENCE LEVEL

Highly Persistent

- Dealing with whining
- Learning to disengage unhelpful behavior
- Using choices
- Learning to take “no” for an answer
- Fighting with others
- Managing temper tantrums

Low Persistence

- Step-by-step to success
- Ramping up rewards

DISTRACTION LEVEL

Highly Distractible

- Sitting still for a meal
- Keeping the atmosphere calm
- Dealing with pestering
- Wakes early in the morning
- Getting rid of stored up energy

Low Distractibility

- Soothing techniques that work
- Is he really hungry?
- Learning to read your baby’s cries
- Learning to take “no” for an answer
- Using choices

SENSORY REACTIVITY

Highly Sensitive

- Dealing with clothing
- Why is shopping with my child so difficult?
- Creating a more tolerable home environment
- Avoiding “controlling” behavior
- Using choices

Low Sensitive

- Beware of mixed messages

Mail this information to:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

I would like to visit with a Family Life Educator Yes: _____ No: _____

Other Developmental Information Available
Through the Family Life Education Office at
Avera McKennan:

Stranger Awareness Guidelines

- Toy Safety
- Preventing Suffocation & Strangulation
- Drowning Prevention
- Terrific Toddlers
- Communicating With Young Children
- Handling a Biter
- Sibling Rivalry
- Children’s Nutrition Guidelines
- Sleep Behavior in Your Child
- Discipline: A Teaching and Learning Experience
- Reinforcement for Appropriate Behavior
- Fatherhood
- Building Self-Esteem
- Reading to Your Child
- Children & Television
- Welcoming a New Sibling
- Emotional Connections

Your Child’s Development

- Birth to 6 weeks
- 6 weeks to 3 months
- 3 to 5 months
- 5 to 8 months
- 8 to 14 months
- 14 to 24 months

Maybe there are no concerns with your child’s behavior right now. There is no expiration date on this offer – save this list with your child’s temperament profile. As he grows and develops, some issues may emerge. Just mail this in at that time and we’ll send you this information at your request.

First Response

APPROACHING OR WITHDRAWING

Refers to a child's very first response to a new food, person, toy or place.

Highly Approaching Characteristics:

- Quickly adjusts in new situations.
- Has no difficulty separating from parents.
Tip: May get lost in crowds or stores. Parents need to keep a very watchful eye.
- May be impulsive.
Tip: Lacks fear in potentially dangerous situations. Parents need to watch very carefully to protect child from harm.
- The approaching child may approach strangers easily.
Tip: This child should have frequent reinforcement of the caution not to approach anyone she doesn't know unless Mom or Dad is with her.

Moderately Approaching Characteristics:

- May approach quickly in some situations and slowly in others.
Tip: In less comfortable situations, respect child's need for some time to just "watch."

Less Approaching (or withdrawing) Characteristics:

- Needs time to warm up to a new experience.
- May have difficulty separating from parents.
Tip: Prepare child ahead of time.
- May want to eat only certain foods or play with certain toys.
Tip: Continue to offer new foods or new situations without pressure to participate. Over time they will become more familiar and therefore more acceptable.





Intensity of Expression

Refers to the energy level of a child's response.

Highly Intense Characteristics:

- Puts a lot of energy into emotional expression.
Tip: Encourage child to speak calmly in order to be understood.
- May scream very loudly for wants and needs.
Tip: Avoid responding with the same intensity as the child. Try to read the child's real need and respond calmly.
- May mislead caregivers as to the importance of the issue.
Tip: Avoid giving in just so the child will be quiet.

Moderately Intense Characteristics:

- Typically, the amount of emotion expressed compares to the child's true feelings.
- The volume of their emotional expression is consistent with their degree of concern.

Less Intense Characteristics:

- May be hard to read. Even though they do experience emotional needs, it is usually difficult for those around them to notice.
Tip: Be alert to the possibility that their strong emotions may be expressed mildly.
- May be mistakenly viewed as uninterested.

Predominant Mood

Refers to the child's tendency to be either smiling and cheerful or unsmiling and thoughtful.

Positive Mood Characteristics:

- Generally happy and content.
- May be described as "happy-go-lucky."
- This characteristic encourages positive and friendly responses from those around the child.

Moderate Mood Characteristics:

- Generally has a balance of both positive and negative moods.
- May be generally positive but still have cranky periods. These are usually related to the situation itself rather than temperament.

Less Positive Mood Characteristics:

- May have more negative reactions such as distress, discomfort, anger or disappointment.
Tip: Avoid responding to child's negativity with misplaced guilt. Fix the things you can fix and understand that the child's response is part of his temperament.
- May be more serious or somber.
Tip: Remember, this is your child's nature. He may be taking some time to think through the issue and it doesn't necessarily mean he is unhappy about it.
Children with a more somber mood frequently have difficulty getting a positive response from the people around them. Make sure that you smile and encourage her.



Persistence Level

Refers to a child's tendency to continue an activity until it is finished.

Highly Persistent Characteristics:

- Rarely gives up on difficult tasks.
Tip: Give advanced warning when a task needs to be interrupted.
- May take on challenges beyond skill level.
Tip: Help child to break task into smaller steps she can handle.
- May do things the hard way because he doesn't like to ask for help.
Tip: You may be able to offer ideas from the "sidelines" on how to do something or ask the child to think of ways to do something that might be easier for him.
Tip: Redirecting a very persistent child who has chosen an unacceptable activity isn't easy but can be accomplished with firm consistency.



Moderately Persistent Characteristics:

- May choose to complete some activities while other activities may be left incomplete.
- Usually focuses on tasks for only a brief time but is also capable of periods of sustained interest.

Less Persistent Characteristics:

- May become easily frustrated and give up on simple tasks.
Tip: Directions need to be clear and specific, like: "Put this book on the bottom book shelf, please."
- May be easily drawn away from unsafe or unsuitable activities.
- Has a tendency to stick with things he naturally does well.
Tip: Encourage activities that promote self-confidence and positive self-esteem. When the child is able to do something well, provide her with opportunities to do it often.
- May struggle with or resist learning self-care skills such as potty training, dressing, and tying shoes.
Tip: Organize activities into shorter segments. For example, you might start the zipper and then let the child finish zipping it. Positively reinforce every successfully completed step.

Distraction Level

Refers to how easily a child is drawn away from an activity she is involved in and how easy it is to soothe the child when upset.

Highly Distractible Characteristics:

- Notices things easily and can be diverted from tasks.
Tip: Redirect the child's wandering attention positively and without criticism.
- Easy to soothe as an infant.
- May change activities often, leaving toys scattered.
Tip: May need to pick up toys after each activity period so task doesn't become too daunting.
- Tends to be forgetful.
Tip: Gently redirect child to task at hand and encourage child to be responsible for remembering. May need prompting to remember – a sticker chart might help.

Moderately Distractible Characteristics:

- Likely to show a mixture of responding to and ignoring distractions that could interrupt ongoing activities.
- Probably not seen as having difficulty staying on task, nor is the child likely to change activities frequently in response to distractions.

Less Distractible Characteristics:

- Tends to stay with tasks until complete.
- Able to complete chosen activities in a noisy place.
- May tune out background noises, including parent directions, when focusing on activity.
- Less likely to forget something he wants and may challenge parent until they are tempted to give in.
- May become caught up in her own world and not notice things around her.
Tip: Recognize the positive things the child does rather than focusing on behavior that may be less desirable.

