



My child has a different temperament than me — what should I do?

TEMPERAMENT IS A BIG PART OF YOUR CHILD'S PERSONALITY.

It shapes how he responds to you, his environment, and everyday life. Because your child's personality is inherited, it stays the same over time. But culture and parenting also play a role in shaping your child's responses to his world.

There are three basic temperament types. Children (and adults) usually fall into these categories.

- 1. Easy:** These children develop a standard routine quickly and adjust to changes easily. If you have an easy child, make sure you provide plenty of time and attention, because she may not demand it.
- 2. Difficult:** These children have an underdeveloped ability to manage their emotions and behaviors. They are often irritable and fussy and may have trouble with changes in schedule. If this describes your child, try to keep a regular routine and pay attention to the kind of comforting that calms him, whether it is rocking, holding, singing, etc.
- 3. Slow to warm:** These children withdraw from new people, places, and foods. While they are not bad-tempered, they need to be eased into new situations. If your child is slow to warm, make changes slowly.

What is your temperament style?

As a parent, be aware of your own temperament style as well. The greatest conflicts result when a parent and child have different temperaments and the parent cannot understand why the child behaves as she does. Whether you and your child are very alike or very different, seeing and appreciating how you 'fit' and 'don't fit' together will



help you make decisions that cherish your child's well-being and talents.

Here are some tips for parents to reach this 'fit':

- Be aware of your child's temperament and respect his individuality without comparing him to others or trying to change his basic temperament.
- Communicate. Explain decisions and motives. Listen to your child's points of view and encourage teamwork to generate solutions.
- Set limits to help your child develop self-control.
- Be a good role model. Children learn by imitation.

Supporting your child's temperament

Children have their own particular temperament from birth. All temperament styles present different rewards and challenges for parents; there is no right or wrong style. But by understanding these patterns, you can fit your parenting approach in such areas as expectations, encouragement and discipline to fit your child's unique needs. ❖

When your child has a...	You can support your child by...
High activity level: he burns lots of energy, moves a lot, and gets restless when sitting still for too long.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing opportunities that allow your child to move about freely. • Creating a large, safe play environment.
Low activity level: she is comfortable playing calmly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging, but not forcing, more active play. • Limiting TV and screen time.
Cautious approach to new situations: he may seem shy and hang back from new places or people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowing your child time to adjust to new people. • Explaining what will happen ahead of time.
Bold and adventurous approach to new situations: she goes ahead without fear.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting limits and helping your child understand how to behave around new people and things.
Long attention span: he is able to focus on to a task, shifting his attention when he wants to.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Praising your persistent child's ability to play and focus in the middle of chaos.
Short attention span: she is easily distractible and may not be able to focus on a task.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping your child develop persistence and focus. • Providing a calm environment.