

QUALITIES OF TEMPERAMENT

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According to Thomas, Chess, and Birch (1970), there are nine qualities of temperament that influence an infant's response to the caregiving environment. **Specific combinations of these qualities characterize infants as:**

Easy infant	Slow to Warm infant	Difficult infant
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • predictable eating sleeping and elimination pattern • adapts quickly to changes in routine • pleasant moods • mild reactions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • low to moderate activity levels varies in regularity of physical needs • initially withdraws from the unfamiliar • needs gentle prompting to respond to changes in routine • accepts changes slowly • slightly unpleasant mood • mild reactions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • irregular physical needs • slowly accepts the new or unfamiliar • unpleasant moods • intense reactions

Temperaments of caregivers and service providers might affect the way they work with infants with disabilities. They may need to modify their natural styles to promote pleasurable interaction.

Goal: To achieve a "good fit".

<p>Activity Level or Amount of Activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infants with high activity levels enjoy movement, dislike being still or contained. • Infants with low activity level cooperate with caregivers, prefer quiet play, not roughhousing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active toddlers require greater supervision than toddlers with low activity levels. • Reduced sensory stimulation tends to increase passivity in a passive child, though they may crave touch, vigorous movement and enjoy physical play.
<p>Rhythmicity, or Regularity of Physical Needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eating, sleeping and toileting needs are predictable. • Difficulty establishing meal time/bed time/toileting routine. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent routines may help child develop more predictable patterns.
<p>Distractibility From Ongoing Activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infant easily distracted tends to be more easily soothed • If the infant is not easily distracted, the child tends not to be easily comforted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discovering ways to comfort is crucial and a calm controlled environment that provides carefully structured sensory input allows child to focus on one sensory modality at a time.
<p>Approach or Withdrawal Response</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive approach response: Infants who taste new foods, play with unfamiliar toys • Withdrawal response: Infants who reject unfamiliar food, toys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These children need gentle introductions to new people, things and activities
<p>Adaptability to Changes in the Routine or Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quickly accepts changes in routine • Does not accept change in routine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Familiar objects can provide information on changes in routine (i.e., a spoon can be used to indicate meal time)
<p>Attention Span and Persistence In An Activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long attention span and persistence in activity over an extended period of time and not easily distracted. • Short attention span and persistence with easy distractibility may require some frequent and brief interaction/activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some persistence in self stimulatory behaviors may require intervention and encouragement to interact and discover other things and activities to enjoy.
<p>Intensity of Reaction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intense reactions: laugh, cry, scream heartily to everyday and unusual situations • Mild reactions: subdued, infrequent fussing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong negative reactions may be a problem for caregivers
<p>Threshold of Responsiveness to Stimulation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low thresholds of responsiveness: extremely sensitive to mild stimulation of their senses 	
<p>Quality of Mood or General Disposition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive mood: pleasant, attracts interaction • Negative mood: fussy, demanding, difficult to interact with caregivers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caregivers/environment need to be responsive to the child's need, thus reducing fussiness