

Understanding your child

Understand what is normal for your child

- We are all different. Everyone has their own way of responding to people, places, and situations. The way you respond is called your temperament or personality.
- Learning about your child's temperament helps you to understand your child's needs and to respond sensitively.
- There may be times when you find your child's temperament challenging. Accepting your child's temperament, rather than trying to change it, will build your relationship and help you both to feel happier.
- Different children have different temperaments. This means that parenting strategies that worked well for one child may not work well for another.
- Your child's temperament is not good or bad; it is just who your child is. When you accept your child for who she is, you help her to grow up feeling good about herself.

Look at your child and her surroundings

- Get to know your child's temperament by looking at how she usually responds to people, places, and situations. Watching your child respond at these times helps you learn what your child likes and dislikes. Ask yourself:
 - How active is my child when I am bathing her, changing her diaper, or playing with her?
 - How does my child react to new things like new foods, people, and places?
 - How sensitive is my child to bright lights, sounds, and touch?
 - How does my child respond when she is excited or upset?
 - How easily is my child distracted from an activity?
- Your temperament may be the same as or different from your child's. Think about your own temperament and then compare it to your child's. Ask yourself:
 - How is my temperament the same as my child's? Does this make it easy or difficult to respond to my child?
 - How is my temperament different from my child's? Does this make it easy or difficult to respond to my child?



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- You can also use the Temperament Scale, found on our website, to help you do this comparison.

Respond sensitively to your child

- Respond sensitively to your child's temperament. For example, if your child is very active, allow her to move around and explore her surroundings while keeping her safe. When you respond sensitively to your child's needs, you help her to feel loved and accepted.
- Prepare for situations that may be hard for your child and try to make it easier for her. For example, if your child needs time to get used to new situations, take a favourite toy and stay close to your child to help her feel comfortable. Knowing how your child usually responds will help you predict situations that may be difficult for her.
- Be aware of what parts of your child's temperament are challenging. Problem-solve ways to make these situations easier for both you and your child. For example, if your child has a temper tantrum when you need to go to the store, try planning the trip at a different time of day or giving your child warnings such as "We need to go to the store in 10 minutes".
- Learn more about what you can do to support your child's temperament from the Temperament and Guidance Chart on our website.

Grow as a parent

- Learning about your temperament and the temperament of others will help you build positive relationships.
- Understanding and accepting your child's temperament can be challenging. Be patient with yourself as you learn how to respond sensitively to your child's needs.
- Taking time for yourself will help you cope as a parent. Getting enough sleep and eating well will help you have the energy to care for your child.

