

St. Michael's Episcopal Day School



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Temperament Assessment

Each child is born with a unique style of processing sensory information and responding to the world around him/her. Drs. Stella Chess and Alexander Thomas investigated the miracle of personality in a longitudinal study of the nine major temperaments. The following descriptions were taken from that study and from the book: Positive Discipline for Preschoolers by Jane Nelsen, Cheryl Erwin and Roslyn Ann Duffy. Please help us to understand your child better by responding to the following questions. Please check or fill in the statement that most describes your child.

Activity Level

This refers to your child's level of motor activity and the proportion of active and inactive periods.

When given a choice whether to draw/look at a book or play a running game, my child would choose_____.

My child doesn't know what the words "Wait, please!" mean. Learn to love your child for who he/she is.

Rhythmicity

Rhythmicity refers to the predictability (or unpredictability) of biological functions such as hunger, sleeping and bowel movements.

- I can set my clock by the routine of my child.
- My child is unpredictable in terms of biological functions.

Understanding rhythmicity can help you and us plan for your child's schedule in ways that ease conflict and stress.

Initial Response

This temperament describes the way a child reacts to a new situation or stimulus, such as a new food, person, etc. Often times these cues are seen by mood expressions or motor activity.

- My child eagerly joins in any new activity.
- My child has a tendency to be slow to warm up to new people or circumstances.

Learning to recognize your child's body language helps you and us respond to him/her in encouraging, nurturing ways. Temperament is inborn.

Adaptability

Adaptability describes how a child reacts to a new situation over time—his/her ability to adjust and change.

- When my child was a baby, he/she would initially spit out a new food but tended to accept it after a few tries.
- My child accepts a new food or situation very slowly.

Many children benefit from a gentle, gradual introduction to new stimuli.

Sensory Threshold

Some children can sleep through a violent rainstorm while others wake up from a nap at the slightest sound. Each child's sensory threshold varies and affects how they behave and view the world.

- My child loves to paint and get messy.
- My child is sensitive to textures, temperature changes and noise levels.

If your child is sensitive to stimulation and physical sensation, we will need to go slowly when introducing new experience and new people.

Quality of Mood

This temperament describes whether your child reacts to life with pleasure and acceptance or tends to find fault with most things.

- My child has a sunny smile nearly every day.
- My child feels compelled to pout or scowl.

If your child is a sober little one, share your sunshine with him/her knowing that there are ways to help a child face life more positively.

Intensity of Reaction

Children react to stimuli with varying degrees of intensity.

- When my child is startled, he/she would probably look up and then go back to whatever he/she was doing..
- My child would jump up and possibly cry if something crashed to the floor.

We can deal with behavior more calmly when we understand how your child reacts to the unexpected.

Distractibility

How does an outside stimulus interfere with your child's present behavior and willingness or unwillingness to be diverted?

- If I forgot my child's favorite "lovey" that he/she needed for naptime, he/she would not be able to accept a substitute.
- My child would be perfectly happy to nap with whatever toy is available.

Children with low distractibility will always need their favorite toy, whereas children with high distractibility can easily substitute. Both temperaments have wonderful assets.

Persistence and Attention Span

Persistence refers to a child's willingness to pursue an activity in the face of difficulties and attention span describes the length of time he/she will pursue an activity without interruption. These two characteristics are related.

- My child is content to play with blocks, dolls or Legos for a long time.
- My child plays with 10 different toys in 10 minutes.

No temperament is better than another; they are simply different and present different challenges in parenting and teaching

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date