



Temperament

Temperament includes:

- How active your baby is
- Your baby's overall mood
- How easy or difficult your baby is to comfort
- Your baby's level of emotional intensity (how happy, how sad, etc.)
- Openness to new experiences and people

Your baby's temperament can explain how they react emotionally and behaviorally, to any situation. Every baby is different, even identical twins can have very different temperaments!

Why your baby's temperament matters: your baby's temperament is going to have a big effect on how you feel about yourself as a parent.

From research, we know that caregivers' self-esteem, satisfaction as parents, happiness in marriage, mood, and decision-making can all be influenced by your baby's temperament. Your baby's temperament will also affect the way you function as your baby's caregiver in taking care of their physical, developmental, and social needs. Some babies are harder or easier to protect, stimulate, teach, love, and socialize.

Finding a "good fit":

As caregivers, things will go a lot smoother if you figure out how to adjust to match your baby's temperament. We call this a "goodness of fit", or the match of the expectations of family members and others in your baby's life to their temperament, abilities, and characteristics. Having a "good fit" can help to build a strong parent-child bond and help your child to develop healthy behaviors. Having a "poor fit" between your parenting and your child's temperament can cause stress and behavior problems.

Being willing to change

The tricky part is when you have two or more children with different temperaments. This requires you to be willing to "customize" your approach to each child. What works well with one child may not work well with another. For example, moving to a new home may be exciting for an easy child but scary for a cautious child, so the way you discuss it will be different across children.