



## Temperament Continuum

Place the initials of each of the children in your care on the continuum for each trait based on your observations and discussions with the child’s family. Then, write your initials where you feel you fall on each trait in the continuum. Use this tool to analyze where your temperament is similar and different to the children you care for. Then, knowing that it is the adult who must adjust to make the “fit” good, use the suggestions above to create care strategies that provide the best possible experience for each child.

### Activity Level:

**Very Active**

wiggle and squirm, difficulty sitting still

**Not Active**

sit back quietly, prefer quiet sedentary activities

### Distractibility:

**Very Distractible**

Difficulty concentrating  
 Difficulty paying attention when engaged in an activity  
 Easily distracted by sounds or sights during activities

**Not Distractible**

High degree of concentration  
 Pays attention when engaged in an activity  
 Not easily distracted by sounds or sights during activities

### Intensity:

**Very Intense**

Intense positive and negative emotions  
 Strong reactions

**Not Intense**

Muted emotional reactions

### Regularity:

**Very Regular**

Predictable appetite, sleep patterns, elimination

**Not Regular**

Unpredictable appetite, sleep patterns, elimination

### Sensory Threshold:

**High Threshold**

Not sensitive to physical stimuli including sounds, tastes, touch, temperature changes  
 Falls asleep anywhere, tries new foods, wears new clothing easily

**Low Threshold**

Sensitive to physical stimuli including sounds, tastes, touch, temperature changes  
 Picky eater, difficulty sleeping in strange crib/bed

### Approach/Withdrawal:

**Tendency to Approach**

Eagerly approaches new situations or people

**Tendency to Withdraw**

Hesitant and resistant when faced with new situations, people, or things.

### Adaptability:

**Very Adaptable**

Transitions easily to new activities and situations

**Difficulty Adapting**

Has difficulty transitioning to new activities or situations

### Persistence:

**Persistent**

Continues with a task or activity in the face of obstacles  
 Doesn't become frustrated easily faced with obstacles.

**Easily Frustrated**

Moves on to a new task or activity when  
 Gets frustrated easily

### Mood:

**Positive Mood**

Reacts to the world in a positive way, generally cheerful

**Serious Mood**

Reacts to situations negatively, mood is generally serious

<sup>1</sup> ZERO TO THREE, Retrieved from worldwideweb [http://www.zerotothree.org/site/PageServer?pagename=key\\_temp](http://www.zerotothree.org/site/PageServer?pagename=key_temp) June 11, 2009

<sup>2</sup> Dimensions of temperament (found in several places and merged/adapted).

<sup>3</sup> WestEd. (1995). The Program for Infant Toddler Caregivers' (PITC) Trainers Manual, module 1: Social-emotional growth and socialization (p. 21). Sacramento, CA: California Department of Education.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas, Chess, Birch, Hertzog, & Korn, 1963.

## Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning

We welcome your feedback on this What Works Brief. Please go to the CSEFEL Web site (<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel>) or call us at (866) 433-1966 to offer suggestions.

### Where Do I Find More Information on Temperament?

See the CSEFEL Web site (<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel>) for additional resources.

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This What Works Brief is part of a continuing series of short, easy-to-read, "how to" information packets on a variety of evidence-based practices, strategies, and intervention procedures. The Briefs are designed to help teachers and other caregivers support young children's social and emotional development. In-service providers and others who conduct staff development activities should find them especially useful in sharing information with professionals and parents. The Briefs include examples and vignettes that illustrate how practical strategies might be used in a variety of early childhood settings and home environments.

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