



Tips for Tots



Tip #3: Understand Temperament in Young Children

Strategies

Did you know?

Infant/Toddler:

Every child is born with his own way, or “personal style” of approaching the world: a temperament. There are several areas a caregiver can look at when working with infants and toddlers: do they wiggle when getting changed, do they spend time looking around the room or do they explore their environment, how do they react when someone new enters the room, is the child persistent when trying something new, and how is the child during transitions. Recognizing patterns in a child’s behavior that are influenced by temperament can help to anticipate a child’s responses to certain situations.

Preschool:

Generally, there are five characteristics that describe an individual’s temperament: emotional intensity, activity level, frustration tolerance, reaction to new people and reaction to change. Temperament describes how a child approaches and reacts to the world. The child’s temperament is a key factor in understanding their behavior and the way they interact with others. There are three general types of temperaments often referred to as easy-going, slow-to-warm, and active/feisty. Temperament is not something a child chooses, nor is it something that a parent or caregiver created. A child’s temperament shapes the way he experiences the world.

Infant/Toddler:

- Observe the infant: temperament is most clearly seen during infancy .
- Look for “goodness of fit” between child and caregiver.
- All caregivers should spend one-on-one time with infants and toddlers: getting to know their likes and dislikes, and how they can be comforted.
- Develop open communication with the family.
- Allow active children many opportunities to safely explore their environment.
- Create challenges in the environment such as soft mazes, ramps, and tunnels.
- Incorporate movement into even quiet activities, turning pages of the book or have the children follow the lead of a book: leaves wave, crawling animals, sleeping babies.
- Engage in social activities such as peek-a-boo or rolling a ball back and forth.

Preschool:

- Consistent routines and schedules benefit children regardless of temperament type.
- As a caregiver spend the time to learn what your temperament is and how it effects your own interactions.
- Allow more time to complete tasks depending on a child’s temperament.
- Allow children extra time for social relationships to develop.
- Whenever possible reduce the number of transitions and interruptions .
- Allow time for different types of play: free flowing, music & movement and vigorous play.
- Include teacher directed activities and free choice time
- Incorporate opportunities for physical activities and fun.
- Continue to develop open communication with the family about a child’s temperament and their individual needs.

Resources:

<http://www.education.com/>

<http://www.zerotothree.org/child>

“Temperament in the Classroom” by Barbara K. Keogh, (2003)

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