

Eyes on

# Temperament:

A life-long influence

PRACTITIONERS



CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE FOR CHILDREN'S WELL-BEING

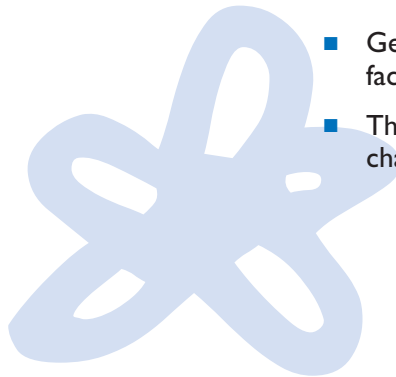
Early Childhood Development



***“Children’s temperaments have an impact on their social competence and mental health.”***

## What do we know?

- The way that people behave and react to situations is influenced in part by their temperament. All children are born with a tendency toward a particular temperament.
- Children’s temperament influences
  - their level of activity
  - their level of fear, frustration, sadness and discomfort
  - how readily they approach new people and situations
  - their ability to pay attention, focus on and complete a task, and manage impulses.
- Children’s temperaments have an impact on their social competence and mental health.
- Certain temperamental features predict future behaviours:
  - Children who are fearful and inhibited, tend later to be more empathetic. But they are also more at risk of suffering from anxiety and depression.
  - Children who are able to pay attention for longer periods and able to restrain themselves, tend later to be able to manage their impulses and stay focused on a goal. They will also be more likely to pay attention for longer periods.
- Genetics plays a strong role in shaping temperament, but environmental factors can also influence it.
- The way parents and caregivers respond and adapt to children, can mitigate challenging aspects of their temperament.



## Paying attention to...

## What can be done?

... an irritable, impulsive, timid or hyperactive child.  
He may be perceived negatively by adults and peers.

- Observe the children in your care to become familiar with their temperaments.
- Inform and support the parents so they can react in a warm and loving way.

... a child who sometimes is aggressive and irritable and behaves in challenging ways due to his temperament.

- Advise parents to adopt a constructive parental style and set clear boundaries.

... a shy child. He has an even greater need to be encouraged.

- Encourage him to explore new surroundings and situations.
- Advise parents to try not to be over-protective.
- Suggest that parents be gentle in their discipline.

... a fearless child.

- Encourage parents to provide sensitive care and build a strong attachment to help him to develop self-awareness.

... adapting to children's temperaments. This can help children overcome the more challenging aspects of their temperaments, leading to more positive outcomes.

- Try to be flexible in your approach to children.
- Adapt as much as possible to best suit their temperament.
- Share with parents the strategies that you use with children of particular temperaments.
- Support parents to build a secure attachment with their children.

... skills associated with self-regulation (e.g.: controlling one's thoughts, behaviours and emotions, being able to plan a course of action and correct one's mistakes). These skills develop considerably during the first years of life.

- Consider specific interventions including training for self-regulation skills for children who need it.



# Information

The Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development identifies and summarizes the best scientific work on the social and emotional development of young children. It disseminates this knowledge to a variety of audiences in formats and languages adapted to their needs.

For a more in-depth understanding of child temperament, consult our experts' articles in the Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development, available free of charge at [www.child-encyclopedia.com](http://www.child-encyclopedia.com).

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