

How To Manage Your Child's Temperament

Every child is born with their own unique way of interacting with the world. Some are flexible in the midst of change while others may experience stress when presented with new situations or a change in schedule. This is what is referred to as temperament. And while some temperaments are easier to handle than others, it is important for parents to understand temperament traits, such as adaptability. By doing this, we can help children become the best version of themselves in the most effective way possible.

Temperament is the way a child reacts to their environment and how they regulate emotions. Psychiatrists Dr. Stella Chess and Dr. Alexander Thomas identified nine dimensions of temperament that they felt were significant when determining how a child relates with the world. One of the nine, adaptability, plays a huge role in how children transition through changes around them. Understanding how this plays a role in the different types of temperament is key for parents, teachers, and coaches.

Within their research, Dr. Chess and Dr. Thomas identified three types of temperament: easy, difficult, and slow to warm up. In regards to adaptability, children with an easy temperament are able to adjust to changes quickly and smoothly and enjoy new activities. However, they can be impulsive because they always jump into new things, sometimes without thinking first. Difficult temperaments tend to have very strong emotional reactions to things and are extra sensitive to stimuli. On the flip side, they are very passionate and determined. Slow to warm up children often resist new activities and feel uncomfortable around new people. On a positive note, though, they are less likely to be influenced by peer pressure and they thrive on routines.

Knowing this information can help parents and other adults interact with children of different temperaments more effectively. One of the first things to do is to be aware of your child's reactions in order to identify their temperament type. No matter what temperament they have, make sure children know that the feelings they are experiencing are ok and avoid comparing

their temperament to that of another child. When addressing different temperaments, help the easy ones with thinking before they act. Help the children with more difficult temperaments by keeping a consistent schedule and encourage self-awareness. For slow to warm up children, give them time to adjust to new situations and avoid putting pressure on them to jump into activities before they are ready.

To help with this the SKILLZ program offers supplemental information called Parent SKILLZ that supports parents to be the best they can for their child. Within this curriculum, there are eight skills that offer ways to do this. Utilizing these skills when addressing individual child temperaments will be the most effective way to handle it. And while it's important for parents to know the temperament of their child, it is equally important for teachers and coaches to be apply this as well. SKILLZ instructors incorporate these skills into their interactions with students on a daily basis. They are attuned to their individual needs and adjust accordingly.

Temperament is different from child to child, even within the same family. Children do not choose what their temperament is, and one temperament is not better or worse than the other. Reframing how you describe a child can be powerful for them and you. The easy child is outgoing, the difficult child is determined, and the slow to warm child is observant. The important thing to remember is that each child is unique and help them to make the best of their own temperament.