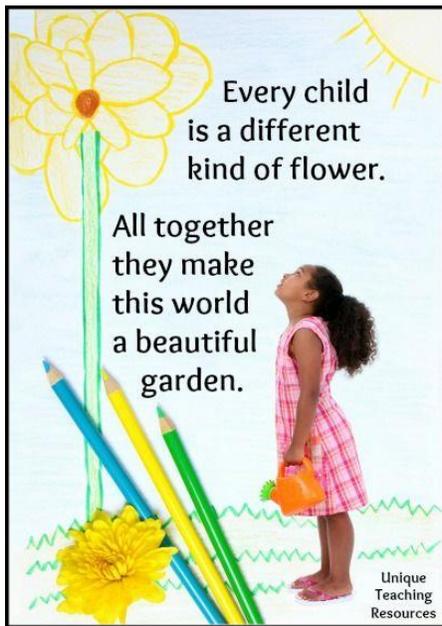


TOPIC OF THE MONTH

RECOGNIZING AND CELEBRATING YOUR CHILD'S UNIQUENESS



Just like a snowflake or a fingerprint, every child is unique in their own special way. Every child has a unique way of feeling, thinking, and interacting with others. Some children are reserved, while others are outgoing; some are active, while others are calm. As a loving and nurturing parent/caregiver, it's our job to encourage them to embrace their uniqueness and celebrate their individual qualities.

We can teach our child to make positive choices, and encourage good deeds, behaviors and positive traits they possess.

Temperament: What Makes Your Child Tick

Temperament shapes the way we experience the world and interact with others. It is the collection of characteristics - emotional intensity, sensory reactivity, activity level, adaptability, persistence - that makes each of us unique.

Temperament is biologically based, part of the unique wiring of each individual's nervous system. Your child did not choose his or her temperament.



Temperament: what is it?

Temperament is the way children respond to the world.

You can think about your child's temperament in terms of how much or how little they show of these three qualities:

Reactivity: this is how strongly children react to things like exciting events or not getting their own way. Reactive children tend to feel things strongly.

Self-regulation: this is how much children can control their behaviour, including the way they show their feelings. It's also about how much children can control their attention and how persistent they are.

Sociability: this is how comfortable children are when they meet new people or have new experiences.

You can't change your child's temperament – they are who they are, and that's great.

You can however adapt your parenting to your child's individual temperament so that you nurture their development. You can help your child develop the positive parts of their temperament. You can understand the situations that your child might find hard because of their temperament, and help them learn how to handle these situations.

Here are some suggestions for parenting to your child's temperament.

Parenting more and less reactive temperaments

More reactive

If you have a very reactive child, they are probably a lot of fun when something good happens. They might also be loud and dramatic when unhappy about something, like not getting their own way. You might need to help your child learn how to respond more calmly – for example, by modeling and helping them relax and use words for their feelings.

Reactive children are often also very physically active and might need lots of time outdoors. You can help your child develop by encouraging them to try new sporting activities, for example. They might also need help winding down, so bedtime relaxation can be a good idea.



"When little people are overwhelmed by big emotions, it's our job to share our calm, not to join their chaos."

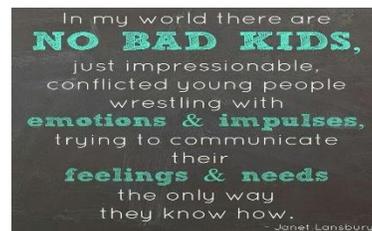
– L.R. Knost

Less reactive

A less reactive child is usually easy to get along with, but might be less assertive. You might need to teach this child how to stand up for themselves. You can encourage and give them the language to use, if you notice situations where your child could be more assertive, this will give them the tools to handling these situations differently.

It's also important to make sure less reactive children aren't left out of family discussions. For example, 'Sally, you haven't said much. Are you happy with that choice of movie?'

Children who are less reactive might also be less physically active. Your less active child will be happiest with lots of opportunities to use their fine motor skills, like doing craft or drawing. But you might need to encourage physical activity. Try a trip to the park to collect leaves for a collage, or have the family walk to the library, rather than driving.



Parenting more and less self-regulated temperaments

More self-regulated

Children who find it easier to self-regulate are good at managing their reactions to emotions like frustration or excitement. They can calm down faster after something exciting or upsetting, and they're less impulsive.

A child who's very self-regulated might be more able to regulate their attention. They might be more likely to keep going with something until they have gotten it right. They might also be good at coping with setbacks and able to get through tasks like homework without much supervision. They might be a bit of a perfectionist, so make sure they know that it's OK to make mistakes.

Less self-regulated

If your child has difficulty regulating their attention, they may need lots of encouragement to keep going at difficult tasks. These children might switch quickly from one activity to another. They can also be very creative. To help your child focus, you can try encouraging your child when they are doing well and making things fun by using games and creative activities.



Parenting more and less sociable temperaments

More sociable

If your child is very social they will like being around other people, having playdates and doing group activities. You don't have to organise playdates and activities for him all the time, because it's also important for your child to learn to occupy themselves sometimes.

Children with more sociable temperaments are also usually very adaptable and can cope with changes to routines quite easily. It's great if you can give your adaptable child lots of new experiences, but make sure they still gets one-on-one time with you.

Less sociable

If your child isn't very social, they are probably quite good at playing by themselves and might not need much help finding something to do. You might need to help them with making friends. If they are not comfortable in groups or at parties, you could try asking just one or two friends for a playdate at your house or the park.

If your less sociable child isn't very adaptable they might like having a regular routine, and might not cope well with changes. This can make it easy for you to plan things around their routine, but your child might also need help coping with changes or transitions.

*Your cell phone has
already replaced
your camera,
your calendar,
your alarm clock...
Don't let it replace
your family. 📱*

Sources

<https://www.aboutkidshealth.ca/Article?contentid=499&language=English>

<https://www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca>

<http://www.ottawapublichealth.ca/en/professionals-and-partners/iecmh-self-regulation.aspx>