



Temperament

Parenting doesn't happen in a vacuum; parenting is an interactive situation. Just as parents have temperaments, children also have styles, or temperaments, which mesh with their parents' style, each affecting the other. Children are born with a tendency toward reacting to people and events in specific ways. This preferred way of responding is called **temperament**. Children in the same family often have different temperaments, and parents who have several children are likely to recognize the differences and to react differently to each child. For example, a parent would probably respond quite differently to an overly active, impulsive child than to a shy, timid child. He or she probably would discourage impulsive behavior in the overly active child but encourage assertive behavior in the shy child.

It's the mix or the "goodness of fit" between parent and child that matters most. The match or mismatch between a child and parent determines the harmony between them. Temperament, however, is not set in stone. Although temperament has been shown to be consistent over time, family environment and life experiences can make a difference. **Parents who are sensitive to their child's temperamental style and can recognize the child's unique strengths, will make family life smoother.** For example, when faced with a new situation, a parent of a slow to warm up child may need to be patient and allow him more time to assess a situation. A difficult child may need advance rehearsal of the expected behavior to help her deal with the new situation.

Obviously, parents and children are individuals and not easily categorized. Most will show characteristics of several styles, but over time, one style generally prevails.

What parents should keep in mind

- Think about how your own temperament style meshes with your child's temperamental style.
- Be attuned to your child's temperament and encourage her to accomplish tasks at her own pace.
- Make your expectations clear. Setting limits will help your child develop self control.
- Encourage children to work with you on generating solutions to problems.
- Make communication a priority. Be open to discussion; take time to explain your decisions and motives and listen to your children's point of view.

- Make them aware that their opinions are respected, but remain firm in your decisions.
- Respect each child's individual strengths and don't compare children.

Excerpt taken from: **Parenting Styles/Children's Temperaments:
The Match** by [Anita Gurian, Ph.D.](#)

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