

Temperament in Children

Temperament is the way we respond and interact with our environment. When we are interacting with someone, we tend to alter our behaviour to suit the other person's temperament. For example, we respond differently to aggression than we do to pleasantness. Therefore a parenting style can also be influenced by a child's temperament. As a result, sometimes different parenting styles are used for different children within the same family.

Research has revealed that children are born with one or a combination of 3 broad styles of temperament: **Easy Children**, **Difficult Children** and **Slow to Warm Up Children**.

Easy Children

These children adapt easily to new situations with minimal help. They have a happy, positive demeanour that enables them to relate well to others and overall be socially adept.

Children with easy temperaments have an adventurous nature; enjoying new experiences and exploring new environments. They perform well at school, have strong coping skills; are independent; calm and in infancy and preschool years have regular eating and sleeping patterns.

Parents must ensure they are not overprotective of children with easy temperaments so as not to stifle their natural curiosity and adventurous spirit.



These children are easy going and as such may not express their grievances, needs or desires. Having one on one time and asking the child questions about their feelings and thoughts will strengthen the relationship and ensure that communication channels are kept open and flowing between parent and child.

Difficult Children

Children with a difficult temperament have difficulty adapting to new environments or people, often reacting with anxiety or fear. They become frustrated or upset easily, reacting with emotional intensity. These children can be impulsive, feisty, needy, fussy, moody, sensitive and have difficulty concentrating. In infancy and preschool years they may have irregular sleeping and eating patterns.

Children with difficult temperaments need time to 'rehearse' a new experience. They do well when they are prepared for new situations and practise expected behaviour. They also need ample space and activities to work off their excess emotional and physical energy; particularly outdoors where there is space to run and play.

These children do well when they feel they have an element of control. Provide this by giving them simple choices in their day to day life.