



Understanding Behavior

Pyramid Resources for Infant-Toddler Social-Emotional Development
University of Kansas

Adapted from:
The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning
Vanderbilt University

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1

Learner Objectives

Participants will be able to:

- Understand and describe that all young children's behavior is a way of communicating and has meaning
- Use a variety of strategies, including observation and self-reflection, to increase capacity to support social-emotional development of infants, toddlers, and their families

2

Training Agenda

- **Setting the Stage**
- **Observation**
- **Examining our Reactions**
- **Responding to Challenges**
- **Wrap-up & Reflection**

3

Our Learning Environment

What can the trainer do to facilitate a safe learning environment?

How can other training participants help make the training environment conducive to your learning?

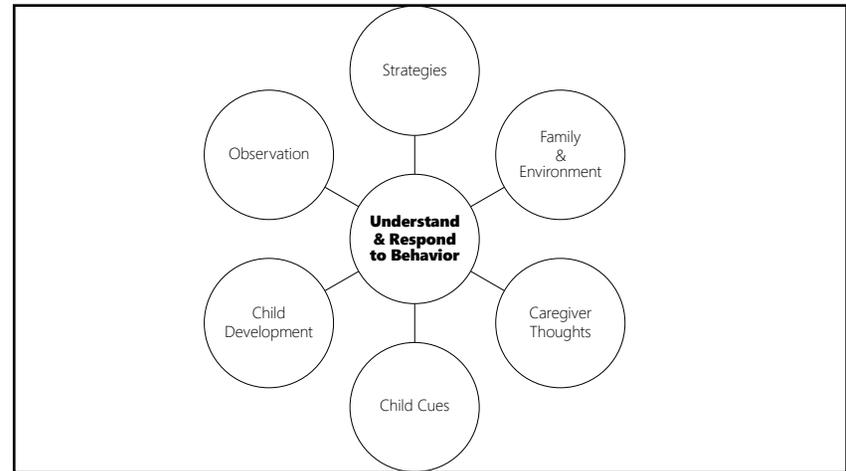
What are some agreements we can make?

4

Possible Shared Agreements

- **Confidentiality**
- **Take Care of Yourself and Others**
- **Demonstrate Respect for all**
- **Right to Pass**
- **Right to Take Risks**
- **Assume Positive Intent**
- **Recognize We Are All Learning, and in Different Ways**

5



6

Understanding Behavior

Observation helps us understand children's development and behavior

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            graph TD
              A((Understand & Respond to Behavior)) --- B((Observation))
              A --- C((Family & Environment))
            
```

7

Understanding Behavior: Observation

Look:
Ongoing Monitoring

- **Record what you see and hear**
- **Be objective – just the facts**
- **Use all of your senses (see, hear, touch, feel, smell)**
- **Note your own responses and how you are feeling**
- **Observe different days, different times of day, different places and activities**

8

Understanding Behavior: Observation

What do you see in this picture?



Look: Ongoing Monitoring

Shared by Kristin Tenney-Blackwell

9

Understanding Behavior: Time for Reflection

- **What was my purpose for observing?**
- **Do I notice any similarities or patterns?**
- **What do these observations suggest?**
- **What else might be going on?**
- **Is there anything else I want to observe or find out?**
- **How does this observation fit with other things that I know about the child?**

Think: Why is it happening?

10

Understanding Behavior: Temperament – A Continuum of Traits

Handouts 4 & 5

Think about where you feel each child falls on the continuum of traits, such as activity level, adaptability, persistence, mood, etc.

Think: Why is it happening?

11

Understanding Behavior: Learning From Families

Encourage families to share their observations.

Let families know their observations are important and valued.

Place a basket at sign-in for families to drop off photos and notes to support careful observation.



Look: Ongoing Monitoring

Shared by Kristin Tenney-Blackwell

12

Look:
Ongoing
Monitoring

Understanding Behavior Cues of Young Children	<pre> graph TD A((Understand & Respond to Behavior)) --- B((Child Cues)) </pre>
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13

Look:
Ongoing
Monitoring

Understanding Behavior: Cues of Young Children		
Engagement cues: "I want more."		Disengagement cues: "I need a break."

14

Look:
Ongoing
Monitoring

Understanding Behavior: Cues of Young Children	
Engagement Cues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eyes widen • Turn eyes, body, or head toward speaker • Alert face • Steady breathing • Hand-to-mouth activity • Hand clasped together • Grasping finger or object • Smooth movements 	Disengagement Cues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crying or fussing • Gagging, spitting • Frowning • Hiccupping, yawning, sneezing • Jittery or jerky movements • Falling asleep • Back arching • Turning away • Stiff or limp posture

15

Understanding Behavior: Cues of Young Children

How Would You Respond to These Young Children?

Look:
Is there a problem?

Think:
Why is it happening?

Think:
What should be done?

16

Understanding Behavior: Development & Challenges

Development & its influences on challenges and behaviors

Child Development

Understand & Respond to Behavior

17

Understanding Behavior: Development & Challenges

New challenges may emerge with development

Challenges may occur because development has not yet occurred

Development creates the need for caregiving shifts and modifications

18

Understanding Behavior: Development & Challenges

A 3-month-old screams and cries for long periods of time because...

A 17-month-old hits another child because ...

A 2-year-old says "no" frequently because...

Think: Why is it happening?

19

Challenging Situation with a 9-Month-Old

cdc.gov/Milestones

Learn the Signs. Act Early.

20

Understanding Behavior: Examining our Reactions

Caregiver values, beliefs, & assumptions

Understand & Respond to Behavior

Caregiver Thoughts

21

Understanding Behavior: Examining Our Reactions

Handout 7

What behaviors push your buttons?

How do these behaviors make you feel?

How does this impact your relationship with a child and their family?

22

Understanding Behavior: Examining our Reactions

- **Pay attention to your own behavior, thoughts, and feelings**
- **Use thoughts and feelings as a signal**
- **Take extra effort to remain calm or take a break**
- **Ask for help**
- **Take time for additional observations**
- **How do these feelings impact your relationship with the child? the family?**

23

Understanding Behavior: Noticing & Challenging our Thoughts

Original Thoughts

That child never stops crying. He is driving me crazy.

I can't calm him. Nothing works. Maybe center care is not for him.

Reframed Thoughts

This child is getting to know me and learning how to regulate. My job is to stay calm and help soothe him. As I stay calm and keep trying to find ways to comfort him, we will develop a better relationship which will help him.

I can handle this. I am in control. I am not alone in this. I can ask others for help and support.

24

**Understanding Behavior:
Noticing & Challenging our Thoughts**

Original Thoughts

Sarah is only trying to get to me and ruin my day.
I don't know how to do this.
This child's needs are beyond my training.

Reframed Thoughts

Sarah is not developmentally capable of this. She may have learned that this is a good way to get her needs met. I can work harder to teach her better ways to get her needs met.

I work as part of a team. We can work together to try to figure this out. This child and family need our help.

25

**Activity: Reframing Behavior
Handouts 7 & 8**

Read the example listed
Pick a "Hot Button" behavior from Handout 7 to record on Handout 8
Write down thoughts you have about the behavior
Challenge your thoughts in order to reframe and replace with a more objective thought

26

Noticing & Challenging Our Thoughts

PRISM Behavior – Noticing & Challenging Our Thoughts (Part 1 of 2)



27

Noticing & Challenging Our Thoughts

PRISM Behavior – Noticing & Challenging Our Thoughts (Part 2 of 2)



28

Strategies for Reframing

- **Notice your own feelings, step back**
- **Observe the behavior**
- **Ask "I wonder" questions about the behavior**
- **Revisit developmental resources about child's age and stage of growth**
- **Think about how this might feel for parents and families**

29

Understanding Behavior

Effective strategies for addressing challenging behaviors & situations

Strategies

Understand & Respond to Behavior

Act: Implement plan or strategy

30

Responding to Classroom Challenges

Act: Implement plan or strategy

Respond immediately

Remain calm & supportive

Help children recognize & deal with emotion

31

Responding to Challenging Behaviors

Act: Implement plan or strategy

Provide positive attention once the child is calm

Use the opportunity to teach problem solving

Redirect often & use planned ignoring when necessary

32

**Self-Reflection:
Practice
Implementation
Checklists**

Handout 9

**Responding to Distress &
Managing Challenging
Behavior**

**Communicating Age-
Appropriate Behavioral
Expectations**

Practice Implementation Checklist: Behavior
Place a star next to the items you feel are a strength for you.
Then, check any of the boxes that apply.

Communicate & provide feedback about behavioral expectations	I would like to...			
	I want more about this	I do this more often	I do it other places or differently	I do this in better ways
Expectations are developmentally appropriate & individualized as needed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Let toddler know what they should do in a positive tone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Temperate behavioral expectations through modeling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Acknowledge & encourage appropriate behavior	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use simple words to explain natural consequence of unsafe behavior	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide feedback to toddlers when behavior does not meet expectations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Anticipate potential conflict and provide guidance before situation gets out of control	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My Notes:				

33

Major Messages to Take Home

- **Caregivers who reflect on their own well-being, skills, and perspectives will be better equipped to contribute to the positive social-emotional development of infants and toddlers and to support families rearing infants and toddlers.**

- **Caregivers who use a variety of strategies, including observation, will be better able to form close relationships with infants, toddlers, and their families.**

34

Understanding Child Behavior Agenda

Part 1

- » Setting the Stage
- » Observation
- » Learning From Families

Break

Part 2

- » Cues of Young Children
- » Behavior & Challenges

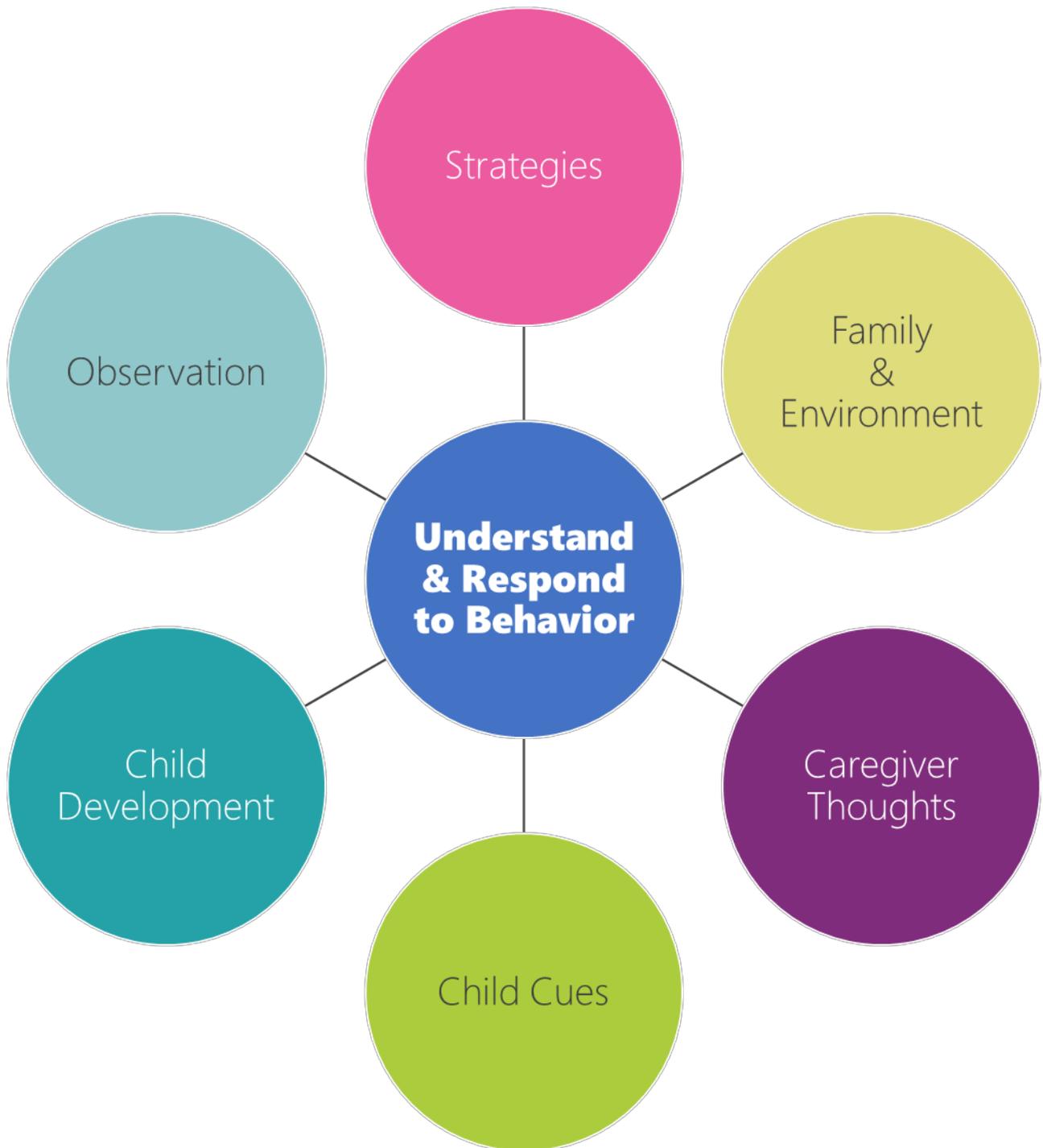
Break

Part 3

- » Examining our Reactions
- » Responding to Challenges
- » Wrap-up and Reflection

Other Information





Temperament Continuum

Directions: Place the initials of each of the children in your care on the continuum for each trait based on your observations and discussions with the child's family.

Activity Level

Very Active

Wiggle and squirm, difficulty sitting still

Not Active

Sit back quietly, prefer sedentary activities

Distractibility

Very Distractible

Difficult Concentrating
Difficulty paying attention when engaged in an activity
Easily distracted by sounds or sights during activities

Not Distractible

High degree of Concentration
Pays attention when engaged in an activity
Not easily distracted by sounds or sights during activities

Intensity

Very Intense

Intense positive and negative emotions
Strong reactions

Not Intense

Muted emotional reactions

Regularity

Very Regular

Predictable appetite, sleep patterns, elimination

Not Regular

Unpredictable appetite, sleep patterns, elimination

Sensory Threshold

High Threshold

Not sensitive to physical stimuli including sounds, tastes, touch, temperature changes

Low Threshold

Sensitive to physical stimuli including sounds, tastes, touch, temperature changes
Picky eater, difficulty sleeping in strange crib/bed

Approach/Withdrawal

Tendency to Approach

Eagerly approaches new situations or people

Tendency to Withdraw

Hesitant or resistant when faced with new situations, people, or things

Adaptability

Very Adaptable

Transitions easily to new activities and situations

Difficulty Adapting

Has difficulty transitioning to new activities or situations

Persistence

Persistent

Continues with a task or activity in the face of obstacles
Doesn't become frustrated easily

Easily Frustrated

Moves on to a new task or activity when faced with obstacles
Gets frustrated easily

Mood

Positive Mood

Reacts to the world in a positive way, generally cheerful

Serious Mood

Reacts to situations negatively, mood is generally serious

ZERO TO THREE: Retrieved from worldwideweb http://www.zerotothree.org/site/PageServer?pagename=kay_temp June 11, 2009

Dimensions of temperament (found in several places and merged/adapted).

WestEd. (1995). The Program for Infant Toddler Caregivers' (PITC) Trainers Manual, module 1: Social-emotional growth and socialization (p.21). Sacramento, CA: California Department of Education.

Thomas, Chess, Birch, Hertzog, & Korn, 1963.



Temperament Continuum

Where do I find more information on temperament?

See the CSEFEL web site (<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel>) for additional resources.

Blackwell, P. L. (2004, March). *The idea of temperament: Does it help parents understand their fussy babies?* Washington, DC: ZERO TO THREE.

California Department of Education, Child Development Division and Far West Laboratory, Center for Child and Family Studies. (1990). *The program for infant/toddler caregivers*. Sacramento, CA.

Honig, A. S. (2005, April). Infants & toddlers: Getting to know babies' temperaments. *Early Childhood Today*, 19(6), 20-23.

Keogh, B. K. (2002). *Temperament in the classroom: Understanding individual differences*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

Kristal, J. (2004). *The temperament perspective: Working with children's behavioral styles*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

Lemer, C. & Dombro, A. L. (2005). *Bringing up baby: Three steps to making good decisions in your baby's first years*. Washington, DC: ZERO TO THREE.

Parlakian, R. & Seibel, N. L. (2002). *Building strong foundations: Practical guidance for promoting the social-emotional development of infants and toddlers*. Washington, DC: ZERO TO THREE.

Strum, L. (2004). *Temperament in early childhood: A primer for the perplexed*. Washington, DC: ZERO TO THREE.

Thomas, A., Chess, S., Birch, H.G., Hertzog, M.E., & Korn, S. (1963). *Behavioral individuality in early childhood*. New York University Press.

WestEd. (n.d.) Program for infant toddler care (PITC). <https://www.pitc.org/>

Wittmer, D. S. & Petersen, S. H. (2006). *Infant and toddler development and responsive program planning: A relationship-based approach*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Prentice-Hall.

Zero to three. (2020). Temperament. <https://www.zerotothree.org/espanol/temperament>



Twenty-month-old Laura just began care in Ms. Neil's family child care home. Ms. Neil is having difficulty integrating Laura into her program. Laura's schedule is unpredictable—she becomes tired or hungry at different times each day—and she always seems to want to run, climb, and jump on everything. Laura also gets extremely upset when it is time to transition from outdoor play to lunch, or when Ms. Neil interrupts an activity in which Laura is engaged. It is not uncommon for her to tantrum for 10 minutes or more at these times. Ms. Neil has had many years of experience working with young children, and attributes Laura's lack of a consistent schedule to her recent enrollment and need to get used to the program. She is also struggling with the fact that her favorite activities—quiet games, book reading, and sensory experiences—are ones that Laura doesn't seem to enjoy. After several weeks of observing little change in Laura's behaviors, Ms. Neil is frustrated. Laura's unpredictable napping and feeding times, as well as her constant need for physical activity and intense reactions during transitions, are making responsive care for all the other children difficult. Ms. Neil meets with Laura's family, and learns that Laura's parents haven't had difficulty with the issues she describes. When she asks specifically about her schedule, her parents describe Laura as being a good eater and sleeper, but do report that she doesn't have a consistent schedule for eating or napping. They also share that Laura's need for active physical play is typically not an issue because they have a large backyard and Laura has several older siblings who often include her in their active play. Still, all of the adults are concerned about Laura's success transitioning into Ms. Neil's program, and want to find a way to help her.

What Is Temperament?

A child's temperament describes the way in which she approaches and reacts to the world. It is her personal "style." Temperament influences a child's behavior and the way she interacts with others. While temperament does not clearly define or predict behavior, understanding a child's temperament can help providers and families better understand how young children react and relate to the world around them. Information about temperament can also guide parents and caregivers to identify children's strengths and the supports they need to succeed in their relationships and environments.

Researchers have described young children's temperament by depicting several different traits. These traits address an infant's level of activity, her adaptability to daily routines, how she responds to new situations, her mood, the intensity of her reactions, her sensitivity to what's going on around her, how quickly she adapts to changes, and how distractible and persistent she might be when engaging in an activity. Based on these traits, researchers generally categorize children into three temperament types:

- **Easy or flexible** children tend to be happy, regular in sleeping and eating habits, adaptable, calm, and not easily upset.
- **Active or feisty** children may be fussy, irregular in feeding and sleeping habits, fearful of new people and situations, easily upset by noise and stimulation, and intense in their reactions.
- **Slow to warm or cautious** children may be less active or tend to be fussy, and may withdraw or react negatively to new situations; but over time they may become more positive with repeated exposure to a new person, object, or situation.

Clarifications about Temperament

Not all children's temperaments fall neatly into one of the three types described. Roughly 65% of children can be categorized into one of the three temperamental types: 40% are easy or flexible, 10% are active or feisty, and 15% can be categorized as slow to warm or cautious. Second, all temperamental traits, like personality traits, range in intensity. Children who have the same temperament type might react quite differently in similar situations, or throughout different stages in their development. For example, consider the reactions of two infants when a stranger comes into the room. A cautious infant might look for her caregiver and relax when she makes eye contact, while another baby with an easy temperament may smile or show little reaction to the stranger. In thinking about Laura's reactions and behaviors in Ms. Neil's care, might you categorize her temperamental type as feisty?

Finally, it is important to understand that although a child's basic temperament does not change over time, the intensity of temperamental traits can be affected by a



a family that values persistence (the ability to stick to a task and keep trying) may be more likely to praise and reward a child for “sticking with” a challenging task (such as a puzzle). Parental recognition of the child’s persistent efforts can strengthen the trait, and she may become more persistent and more able to focus over the course of his childhood. A child’s temperament is also influenced to some extent by her interactions with the environment. For example, if a child is cared for in an environment that places a high priority on scheduling predictable sleeping, eating, and diapering/toileting experiences, a child whose biological functions are somewhat irregular might, over time, begin to sleep, eat, and eliminate more regularly. It is important to know that adults cannot force a change to a child’s temperament; however, the interaction between the child’s temperament and the environment can produce movements along the continuum of intensity for different traits.

Why Is Temperament Important?

Temperament is important because it helps caregivers better understand children’s individual differences. By understanding temperament, caregivers can learn how to help children express their preferences, desires, and feelings appropriately. Caregivers and families can also use their understanding of temperament to avoid blaming themselves or a child for reactions that are normal for that particular child. Most importantly, adults can learn to anticipate issues before they occur and avoid frustrating themselves and the child by using approaches that do not match her temperament.

Ms. Neil visited Laura in her own home and observed that Laura is constantly trailing behind her older siblings, and runs inside and outside the house with few limitations. The household is a relaxed environment, where the older children help themselves when they are hungry, and Laura’s mother responds to Laura’s hunger or need for sleep whenever they arise. In contrast, Ms. Neil’s program functions on a very consistent schedule, which she feels is important in preparing children for their later school experiences. Ms. Neil does not have much space indoors, and she finds outdoor play somewhat difficult to manage with children at varying ages and developmental levels. While Laura’s family’s pattern of behavior seems to be a match to her temperament, Ms. Neil’s home does not currently

represent a good “fit” for Laura, who might be categorized as active or feisty.

Developing a “Goodness of Fit”

“One important concept in care that supports healthy social-emotional development is the notion of “goodness of fit.” In the previous example, Laura’s activity, intensity, and unpredictability may reflect a mismatch between her temperament and Ms. Neil’s caregiving style and environment. A caregiver can improve the goodness of fit by adapting his or her approach to meet the needs of the child.

Using What You Know About Temperament to Promote Positive Social-Emotional Development and Behavior

You can use your knowledge of temperament in many ways to support positive social-emotional development in the infants and toddlers you care for:

- 1. Reflect on your own temperament and preferences. Understanding your own temperament can help you to identify the “goodness of fit” for each child in your care.** Knowing more about your own temperament traits will also help you to take the child’s perspective. For example, a caregiver who enjoys movement, loud music playing, and constant bustle might try to imagine what it would feel like to spend all day in a setting that was calm, hushed, and quiet. This reflective process can help you become more attuned to the experience of each child within your care. You can then determine what adjustments might be needed to create a better fit for each child.
- 2. Create partnerships with families to understand a child’s temperament.** Share what you have learned about temperament with the families you serve, and provide information about temperamental traits. Talk about what each temperamental trait describes, and ask parents to help you understand their child’s activity level, response to new situations, persistence, distractibility, adaptability, mood, intensity, sensitivity, and regularity so that you can learn about the child’s temperament and the family’s cultural values (see Temperament Continuum handout attached). For a better understanding of how these traits look in young children, work with families to identify their child’s individual temperament.



Understanding Temperament in Infants and Toddlers

What Works Brief Series • Lindsey T. Allard and Amy Hunter

Refrain from judging a child's temperamental traits as "good" or "bad" behavior, and work with parents to see each child's approach to the world through a positive lens. Understand the contribution each child's temperament type makes to the group. The active or feisty children are often leaders and creators of games, or initiators of play. The slow to warm or cautious child may observe situations carefully and help you notice things you hadn't seen before. The flexible or easy child may take new play partners on easily. Support each child's development by recognizing, valuing, and integrating the unique traits that each child has, rather than trying to change a child's temperamental traits.

Listen to how the family feels about the temperament characteristics of their child. For example, if a child's temperament makes his sleeping routines irregular, but his family is consistently trying to get him to nap at 1:00 PM, he may be frustrated by expectations that don't fit with his temperament. This frustration, if not understood, might result in conflict between the parents and the child, or result in him demonstrating challenging behaviors at home or in care. Share with families what you have learned about goodness of fit, and share your strategies, such as individualizing nap schedules for your program. As you learn which traits are highly valued by each family, you can partner with them to determine an appropriate balance between the child's temperament, the family's preferences, and the policies of the program.

3. *Respect and value each child's temperament when individualizing your curriculum. Recognize how quality caregiving practices support all children's development, yet certain practices might be especially important for certain temperament types.*

A) For the **easy or flexible** child, ensure that you often check in with her, and initiate communication about her emotions. She might be less likely to demand attention and make her needs or distress known.

- You can use language to develop her awareness and understanding of her own emotions, feelings, and reactions. Make sure she knows that her feelings and preferences are recognized and validated.

- Encourage her to seek help when he needs it, and work with her to communicate his feelings and needs to others. "When Jack takes your block, you can tell him, 'I am using that.'"

B)) For the **active or feisty** child, be prepared to be flexible and patient in your interactions. A child who is feisty can experience intense emotions and reactions.

- Provide areas and opportunities for her to make choices, and engage her in gross-motor and active play to expend high energy levels. Feisty children might need a peaceful environment in order to help them calm themselves and transition from playtime to rest or naptime.
- When preparing children for transitions, pay special attention to individualized transition re-minders for feisty children by getting down on the child's level and making sure that the child hears and understands what will happen next in order to ensure smooth experiences throughout the day.
- Label children's emotions by describing what they seem to be feeling ("You are so angry. You really wanted that toy.") Stay calm when faced with the child's intense emotions. Reassure him by acknowledging her feelings, and also point out to her when he is calm so he can learn to recognize his emotions on his own as she grows.

C) For the **slow to warm or cautious** child, provide additional preparation and support for new situations or people who become part of his environment.

- Set up a predictable environment and stick to a clear routine. Use pictures and language to remind the cautious child what will happen next. Drop-off and pick-up might also require extra time from you in order to support the cautious child.



- Give children who are cautious ample time to establish relationships with new children or to get comfortable in new situations. Primary caregivers, who can provide a secure base to all children, are particularly important for a cautious child. Help her in unfamiliar situations by observing her cues carefully, and providing support and encouragement for her exploration and increasing independence. (e.g., “I’m here. I’ll be right in this chair watching you try on the dress-up clothes”).

Each child’s response to the environment will vary in intensity. Over time, temperamental traits might increase or decrease in intensity. As children grow, develop, and learn to interact with others, the environment, and their families, shifts in temperament might occur. This means caregivers must continue to observe children many times and in different contexts to ensure that their needs are being met. The importance of adapting strategies in order to create a goodness of fit and meet the unique needs of the children and families in care, as Ms. Neil does below, cannot be overstated.

Ms. Neil reflected on her own temperament and how it might affect the children in her care, each of whom had their own distinct temperaments. She realized that she values a predictable schedule and is most drawn to calming, quiet activities. By developing a partnership with Laura’s family, she learned more about Laura’s home and her unique temperament traits. She was then able to better understand Laura’s reactions and behaviors while in care. Ms. Neil began to organize additional outdoor play and active opportunities in her schedule. She watched Laura closely and learned to recognize her need to sleep or eat, and made accommodations to individualize eating and sleeping schedules for her. She offered Laura many advance reminders when transitions were about to take place, and was patient and understanding when she experienced intense emotions. Soon, Laura appeared to be much more comfortable in Ms. Neil’s family child care home, and was able to better use her energy to build strong and positive relationships with Ms. Neil and the other children. Through understanding herself, the children, and their families’ temperament, Ms. Neil created an environment that better met all of the children’s needs. Ultimately, the work she did positively impacted the experience of Laura and the other children in her care.

Who Are the Children Who Have Participated in Research on Temperament?

Research in temperament has blossomed in the last 15 years through the efforts of literally hundreds of scientists in many disciplines. Studies that attempt to understand facets of temperament in children have been conducted in a number of countries and with a wide variety of ethnically and linguistically diverse children. Participants in these studies have included children from European, American, Chinese, and Sub-Saharan African backgrounds. Research on temperament has been conducted with children and families in home and child care settings.



What Is the Scientific Basis for the Strategies?

For those wishing to explore the topic further, the following resources might prove useful:

- Bridgett, D. J., et al. (2009). Maternal and contextual influences and the effect of temperament development during infancy on parenting in toddlerhood. *Infant Behavior & Development*. 32(1), 103-116.
- Carey, W. B., & McDevitt, S. C. (1994). *Prevention and early intervention. Individual differences as risk factors for the mental health of children*. New York: Brunner/Mazel.
- Chess, S., & Thomas, A. (1996). *Temperament theory and practice*. New York: Brunner/Mazel.
- Chess, S., & Thomas, A. (1999). *Goodness of Fit*. New York: Brunner-Routledge.
- Hwang, A., Soong, W., & Liao, H. (2009). Influences of biological risk at birth and temperament on development at toddler and preschool ages. *Child: Care, Health & Development*. 35(6), 817-825.
- Klein, V., et al. (2009). Pain and distress reactivity and recovery as early predictors of temperament in toddlers born preterm. *Early Human Development*. 85(9), 569-576.
- Pitzer, M., Esser, G., Schmidt, M., & Laucht, M. (2009). Temperamental predictors of externalizing problems among boys and girls: a longitudinal study in a high-risk sample from ages 3 months to 15 years. *European Archives of Psychiatry & Clinical Neuroscience*. 259(8), 445-458.
- Rubin, K. H., Burgess, K. B., Dwyer, K. M., & Hastings, P. D. (2003). Predicting preschoolers' externalizing behaviors from toddler temperament, conflict, and maternal negativity. *Developmental Psychology*. 39(1), 164-176.
- Thomas, A., Chess, S., Birch, H. G., Hertzog, M. E., & Korn, S. (1963). *Behavioral individuality in early childhood*. New York: New York University Press.
- Van Aken, C., et al. (2007). The interactive effects of temperament and maternal parenting on toddlers' externalizing behaviours. *Infant & Child Development*, 16(5), 553-572.

Communicating with Parents: 3 Key Steps

When you have a challenging encounter with a parent, you can use the steps below to get things back on track in order to provide the best care for the child you all care so deeply about.

Step 1: Notice how you are feeling.

Tuning in to your feelings is very important. When you're not aware of them, they often rear their ugly heads in ways that can interfere in building strong, positive relationships with parents.

Adele watches her niece's son, Eduardo, each day, which she really enjoys. But her niece, Tasha, is often late to pick him up and never calls. Adele is really frustrated and angry. She feels it's very disrespectful and that she is being taken advantage of. When her niece does eventually show up, Adele is very abrupt and annoyed in her tone. The two adults barely communicate. Eduardo glances from one to the other and looks very tense. Tasha whisks him away and Eduardo doesn't even say good-bye to his auntie whom he adores.

Recognizing the impact on Eduardo, Adele decides to talk to Tasha about her feelings and to see about making a plan to help Tasha arrive on time, and at least to call to let Adele know she is running late. When Adele takes the approach of partnering with Tasha in solving the problem, versus blaming her, Tasha is open to discussing solutions.

Step 2: Look at the interaction from the child's point of view.

Tuning in to the child's experience can reduce tension and lead to joint problem-solving. Take the example of a child throwing a tantrum when his parent comes to pick him up. This situation can naturally make a parent feel incompetent and embarrassed. But if you look at it from the child's point of view, you can reframe the issue in a way that doesn't make the parent feel bad and that also helps him or her understand the complexity of the child's behavior: "It seems like Stephanie is trying to tell you, *I'm having so much fun with the dollhouse that I need a little time to adjust to the idea it's time to leave for the day.*"

In the cases where a child is more cooperative with you than the parent, again, help her see it from the child's perspective: "Yes, Tony puts his coat on when I ask him to, but that's because he knows I have to help the other kids too. Kids learn quickly that the rules and expectations at home and here can be different. He tells me all about how you make sure he is zipped up and how you always check that he has his hat. He talks about you all the time."

Step 3: Partner with parents.

Developing a plan together with parents on how to handle a child-rearing issue helps you move forward as partners, instead of competitors. For example, if you are trying to teach children not to hit when they are angry, but the parent hits her child to discipline her at home, you can:

- **Use "I" statements:** *I know we are both concerned about Erica hitting other kids when she's here. I really work with the kids on finding other ways to show angry feelings. I don't hit them because when adults hit children when they are angry, it teaches children to hit as well when they are mad.*
- **Ask for the parent's perspective:** *Clarify the parent's feelings and beliefs on the issue. Ask questions to learn, not to pass judgment: "What are acceptable ways to you for Erica to express her angry feelings? What do you do at home? What do you find works? What doesn't work? Would you be open to finding ways to discipline her other than hitting?"*
- **Most important: Look for a place to compromise.** Ask the parent if he or she has ideas for next steps. What can the two of you agree on? What can you both work on? For example, *"We both agree that Erica needs to find other ways to show her anger besides hitting. One strategy that seems to work here is to have her stomp her feet as hard as she can to get her mad out. Are you comfortable with that? I also tell her that if she needs a break, she can curl up on the couch with her teddy bear. Are these strategies you think you might want to try at home?"* (If not, ask the parent(s) what he or she would be comfortable with.)

Finally, don't forget to check in. A relationship is a living thing that grows and changes over time. It's important to check in with parents to see how things are going, how your agreed-upon plan is working, and where you might need to make some adjustments. Communication is the key to making any partnership work.

<https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/92-how-to-communicate-with-parents>



Hot Buttons

Write three behaviors that "push your buttons."

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Write the emotion word that describes the way each of these behaviors makes you feel.

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What is the impact of your feelings? How do you respond to each of these behaviors? Write down how you act/react towards a child when he or she displays each behavior.

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How do these behaviors and your response impact the relationship you have with the child?

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How do the child's behaviors and your response impact the relationship you have with the family?

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Reframing Activity

Directions: 1) Challenge the "original" thought and reframe with a new, more objective thought.
2) Choose a thought you have that you'd like to challenge and reframe with a new thought.

Original:

Johnny whines the moment he arrives and continues throughout the day. He doesn't like being here.

Reframed:

*Johnny must miss his family.
It takes time to adjust.*

Original:

Sally clings to her parents at drop-off and to certain teachers. She does not seem interested in me.

Reframed:

Original:

Reframed:

Practice Implementation Checklist: Behavior

Place a star next to the items you feel are a strength for you.
Then, check any of the boxes that apply.

I would like to...

Communicate & provide feedback about behavioral expectations	Learn more about this	Do this more often	Do in other routines or differently	Do this in better ways
Expectations are developmentally appropriate & individualized as needed				
Let toddler know what they <u>should do</u> in a positive tone				
Demonstrate behavioral expectations through modeling				
Acknowledge & encourage appropriate behaviors				
Use simple words to explain natural consequence of unsafe behavior				
Provide feedback to toddlers when behavior does not meet expectations				
Anticipate potential conflict and provide guidance before situation gets out of control				

My Notes:



Practice Implementation Checklist: Behavior
 Place a star next to the items you feel are a strength for you.
 Then, check any of the boxes that apply.

I would like to...

Respond to children in distress & manage challenging behaviors	Learn more about this	Do this more often	Do in other routines or differently	Do this in better ways
Remain calm & supportive during distressful episodes				
Immediately respond to child in distress to assess child's status				
Provide attention when child is calm & behaving appropriately				
Use challenges as an opportunity to help children recognize & deal with emotions				
Provide support to toddlers to help them problem solve, when appropriate				
Use strategies such as redirection and/or planned ignoring with toddlers who engage in challenging behaviors				
Use variety of strategies to calm, soothe, or console children in distress on an individual basis				

My Notes:



Training Feedback Form

Directions: Please take a moment to provide feedback on the training you received. When the survey is complete, leave it with your trainer.

Training Location:

Training Date: / /

My Program or Center:

Position (Circle one):

Administrator

Education Coordinator

Disability Coordinator

Mental Health Consultant

Teacher

Teacher Assistant

Other (please list) _____

Put an "X" in the box that best describes your opinion as a result of attending this training:	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
My understanding of how to use observation to build strong relationships with infants and toddlers has increased.					
My knowledge about strategies to promote social-emotional development, including reading babies' cues and responsivity has increased.					
I have a better understanding of components that influence behavior & how I can address every-day behavior challenges.					
During the training, I thought of ways to incorporate what I was hearing into my daily classroom activities.					
My trainer was knowledgeable about the Pyramid Model.					
My trainer was able to present the material in an understandable way.					
My trainer was responsive to participants' questions and needs.					

Please respond to the following questions regarding this training:

The best features of this training were...

My suggestions for improvement are...

Other comments and reactions I wish to offer (please use the back of the form for extra space):

