

# BABY BYTES

For families with infants and young children

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## Temperament

Every child is born with their own way of approaching the world. This is known as temperament. Temperament shapes a baby's behaviour and development in significant ways. It is important to understand your baby's temperament in order to nurture their healthy development.



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## DID YOU KNOW???

- A child's behavior and temperament can be shaped by their experiences.
- Your interactions with your baby contribute to their behaviour and temperament.
- Temperament is not something a child chooses, nor is it something a parent creates.
- It is true though, that there are some temperaments that are more challenging than others.

## TEMPERAMENT CHARACTERISTICS

There are five primary temperament characteristics:

- Emotional intensity and reactivity
- Activity level
- Sociability
- Coping with Change
- Frustration tolerance

## TUNING INTO YOUR CHILDS TEMPERAMENT

**"Laid Back" babies** seem less demanding than others. They tend to be quiet and rarely fuss, sleep more than average, show their emotions with only slight changes in facial expression, tone of voice, or body posture and tolerate a lot of stimulation.

At the other end of the spectrum, **“Highly Reactive” babies** tell the world how they feel in a voice that is loud and clear. They tend to express their feelings with great intensity, for example, showing supreme happiness by squealing with delight and maybe expressing anger by shouting, throwing things, hitting and biting. They also tend to react to physical stimulation intensely.

**The following questions may help you to understand your child’s unique personality traits.**

- How does your child react to sensory stimulation such as sights, sounds, smells, tastes, textures, etc.?
- Do they react to the slightest bit of stimulation or does it take a long time to get them to respond?
- Does your child express their feelings with high, moderate or low intensity?
- How often do you have to help them calm down and self-regulate?

### **Parenting Strategies**

#### **For “Laid back” babies**

- Create interactive games or activities that involve turn taking.
- Tune things up to attract your child’s attention. Use a dramatic voice when reading, be silly, choose music with a lively beat, watch your child’s reactions to be sure they are engaged but not overexcited.
- Get your child’s body moving, for example, dance, jiggle, or swing. Low intensity children may be more responsive if they are physically engaged.

#### **For “High Energy” babies**

- Offer physical comfort when your child is distressed. Rub their back, hold them close, rock them.
- Show your child you understand them by validating their feelings for example “I know it is too noisy in here for you.”
- Tune things down. Play should be fun but not over stimulating. At times you may want to soften the lighting and turn off the television to create a soothing environment.

### **Be Your Baby’s Champion**

Parents can help their children best by understanding their unique temperament. By watching and learning from your child you can slowly and sensitively help them to adapt, to expand their world, and to feel confident about their place in it.

Developing daily routines will give your child an opportunity to learn from the activities that you are modeling and, in turn will help them to learn to cope with frustration, build self-confidence, social skills, self-control and more!

*Source: Zero to Three: 2009, 2011*