

Discussion Guide

Discussion Guide for Module 12: Temperament in Early Childhood

Module run time: 20 minutes

Estimated time to complete the module with discussion guide: 45-60 minutes

Below are recommended stopping points and suggested questions to use in your group's discussion. Please feel free to follow your group's lead and discuss topics and questions that are of greatest value to the group!

Key points:

- Babies are born with different **temperaments** or ways they approach everyday events and challenges. Biology helps determine temperament, but environment and experiences also influence a child's temperament and development.
- Temperament consists of three dimensions: positive reactivity; negative reactivity; and attention, soothability, and regulation. Each **dimension** is a continuum, meaning a child can show more or less of a behavior.
- You cannot change a child's temperament, but you can adapt your behavior and environment to meet the child's needs. This is creating **goodness of fit** between your expectations and a child's temperament.

Module synopsis:

Page 1: *Title Page - Temperament*

Page 2: *Acknowledgments*

Page 3: *Individual Differences (Video)*

Page 4: *Research Measures of Temperament*

☪ Recommended stopping point

- How does temperament influence our daily experiences? Discuss factors that you think might affect a child's temperament and why.
- There are three primary ways researchers measure temperament: questionnaires, observations, and psychophysiological measures. What do you think are some advantages and disadvantages to using each type of measure?

Page 5: *Classifying Temperament*

Page 6: *Rothbart's Model of Temperament (Video)*

☪ Recommended stopping point

- Thomas and Chess categorized children's temperament as easy, difficult, or slow-to-warm up. How might these classifications be helpful? How might they be harmful?
- Thinking about temperament as dimensions can help a child find balance. For example, working on self-regulation can help balance more negative emotions. What are other examples of how one dimension can help balance another dimension?

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Page 7: *What Determines Our Temperament?*

Page 8: *Cultural and Social Groups*

Page 9: *Gender Differences (Video)*

Page 10: *Gender Differences*

Page 11: *Goodness of Fit*

☞ Recommended stopping point

- Shyness is one example of how cultures can have different views about temperament traits. What other cultural values might affect how a person views a child's behavior? How might a society's beliefs, expectations, and values impact a child's temperament?
- There is no good or bad temperament, but some aspects can be more challenging than others. How can parents create a better match or "goodness of fit" between their child's temperament, the environment, and their parenting expectations? Give specific examples.
- How does your own temperament shape your view of a child's temperament? Why is paying attention to a child's temperament important? How might similarities or differences between an adult's and child's temperament affect goodness of fit?

Page 12: *Stability and Change*

Page 13: *Is It Temperament or Typical Development?*

☞ Recommended stopping point

- Why does temperament become more predictable and stable after infancy?
- Some behaviors, like separation anxiety, are age-appropriate responses rather than temperamental traits. Think of other examples that are likely typical developmental responses, not temperamental traits. Why is it important to distinguish the two?

Page 14: *Developmental Outcomes*

Page 15: *Intervention Programs*

Page 16: *Our Unique Temperament*

☞ Final discussion points

- How are temperament and personality different?
- We talked about goodness of fit at home and school. Consider this scenario: "Tom refuses to complete a writing assignment. Tom is capable of completing the task but he has a short attention span." How can you provide support for Tom's temperament? Why is goodness of fit important in the classroom?
- This module may have inspired you to think about your own temperament. How would you describe your temperament? Think about your emotional reactivity, attention, and activity level. Are they similar to when you were a child? How does your temperament influence your job, actions, and emotional well-being?

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To learn more about temperament during early childhood, take a look at these resources:

INSIGHTS Intervention

<https://insightsintervention.com/>

The Preventive Ounce

<http://www.preventiveoz.org/>

ZERO TO THREE | Temperament

<https://www.zerotothree.org/early-learning/temperament>

We are constantly working to improve our materials. Do you have suggestions about topics to add to this guide? Did your group discuss something we didn't suggest? We'd love to hear from you! Please email your thoughts to us at ilabsout@uw.edu.

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