

Handout

Temperament Rating Scale

Place a check on the scale, somewhere between the high and low places at either end, for each of the temperaments listed. A check near high would mean that a child exhibits a trait to a marked degree, whereas low would indicate less pronounced behavior for a given trait. Use the top line to rate a child and the bottom line to rate yourself.

Activity Level

This describes motor activity and the proportion of periods of activity versus inactivity. A high activity infant moves much of the time, is boisterous in the bath and when eating, whereas a low activity infant lies passively much of the time and quietly watches life around him/ her. A high activity preschooler is climbing and running most of the time while a low activity preschooler is likely to prefer quietly drawing and building with blocks.

Child:

High _____ Low

Yourself:

High _____ Low

Rhythmicity (Regularity)

Do biological functions occur with regularity? An infant or preschooler with high regularity has bowel movements on a fairly predictable timetable, regular nap and bedtimes and wakes up like clockwork each morning. A low regularity child has a totally unpredictable schedule and will want to eat at irregular times, does not seem ruffled whether nap time is at 1:00 or 3:00 and may wake up at 4:00 a.m. or 8:00 a.m. with little seeming reason to do so.

Child:

High _____ Low

Yourself:

High _____ Low

Approach or Withdrawal (Initial Response)

Approach responses are positive and a child will smile, reach for a new item or in other ways indicate willing interest (rate high on scale). Withdrawal responses are negative and can be determined by fussiness, pushing away or refusing a new food or hiding behind an adults legs (rate low on scale). A preschooler with a temperament leaning towards withdrawal will need longer to warm up, to settle into a new child care setting than one who has a high approach temperament and begins to join in eagerly.

Child:

High _____ Low

Yourself:

High _____ Low

Adaptability

Rather than a child's initial response, this refers to his/her long-term reaction to change. A child might approach something nervously (exhibiting withdrawal as described above) but rapidly adjust to the change involved, such as a new food, different playmates or a new bed. A child with low adaptability sometimes gives the impression that every time a situation occurs it is the first time all over again. It was hard to get this child to take a nap at preschool and six months later he/she is still resisting.

Child:

High _____ Low

Yourself:

High _____ Low

Sensory Threshold

This refers to the intensity of a stimulus needed to provoke a response. In this case a high sensory threshold would describe the child who can fall and get all kinds of cuts and scrapes, hardly breaking stride. The low sensory threshold child, on the other hand, may wake up from a deep sleep if he/she hears the radio click off.

Child:

High _____ Low

Yourself:

High _____ Low

Quality of Mood

Would you describe this child as sunny or as gloomy as Christopher Robin's Eeyore? A positive mood rated as high will be the child who jumps up and down with excitement when he/she hears he/she is going to the zoo. Contrast that to the child whose first response to any outing is "I don't want to do that!" The negative mood child (scored as low) has many tales of woe each day and approaches life with a little gray cloud attached firmly above his/ her head.

Child:

High _____ Low

Yourself:

High _____ Low

Intensity of Reactions

How much energy does a child put into his/her response, positive or negative? The high intensity child will squeal wildly with delight or complain volubly and pout with every fiber of his/her body. The low intensity child will radiate a quiet smile or silently pucker up with dismay.

Child:

High _____ Low

Yourself:

High _____ Low

Distractibility

When a child is engaged in an activity, whether it is coloring or demanding a drink of water, how easily can his/her attention be diverted? A highly distractible child can be dying of thirst one minute and intently wanting to see the spider you just noticed across the room the next. The child with low distractibility could care less about the spider. He/she wants something to drink and all the spiders in the world are not going to change that.

Child:

High _____ Low

Yourself:

High _____ Low

Persistence

A persistent child continues an activity even in the face of obstacles. He/she wants to get past that chair and will find a way to do so. A few setbacks will not discourage him/her. A child with low persistence will start on a puzzle and, if the pieces do not fit together immediately, will find something else to do.

Child:

High _____ Low

Yourself:

High _____ Low

Attention Span

This is usually related to persistence. The length of time a particular activity is pursued without interruption defines attention span.* A child with a high (or long) attention span will happily play with Play-Doh for 45 minutes or still be fingering and carefully tasting a

*TV watching should not be used in measuring attention span. Although a child may sit for over an hour watching TV, he/she may in fact still have a short attention span. All activity on TV occurs in 10- to 15-second intervals, so a child's attention span can actually be extremely low and yet he/she can spend long uninterrupted periods of viewing.

bowl of cereal for half an hour without interruption. A child with a low (or short) attention span can barely sit through a single story or may be interested in nursing for just short periods of time before he/she becomes fidgety.

Child:

High _____ Low

Yourself:

High _____ Low