

## **As a parent, how can I impact my child's temperament?**

As a parent, you may wonder how you can “mess up” your child. Am I making the right parenting decisions? Is my child's behavior normal? During your frantic Google searches, you may have encountered many different websites with an overwhelming amount of information. You may not have known who to trust or even encountered some terms you have never heard before- you are not alone. One of those unfamiliar terms is temperament. *Temperament* is the biologically based difference in an individual's behavior, precisely, how individuals react to situations and their environment. Temperament is measured by the intensity of one's response and how one self-regulates (Rothbart, 2007; Rothbart & Derryberry, 1981; Posner et al., 2007). Many components are needed to explain temperament beyond a single blog post. To narrow down what I wanted this post to focus on, I completed a Google search to find out what others were sharing on temperament. I was pleased to find that information primarily came from research articles, university websites, and other pages backed by research. However, I came across some information that needed empirical research to support it. All parents looking for information online on parenting and other child development topics should find the information by looking for the research evidence supporting their reading.

I found a video on YouTube, [Navigating Your Child's Temperament by Parent Lab and Hello Joey](#), that gave parents a simplistic definition of temperament, real-life examples of how temperament plays out, some history behind temperament, strengths and challenges to the three types of temperament, and how a child's and parent's temperament interact. While the Parent Lab claims to provide evidence-based solutions, no specific research was cited in this video. One topic I wanted to dive deeper into was the idea of how a child's and parent's temperament interact in the theory of “goodness-of-fit,” which the video defines as “the compatibility between

one's temperament, the circumstance, and their environment." The video focuses on goodness-of-fit in terms of differences in expectations and tension. They recommend that parents meet their child's needs by being mindful of and adjusting their own temperament (Parent Lab, 2019).

"Goodness-of-fit" was a model developed by Thomas and Chess in 1997, which states that child and parent traits may not be problematic alone but can lead to conflicts and behavior problems when there is a mismatch between the child/parent trait and the environment they are in (Thomas & Chess, 1997; Thomas & Chess, 1984). A study by Rettew and colleagues in 2006 evaluated the interaction between child and parent temperaments and child behavior problems in terms of the goodness-of-fit model. Findings support that interactions between child and parent temperament significantly predicted childhood psychopathology. Significant correlations were between child and both mother and father harm avoidance and between child and mother reward dependence. Further analysis of results found that in terms of child behavior, a child's temperament traits have strong independent effects on their own, and parental temperament traits were only significant when interacting with the child's trait. The authors also emphasized that evaluating interactions of child and parent temperament through the lens of a goodness-of-fit model limits findings as parents have both environmental and genetic influences on their child. Overall, findings support that child temperament traits may not be problematic independently but, when paired with certain parent temperament traits, may lead to behavior problems. (Rettew et al., 2006).

While the study's findings focus on behavior as the outcome, they relate to the video in showing the importance of seeing temperament as a complex issue with many factors. Both sources show clinicians must evaluate a child's temperament and their family context (Parent Lab, 2019; Rettew et al., 2006).

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