



Learning to Grow

MAKING A DIFFERENCE TOGETHER

UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII ♥ WINDWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Getting to Know Your Child

Every child is born with unique characteristic traits (emotions and activity level, etc.) that forms his temperament (personality, character); of which, influences the way he will approach the world, interact with his environment, and approach learning.

According to the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning, there are three types of temperament:

- ♥ **The easy or flexible child:** Tend to be happy, have regular sleep and eating habits, tend to be calm and easy-going in nature.
- ♥ **Active or feisty child:** May be fussy, have irregular sleeping and eating habits, are fearful of new situations, and get easily upset.
- ♥ **Slow to warm up or cautious child:** May be less active and prefer to observe activities for a while before joining in. May withdraw in new situations or cling when unfamiliar people are around.

It's important to note that not all children's temperament fit in one of the three types and children who may have the same temperament type might react differently in similar situations, or throughout different stages in their development.

Understanding temperament is important because it helps you understand your child's individual differences and can help you learn how to help your child express his preferences, desires, and feelings appropriately. This newsletter will focus on understanding your child's temperament. It also provides age-appropriate activities you can do with your child, with modifications to fit his temperament.



In This Newsletter:

To support you in fostering your child's healthy development and school readiness, this newsletter includes:

- ♥ **Age-specific information and suggestions** about activities to do with your infant, toddler, or preschooler,
- ♥ **Featured activities** for each age group,
- ♥ **How This Helps:** a summary of how your child develops when you do these activities together,
- ♥ **Community Resources:** for more information about this topic, and
- ♥ **Suggested Books:** a list of books to read with your child.

Infants

Infants are born with their own distinct personalities. Discovering the traits that make your child unique and special is one of the most exciting parts of being a parent! Even when your child is very young, you can learn about his temperament by observing his behavior.

When caring for your child, ask yourself if your child:

- ♥ Seems to be more alert at certain times of the day?
- ♥ Takes short or long naps?
- ♥ Want to eat at regular times or does this vary from day to day?

The answers to these questions can help you determine his activity level, and his response to routines and change; which, are the traits of your child's temperament.

The following are some ideas that may help as you interact with your child, based on his temperament:

- ♥ **The easy or flexible child:** Check in often to ensure that his needs are met; he may be less likely to demand attention.

- ♥ **Active or feisty child:** Be flexible and patient in your interactions; he can experience intense emotions and reactions. During activities, vary the frequency and movements according to his energy level.
- ♥ **Slow to warm up or cautious child:** Provide additional preparations and support for new situations or people that he will encounter. For example, talk about the activity before starting and give positive feedback (smiles, soothing voice) to ensure that your child knows that he is safe.



Activity for Infants: *Fly High in the Sky*

See also p. 57 in *LTG Early Learning Activities for Infants and Toddlers*

What You Need:

None

What to Do:

1. Have your child hold out his arms, hold him under his armpits and lift him into the air.
2. Gently “fly” him in the air and say words like, “Whee! You’re flying.”
3. Talk about flying high as you lift him up and flying low as you bring him down.

⚠ Safety Alert! Only do a lifting type of activity with an older infant who can hold his head up without support. To prevent accidental falls, hold on to your child securely under his armpits when lifting him.

(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps his development and school readiness.)



Toddlers

As your child becomes a toddler, his distinct preferences and personality will become more obvious. As he asserts his growing independence, you will see how his temperament influences his responses to people and situations. He is learning new ways to express his needs, desires, and comfort level to you. However, crying may still be the main way he expresses his emotions of anger, frustration, sadness, or feeling overwhelmed. You can help support him to learn other ways to express his feelings. The following are ways to help him:

- ♥ **The easy or flexible child:** Use language to develop his understanding of emotions, feelings, and reactions. Model using language to express feelings.
- ♥ **Active or feisty child:** Provide opportunities to play, explore, and learn in big open spaces and provide peaceful environments to help him unwind, calm himself, and transition from playtime to rest.

- ♥ **Slow to warm up or cautious child:** In new settings, engage in a familiar and enjoyable activity, like reading a book together, to ease him into the new situation.



Activity for Toddlers: *Mirror, Mirror, What Do I See?*

Adapted from Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning

What You Need:

None

What to Do:

1. To help your child identify different emotions, have him sit in front of you and ask him to copy the facial expressions that you make that represent emotions.
2. Tell your child, “Mirror, mirror what do I see, I see a happy face staring at me?”
3. Make a happy face and have him copy your facial expression. Talk about how your face shows happiness and instances when you are happy. For example, “Look at my smile. I’m happy when you give me a hug. When are you happy?”
4. Continue doing this to help him identify different feelings such as mad, scared, proud, nervous, sad, and frustrated.



(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps his development and school readiness.)

Preschoolers

In his preschool years, your child is developing his ability to understand, adapt, and express his feelings (positive and negative) in more socially acceptable ways. He is learning to monitor his own behavior, and while he may still cry or shout to express strong feelings, he is learning other ways to communicate what he is feeling.

Learning to manage emotions is a critical accomplishment for preschoolers and his temperament will affect how he is able to do this. You can support your child in the following ways:

♥ **The easy or flexible child:** Let your child know that it is okay to have strong emotions. Show him different ways he can control what he does and says when he feels these

emotions. For example, encourage him to seek help when he needs it by using his words to say what he wants or is feeling.

♥ **Active or feisty child:** If he is displaying intense emotions, reassure him by acknowledging his feelings, and directing him to appropriate ways to cope. When he is calm, talk about what he is feeling and appropriate things to say or do so that he can learn to recognize his emotions on his own.

♥ **Slow to warm up or cautious child:** Set up a familiar environment and routine. In unfamiliar situations, observe his cues and provide support and encouragement for him to explore and do things on his own.

Activity for Infants: *My Feelings Book*

See also p. 68 in *LTG Early Learning Activities for Infants and Toddlers*

What You Need:

- 3"x3" photo of your child
- 1 sheet of 8.5" x 11" paper (e.g., cardstock)
- Scissors
- Glue stick
- Marker
- Crayons



What to Do:

1. Create a book by placing a piece of paper in front of you (landscape way). Fold this paper into thirds. Keep it folded, then fold the paper into thirds the other way, creating a square. Open the paper, you will have 9 squares. Cut out the four corners leaving a cross. On the top square, write a title for the book (e.g., My Feeling Book).
2. Have your child glue his photo into the middle square. Choose a photo of your child smiling. Ask your child what makes him smile and write that under his photo.
3. Talk about other feelings with your child. Ask questions such as, "What does your face look like when you're sad? What makes you sad?" Use an emotion chart to show your child what these feelings look like. For more emotions visit this website: <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/modules/2006/feelingchart.pdf>.
4. Have your child draw the other faces that represent feelings, label each picture with what feeling it is and when he feels that way.

(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps his development and school readiness.)

How This Helps

The activities suggested in this newsletter help promote many different aspects of development:

Physical Development

- ♥ Learn through his senses: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching
- ♥ Experiment with different ways of moving

Social and Emotional Development

- ♥ Build trust in you and other important people
- ♥ Feel important and good about himself

Language and Literacy Development

- ♥ Increase his observation, listening and understanding skills, and his attention span
- ♥ Build verbal skills and vocabulary

Cognitive Development

- ♥ Begin to learn about cause and effect
- ♥ Develop his creativity and imagination



Kids in the Kitchen

Cooking teaches valuable lessons. As you do this recipe with your child, show him how to safely handle the items and allow him to do as much as he is capable of. Ask questions throughout the process to encourage his thinking skills. Remember to follow food safety guidelines when working in the kitchen: wash hands and surfaces often, separate raw meats from other foods, cook to the right temperature, and refrigerate food promptly.

Monkey Bites

Ingredients:

- 2 bananas, sliced
- 1 6–8 ounce yogurt
- Coconut shreds, granola, or cereal

Directions:

1. Have your child separate the ingredients into bowls. Spoon yogurt into one bowl and the coconut shreds, granola, or cereal into another bowl.
2. Have him take a banana slice and roll it into the yogurt (so it covers the banana on all sides and forms an edible paste for the dry ingredients to stick to).
3. Then have him place the yogurt coated banana into the dry ingredient of your choice (granola, shredded coconut, or cereal). Talk about the taste and texture of the banana and the other ingredients.

*Variation — Freeze some of the banana creations and eat them like frozen pops. Try different fruits (strawberries, pineapple, or even apples) and a variety of toppings.



Community Resources

Center for Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation

<http://ecmhc.org/temperament/index.html>

Features temperament resources including a short online survey that allows parents and care providers of infants and toddlers recognize and explore their own temperament traits and those of a child for which they provide care.

Zero to Three

<http://www.zerotothree.org/child-development/>

Provides information and tip sheets designed to help parents and caregivers support and nurture the health and development of young children.

The Center for Social and Emotional Foundation for Early Learning

<http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/family.html>

Provides information to parents and caregivers designed to improve the social emotional outcomes of young children.



Suggested Books

Recommended by **Hawaii State Public Library** www.librarieshawaii.org.

Infants and Toddlers

Counting Kisses by Karen Katz

This board book takes a little baby on a kissing and counting adventure. Everyone gives baby kisses, grandparents, mom and dad, even the dog.

Little You by Richard Van Camp

This board book honors the child in everyone. It can be read or sung to your infant or toddler child. Its' contemporary illustrations will catch your child's attention.

Preschoolers

You're All My Favorite Bears by Sam McBratney

Bear's parents talk to each sibling and reminds them that they are all very special and their "favorite" bears. This board book offers the ideal way for parents to remind their children how much each are different and special in their own unique way.

Giraffes Can't Dance by Giles Andreae

Gerald the giraffe has features that make it hard for him to dance. His legs are very skinny and his neck is too long. When he dances his knees buckle. All the other animals can dance, but not Gerald the giraffe. The cricket believes in him and encourages him to sway to his own tune.



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