Tips for regulating temperament

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Many things affect the way we react to different events and people. For example, we can be extremely shy or afraid of new things. We may respond like that because our nervous system sends an extra dose of chemicals to the brain to signal danger. Or it may be because we see other people getting scared. Or it may even be due to a frightening experience we had in the past.

The key is to regulate or control how we express our temperament and feelings, so we can find a more balanced way to behave. This will help us like ourselves more and gain other people's acceptance. Parents can help their child learn to regulate extreme emotions and temperament, and find their inner balance.



- **Good planning**

The active child: These children need space to move about. Be prepared for them to go in and out of activities, or climb around while the activity is taking place.

The sensitive/shy child: Introduce new things in a careful and measured way. Plan to do only one activity at a time. Keep it simple. Be prepared to break off early and pick up again at another time if they show signs of wanting to finish the activity.

The persevering/strong-willed child: Let them choose the activity for themselves. Plan to explore this single activity thoroughly. Give your child time to concentrate. Strong-willed children need to be allowed autonomy during play. Your child may not want to stop the activity. Tell your child in advance when you are going to stop the activity. "After we have built this tower, we will clear away the bricks." End the game in a clear and predictable way.

- **Share your good mood**

Most children adapt to the mood of the people around them. If you share your positive feelings, you will dampen extreme outbursts of temperament, except when your child is over-excited. Laughter, rhythm or music can help to regulate emotions.

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- **Regulate... don't escalate**

The anxious child: When a child is afraid, responding dismissively only makes things worse. Ask yourself why your child is afraid. Reassure your child by touching them or holding them close to you. Tell your child you understand. Show them that you are not afraid by being bigger, stronger, confident and kind. Take things slowly. Don't force your child into a situation they find scary.

The angry child: When a child is angry, losing your temper only makes things worse. Ask yourself why your child is angry. Can you reduce their frustration by helping to resolve the problem causing it? Can you regulate their anger by holding them close and sharing your own calmness?

- **Provide structure and clear signals**

The sensitive child: Sticking to a routine helps the sensitive or shy child. They know what to expect if the same things happen in the same way every time. Give clear signals about what is going to happen and when the activity will end. Do what you say you will do. Play with what your child is interested in and listen to their positive signals. Be flexible and not overly structured. Let your child have a few choices and take the lead some of the time.

- **Limit distractions**

The easily distracted child: Plan to have a quiet place where you can play with your child. Limit the number of distractions. This will make it easier for your child to focus on the activity you are doing together. In addition to keeping your child focused, it will also strengthen your relationship. Plan a quiet activity that you can do together each day. Positive feelings keep your child more focused.

- **Don't interrupt**

The persevering child: When the child is busy with a task, they can become extremely angry or upset if they are interrupted. Just like with adults, it is best to give them advance warning. Say for example: "John, we will have to go soon. Where do you want to put the bricks?" Children may need a long time to refocus. Sometimes, they are thinking about the last thing they were doing after you have already moved on to the next thing. Take things slowly. Be patient with your child.

- **Keep an eye out for signs of overstimulation or tiredness**

All children can become emotional when they are overtired or too excited. This can happen very quickly. Concentrated play can be exhausting. Recognise the early signs of overstimulation, and be prepared to bring things to a close. When your child is exhausted or overstimulated, it will take a long time to calm them down. Parents should hold their child close to them and share calm, reassuring, quiet signals.
If your child loses control of their emotions, it is important for you to remain calm. Take a deep breath and ask yourself: "Why is this happening? What can I do to help my child regulate their emotions?"