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Children Come in All Varieties



Chess and Thomas

New York Longitudinal Study



Babies are different—right from the start.

Interactionism

“All the behavioral attributes of an individual, interacting both with each other and with the opportunities, demands, and expectations of the environment.”



Activity Level

- Proportion of Active and Inactive Periods



Rhythmicity

- Sleep/Wake patterns
- Hunger patterns
- Bowel movements



Approach or Withdrawal

- Initial response to a new situation



Adaptability



Sensory Threshold



Quality of Mood



Intensity of Reaction



Distractibility



Persistence



Attention Span



9 Attributes Can Cluster



The Easy Child



The Difficult Child



The Difficult Child

“Parents do not produce this temperamental pattern in a child, although the way parents respond to such a child may minimize or exaggerate the difficult features of the child’s behavior. Given sufficient time and patient handling, these difficult children do adapt well, especially if the people and places in their world remain constant.”

Chess and Thomas

Slow to Warm Up Child



3 CAUTIONS



1.

Do not assume that if your child behaves differently from what you expected and hoped, you have been a bad parent.



2.

“Don’t assume that your child is deliberately behaving in a way that upsets you and could behave differently if he wanted to.”



#3.

“Don’t make moralistic judgments about your child because of behavior that doesn’t live up to a rigid standard that you have set.”



Goodness Of Fit

Does that mean we should shelter and protect the child on every front?



Have reasonable expectations

- Understand the child's temperament
- Validate emotions
- Ease them towards reasonable incremental changes



Goodness of fit does not mean an absence of stress for the child.



Goodness of fit does not imply the desirability for parent and child to have the same temperament.



Poorness of Fit

“Poorness of fit develops when the parents insist that the child meet their standards in their way and will not accept failure or even partial success on the child’s part. This can only leave the child with a sense that she has let her family down, that she is inferior, and that this specific inadequacy is an omen of future failures to come in other areas of life.”

--Chess and Thomas.

Parents should not make any demands that the child cannot meet because of their own characteristics.





Parents should not encourage their children to form patterns of behavior that are at serious odds with environments outside the home.



Lump of clay to
be molded?



Tree to be
pruned?

Press on!

