

## Love You Just The Way You Are: Supporting Temperament



Karin (KJ) Johnson  
Senior Field Consultant  
High Scope Educational Research Foundation  
[karin@can-dospirit.com](mailto:karin@can-dospirit.com)

Every child is born with their own individual way of approaching the world—a temperament. Children’s temperaments affect how they interact with people and materials, and they require respectful support from adults in order to feel accepted for who they are. In this workshop, we will examine the different types of temperaments and reflect on our responses so that we can sensitively help children adapt and feel more confident about their place in the world.

### **Objectives**

Participants will be able to identify different types of temperament and reflect on our responses to the these.

Participants will identify adult-child interactions strategies that are supportive of children’s individual temperaments.

### **Teachers need to:**

Respect children’s preferences and individual temperaments  
Accommodate children’s’ natural rhythms and temperaments

### **High Scope Supportive Adult-Child Interactions**

Create a climate of trust for children  
Form partnerships with children  
Supporting children’s intentions

**List the People You Know Who Are...**

Describing Phrase	Person You Know
"Life of the Party"	
"Beats to their own drum"	
"Voice of reason"	
"Adventure Seeker"	
"Strong but silent"	
"Class clown"	
"Social Butterfly"	
"Leader of the pack"	
"Your confidante"	
"The opposite of you"	

### Chart of Temperament Traits

Chart developed by Janet Poole, Faculty, Program for Infant/Toddler Care

	1	2	3	4	5													
High Level	High Activity	Biological Rhythms	Adapt-ability	Approach/Withdraw	Sensitivity	Intensity of Reaction	Distractibility	Quality Mood	Persistence	Low Activity	Irregularity	Slow to Adapt	Withdraws	High Sensitivity	Mild Reaction	Low Distractibility	Negative Mood	Low Persistence
		Regularity	Adapt Quickly	Approaches	Low Sensitivity	High Intensity	High Distractibility	Positive Mood	High Persistence									

The Program for Infant/Toddler Care

### Scenarios to Discuss

#### ***How are these adults supporting children's temperaments?***

- 1. Tony's sister, Sophia, has flown in from Chicago for the weekend to visit with her brother's family, especially her two-year-old niece, Lucia. Sophia is not pleased that Lucia isn't giving her the warm reception she hoped for. Tony smiles and says to his sister, "Lucia, like lots of other kids, needs time to adjust to new people." Tony hands his sister Lucia's favorite book, "She loves this book. Maybe sit down and start to read it? She might be interested."*
- 2. Claire's next-door neighbor is an avid gardener and often observes Claire's daughter, Tess experiencing big emotions when outside. When Claire's neighbor is critical of Tess's feisty nature and comments with an eye roll that, "Tess is a real handful". Claire responds calmly, "Tess knows who she is and what she wants. She is loving and fierce. She puts her whole heart into everything."*
- 3. Carlos has finished work for the day and rushed to the childcare center to pick up his one-year-old, Mateo. As they head home, Carlos realizes that there are a few essential groceries they will need to pick up before they can go home. The store is loud and busy with many shoppers and Mateo begins to squirm in the grocery cart. Carlos looks at Mateo and says, "I know it is noisy in here and it's uncomfortable for your ears. We are going to leave in a few minutes. Would you like me to carry you?"*

## Supportive Adult-Child Interactions: Summary

1. Create a climate of trust for children
  - Touch, hold, speak to and play with children in a warm, unhurried manner
  - Take pleasure in interactions with children
  - Respond supportively to children's needs and attention-getting signals
  - Give children time to interact and respond in their own way
  - Support children's relationships with peers and other adults
  
2. Form partnerships with children
  - Interact at the child's physical level
  - Respect children's preferences and individual temperaments
  - Follow children's lead
  - Watch and listen to children (including using simple sign language)
  - Communicate and converse in a give-and-take manner
  - Make comments and acknowledgments (including repeating and restating children's babbles and words)
  - Look at children's actions from their viewpoint
  - Give children choices when they have to do something
  
3. Support children's intentions
  - Focus on children's strengths and interests
  - Anticipate children's explorations
  - Encourage and acknowledge children's choices in exploration and play
  - Help children achieve what they set out to do
  - Give children time to solve problems they encounter with materials in exploration and play
  - Support toddlers in resolving social conflicts
    - Approach calmly, stopping any hurtful actions
    - Acknowledge children's feelings
    - Gather information
    - Restate the problem
    - Ask for ideas for solutions and choose one together
    - Acknowledge children's problem-solving efforts. Provide follow-up support