Temperament and Behavior Worksheet

Child’s name: ____________________________  Age: ______

Child’s significant temperament traits:

❑ Active  ❑ Intense  ❑ Slow adapting  ❑ Easily frustrated
❑ Persistent  ❑ Sensitive  ❑ Irregular  ❑ Slow-to-warm-up
❑ Distractible  ❑ Other

Describe one particular behavior that is challenging in the classroom?

What time of day does this behavior occur?

How often does it occur?

Where does it occur?

With whom does it occur?

What often happens before the behavior?

What makes this behavior worse?

What sometimes helps?

How does the child’s temperament contribute to the behavior?

Are there any temperament traits of yours that influence the behavior?

Do the parents have the same problem at home? What do they do?

What are some of the child’s strengths?

Other significant factors:

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Tips For Challenging Temperament Traits

High sensitivity to distractions
Some children take in the world more, and do not see or do one thing at a time. They don’t like restrictive environments and often don’t sit for long at the dinner table.

- Make eye contact. You want to make sure the child hears and understands what you are asking. Tell him only one thing at a time to do. Engage him.
- If a child is getting over stimulated and try to soothe her. You can try things like— soft music, physical contact, a bath, a story, or a quiet game.
- Keep watching to see what kinds of activities capture a child’s attention.
- Have realistic expectations and work with a child’s temperament. Praise him for his efforts and then expect a little more. With practice, a child’s ability to tune out distractions can improve, but remember it can be difficult for some children (and adults) to be in a highly distracting environment.

High activity when self-control is expected
Some children have more energy than self-control. Their energy exceeds their adaptability.

- Sleep and rest are important. Give a child the opportunity to rest and “re-fuel” after school, when possible. Have a bedtime routine, with calming activities before bedtime. Help her unwind and relax with a song or gentle back rub.
- Channel a child’s energy into things that are acceptable, like playing catch with their little sister instead of complaining when they need to wait for you.
- Decrease yelling and saying no. Calm yourself and show a child what he can do, not just what he can’t do. Stay close and let a child know when you’re happy with his behavior.
- Offer frequent small healthy meals. Active children need frequent re-fueling.

High negative intensity
Negative intensity makes other issues more of a problem. These children have loud tantrums when told no.

- Work on sleep issues. Poor rest increases the frequency and length of intense negative reactions. Try to avoid active intense activities before bedtime.
- Control your own intensity when your child is escalating. Your anger will make things worse. On the other hand, try not to give in to your child’s intense reactions and demands, otherwise she will be more likely to try and get her way with a good loud scream. Connect and help your child calm down before you give a consequence or make a new plan.
- Practice being patient and let the strong reactions pass. Keep in mind that there may be feelings that you are not aware of that are fueling the reactions. Empathize with a child’s strong feelings.
- Show appreciation and admiration towards your child when she is not responding in an intense negative manner. Enjoy her enthusiasm.
- Notice the time of day when your child’s negative intensity is high. You may be able to see a pattern and be able to understand what triggers these reactions.

Slow adaptability to transitions and changes
For some children moving from one activity to another is difficult, such as going to bed after playing, or waking up in the morning. A child who is slow to adapt may also insist on eating the
same thing for lunch every day, or wearing the same P.J.’s to bed every night.

- Try and introduce change when your child is rested and healthy, and when the stress level is low. If the stress is high be prepared for struggles and give cuddles.
- Give warnings when changes are going to occur. Use a timer to help prepare your child for a transition. Be mindful of your own impatience. Use a chart or calendar to keep track of things.
- Establish routines and traditions that help your child know what to expect, when possible.

**Low positive persistence**

Positive persistence is when a child is persistence in activities like playing with toys or getting dressed. When a child has low frustration tolerance they are usually lower in positive persistence, and they give up easily. If they are invested in the activity, they may continue despite the obstacles. Often they look to adults for help and company.

- Let your child play near you if he needs the extra support. Break tasks down into smaller parts. Show your child how to do one part at a time. When helping with a task start by doing more of the task and gradually let your child do more.
- Encourage your child and let him stop on a high note. Give breaks frequently.
- Look for activities that are intrinsically interesting to your child and that are not too frustrating.
- Model for your child how to handle frustration.

**High negative persistence**

Parents complain that children always want to do just the things they are told not to do. Even if you yell, they just continue doing what they want to do. They have a lower frustration tolerance for obstacles or delays.

- Work to keep your child’s frustration tolerance as high as possible by being firm about naps or rest periods and early bedtimes. A child’s tolerance for frustrations decrease when tired.
- Pick your battles and save frustrating words like “don’t” and “stop now” for important situations, such as dangerous ones or times when you have to stop your child from his actions.
- When you do need to set a limit, mean what you say and say what you mean. Make your requests simple and back them up with action. Help them find something they “can” do, not just what they can’t.
- When possible, use distraction or diversion to another interesting activity.
- Pay attention to your own persistence. Do you also get locked in?

**Low regularity to sleep and meals**

When irregular sleep creates too little sleep, other problems can develop. Sleep deprived children may be more restless and fuss when asked to do things. Often when they wake up at night they have trouble getting back to sleep without parents help. Another issue is mealtime—skipping meals, getting hungry at different times each day, and wanting to snack rather than eat regular meals.

- If your younger child won’t nap insist on quiet periods during the day. Help her shift gears to a quieter activity. Avoid intensity-increasing activities right before bed times.
- Keep bedtime schedule as regular as possible. Have a routine that you stick with every night.
- Build bridges to sleep. You may need to tell stories, or give physical contact.
- Give warnings that mealtime is coming, and that your child will stop what he’s doing to eat with the family.
- Have nutritious snacks available, but try not to give them too close to dinnertime.
• If your child is high activity, try to gradually extend the time she spends at the table. Engage her in conversation and praise her when she sits for longer periods of time.