

Temperament



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Temperament encompasses patterns of arousal and emotionality that are consistent and enduring characteristics of an individual. In simpler terms, temperament refers to quality of mind from a psychological perspective (Feldman p. 187, 2010).

Erikson's theory of psychological development suggests that infancy is the first stage of development of a person's temperament. This starts off with trust vs. mistrust stage in the first 18 months of life, in which babies develop such feelings towards their parents. This stage is followed by autonomy vs. shame and doubt stage, between 18 months to 3 years. In this period, children develop a sense of freedom and exploration (Feldman p. 187, 2010).

Children have been observed to have many different types of temperaments, which have been broadly classified as easy babies, difficult babies and slow-to-warm babies. Easy babies have a consistent behavior, which can be adapted easily to patterns of eating, sleeping and other routines. Difficult babies are very irregular and irritable in their patterns making it harder for them to adapt to changes. Slow-to-warm babies tend not to be very irritable, though their behavior is negative and they recede from public (Feldman p. 188, 2010).

Common sense dictates that temperament should effect the development of a baby into a good or bad individual, or a healthy or unhealthy individual. But researches have shown that this is not the case, although temperament does have an indirect effect. The overall effect combines temperament and the societal nature and the general atmosphere around a person also.

Temperament directly affects the attachment of babies with their parents. A

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recent research has shown that the parental attachment can also govern the development of a child's temperament. Easy to handle babies are generally highly attached to parents (Smith, 2009).

Behavior of a mother post-partum is a very important factor in determining a child's temperament. Women with a higher level of maternal education are able to cope with babies better, having a lesser negative post-partum impact on their children (Smith, 2009).

It has been observed that the mode of delivery has a very direct impact on the mother's emotional stability. Natural and planned cesarean births fare far better than emergency cesareans and epidurals. These can also affect the temperament of children indirectly (Smith, 2009).

Scientists are still unsure whether temperament is a completely psychological aspect of a human, or is there some biological effect too as there is evidence of this. The research in question also points out that baby boys are temperamentally more difficult than girls, suggesting both a biological and a sociological trend (Smith, 2009).

Temperament is a very important trait of human personality. Although we have knowledge of many social aspects which affect the temperament of an infant, we have relatively low information on the biological aspects of a human which give rise to a certain personality. This needs to be investigated into, as it might give us more insight into the working of humans.

References

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