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## *Goodness of Fit*

Research shows that goodness of fit between your child's temperament and your parenting style is important for healthy social and emotional development. Differences in child temperament require differences in parental handling to achieve a good fit. A good fit means parents match their demands or expectations with what their child is able to do, given the child's temperament, age and abilities. For example, we don't expect a baby to know what is safe, so we childproof our home. Similarly, we can't expect an active toddler to sit still for too long (until everyone finishes dinner), although we can expect him to come to the table for a short while. Creating a "good fit" means parents meet the needs of their child, while also meeting the needs of everyone else in the family (including the parents' own needs).



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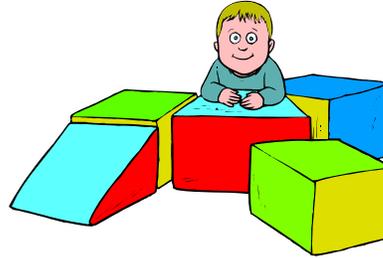
## *How can you create a good fit with your child?*

Knowing your child's temperament is a good place to start. When you understand your child's temperament you can plan ahead to prevent problems - what we call being **proactive**. This means rather than just reacting to your child's behavior, you can plan where your child might have specific needs or difficulties and use parenting strategies that make it easier for your child to behave. For example, if your toddler adapts slowly to changes, you will likely have to introduce a new food a number of times before she is likely to try it. If your toddler is highly active, you will need to provide ways for him to release his energy, such as running in the park or climbing on the slide or jungle gym. Then you can stick firmly to limits of not climbing on the tables or countertops.

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## Poorness of fit

When parents' expectations and demands do not fit well with their child's temperament, there is a poor fit. A poor fit leads to stress in the parent-child relationship and parents feel less happy and less capable in their parenting. Research also shows that children who experience a poor fit are more likely to develop behavior problems.



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## Which of the following are examples of a good fit? A poor fit?

1. Jeffrey took time to adapt to any changes or transitions. His mom set a timer to give him a 10-minute warning before he needed to stop playing and come to dinner.
2. Suzie was sensitive to the feel of clothing. She complained loudly (high intensity) about lumps in socks and scratchy tags. Dad said she was too sensitive and needed to get dressed and stop complaining.
3. Juan was easily distracted from whatever he was supposed to do. When his parents asked him to pick up his toys he would start but then get interested in the show on TV or the kids playing outside. Mom turned off the TV and pulled down the window shade to remove the distractions.
4. Maisha was a very active toddler, always running and climbing on everything. Mom enrolled her in a gymnastics class and often took her to the park, but mom didn't let Maisha climb on the tables.
5. Joshua was highly persistent and he liked to stick with something until he was finished. Dad called for him to come to bed but Joshua kept on building. Dad picked up the blocks and carried Joshua up to bed.
6. Jenny took time to warm up to new people, places and things. Before her first day of preschool, mom and dad took Jenny several times to visit her new teacher and check out the new classrooms and playground.
7. Carlos was slow adapting and also irregular in his sleeping schedule. Since she never knew when Carlos would be tired and he protested going to bed, mom let him stay up until he fell asleep and then put him in bed.

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Answers: Good fit #1, 3, 4, 6      Poor fit #2, 5, 7

#2 Dad could cut out the tags and remove the sock lumps and then expect Suzie to get dressed.  
#5 Dad could give Joshua 10 minutes to finish his building and then expect him to come to bed.  
#7 Mom could set a bedtime and have a routine to help Carlos settle down, then expect him to stay in bed. If he's not sleepy he could look at books.