

# Transcript of Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect: Helping Parents and Providers Understand Temperament

Rijelle: Good morning, I am Rijelle Kraft, Family Support Technical Assistance Coordinator with the Pennsylvania Family Support Team, based at the Center for Schools and Communities. I will be your moderator for today, and it's my pleasure to welcome you to today's webinar session, Preventing Child Abuse & Neglect: Helping Parents and Providers Understand Temperament. Our presenter today is Carmen Gatti. Carmen has been working in the field of Early Childhood Education for almost 40 years in various capacities, including Program Director, Professional Development Instructor, Technical Assistance Consultant, and Advocate for the needs of children and families.

She has a masters degree in Early Childhood Education from West Chester University, and is certified as a trauma competent Early Childhood Professional by the Institute for Family Professionals. Her passion is facilitating the positive growth, and development of all children, by supporting and nurturing caregivers. It is my pleasure to welcome Carmen this morning, please be patient while I pass the presenter privileges to her. Carmen thank you so much for joining us, the microphone is now yours.

Carmen: Thank you Rijelle, it is a pleasure to be here. I'm so excited to share information with those of you that are on the webinar, and I love this topic, and so it's something that I'm passionate about. I think that we all have a role to play in ensuring that we're preventing child abuse, and neglect, and I find that one of the key benefits of supportive relationships between professionals, and parents, is the reduction in factors known to contribute to the risk for child abuse, and neglect, and those factors can include isolation, lack of support, lack of information related to infant development, and behavior, and lack of strategies for positive discipline.

We need brief doses of warmth, respect, listening information, and also connection of families to needed resources, so that [inaudible 00:02:11] impacts, and we can do this in child care through our everyday opportunities for interactions with families, and as teachers, we can serve to strengthen parent-child interactions, and reduce the potential for harmful parenting behaviors. Today's topic is helping parents, and providers understand temperament, and we know that a child's temperament influences not only his, or her style of interactions, but also the way that he or she understands, and experiences the world, and the people in it.

In today's session, I'm going to try to give you an introduction to the concept of temperament, and five key temperament traits, and I want to acknowledge that this is just the tip of the iceberg. In one hour we're certainly not going to cover this topic in the way that I would like us to, but I want to hopefully springboard your interest, and have you moved to get getting more information about this topic, because it is so critical to the work that we do, especially with infants, and toddlers.

I think that the work that we do with infants and toddlers, is the most important work, because we impact the future of the world from my perspective, and I think this topic is really timely. There is actually a survey, a parent survey, a national parent survey that

was conducted, ZERO TO THREE, one of the leading organizations that really speaks to temperament, and connections with building relationships with families from the caregiver's perspective. That survey is available on their ZERO TO THREE website. It's entitled, Tuning in: Parents of Young Children are Speaking up About What They Think, Know, and Need.

What ZERO TO THREE did, was they actually interviewed over 2200 parents of children birth to five years of age, and the study was conducted in Chicago, and Dallas, in October 2015, and they have an overview of the key insights that they developed, and I find that when I look at those insights, they really correlate to what work we do with families. We want to make sure that parents have the most up-to-date information, and that they are supported in supporting children. I have that, Rijelle I think is going to put the resource up for you, so that you can connect to that, and take a look at it for yourself.

Like I said, it really highlights temperament, and what we need to do to support families in getting this information to them. When we look at this slide, we find that temperament is biologically based, so that means it's in our DNA, and so I think that's an important part, so children are born with their temperament, and so that's an important aspect for us to know. Temperament refers to the way individuals react to, and experience their environment. It is the how of behavior, as contrasted with the what, and the why.

Because it's biologically-based, it's usually consistent over time, however, we all know that nature, and nurture fight where environment, and maturation also influence temperament. Temperament provides one lens for understanding children's behavior, although learning about temperament is a useful construct, we need to remember that other factors in a child's life may contribute to the behaviors you see. We know that culture plays a big role in how children experience their world.

I want you to take a look at those individuals, Thomas, Chess, and Birch. Alexander Thomas, Stella Chess, and Herbert Birch did a lot of their studies in 1968, in the early 1970s, and if you want more information, you can Google those names, and you will find a lot of information about temperament. Like I said, we're only touching the tip of the iceberg today, and that way you can gather more information about what temperament means, and how you can take the information, and make it useful for you in your lives, and your work with children.

What they came up with, were the dimensions of temperament. They identified nine temperament traits, and so we're going to look at these traits in more detail, and try to discuss them, but it's important to think of these traits as being on a continuum, so they're ranging from low to high, or less intense to more intense, so when you think about your own temperaments, and your own behaviors, you can think about, what about your activity level is on the high spectrum, and what about your activity level might be on the low spectrum?

When a person falls on a continuum, it gives us some insight into what his or her temperament might be. As we go through this list, think about your own characteristics in relation to what I'm saying about children's temperamental traits. The activity level refers to how active, or physical an individual child is. They're always moving, or do they prefer

to sit and observe? Regularity describes how consistent children are in their sleeping, eating, and eliminating patterns.

Some children go to bed, and nap at the same time each day, get hungry at the same time each day, and always have bowel movements after eating, and so forth. With other children, their schedules are more variable, and you might not be able to predict what they will want, when they will want to nap, or eat. Distractibility tells us how easily, or quickly a child shifts his, or her attention from one activity to another. We all know those children who have attention spans that are just a second, and those children that can really stay with a task for a long amount of time.

A child's response to new things describes how open, and easy going, or how cautious, and apprehensive a child is about new experiences. Sometimes when children come into your care, you might notice that they're a little fearful of new people. That stranger anxiety might come into play there as well, but I think we need to be aware of children's temperament, so that we can meet their individual needs. Adaptability tells us how easily a child can adjust to new situations, and people.

Intensity of reaction, describes how intensely a child reacts to stimuli, or situations, and threshold of response, is the amount of stimuli, such as light, sound, or texture it takes to evoke a reaction. Quality of mood, describes whether a child has a generally positive or negative tendency in neutral situations, in other words is the child's mood primarily happy, or are they sad? Attention span, and persistence, describes the amount of time a child spends on an activity despite interruptions, or other hurdles.

A persistent child may stay with a task like building a tower, even after it has fallen down several times, while a less persistent child may give up after one or two tries. What Thomas, Chess, and Birch did, was they actually categorized the temperaments into adaptable, cautious, and feisty. I think they were further identified as flexible, feisty, and fearful, and there's a great YouTube video that you can look at on your own time, and if you Google fearful, feisty, and flexible, you'll be able to find it on YouTube, and I think Rijelle will also have that information for you, so that you can easily access it, but it gives us a good idea, and makes it relevant to our caregiving world as to it just highlights the adaptable, cautious, and feisty temperaments, and what they might look like in your programs.

They identified three common types, adaptable, feisty, and cautious, and I want you to think of them, one of the ways that I like to think of them, is using the Winnie the Pooh characters. Winnie the Pooh, Piglet, or Tigger, and I'd like you to think about right now, which one of those is most like your temperament. I grew up in a big family, and I would like to think that I'm an adaptable human being, so the flexible temperament fits me the most. I have three daughters, and what I find in their temperaments, is that each one of them has one of those.

My oldest daughter is the feisty temperament, my middle daughter is the adaptable, or flexible temperament, and my youngest daughter is what I call slow to warm, or the cautious, fearful temperament. Think about that for yourself, and think about what temperament type you fit into, and again understanding that you have these

temperament categories on a continuum, that it may not fit you to a T in all aspects, but for the most part this is how you interact with the world.

We'll start with the adaptable temperament, and the adaptable temperament is like the Winnie the Pooh character, flexible, ... children generally fall on the middle of the continuum for most temperament traits. Their moods are positive, and their activity level is moderate. They have regular rhythms, and they're low intensity, and low sensitivity. They're usually open to meeting new people, but may occasionally need support, and assistance to feel comfortable.

They generally take change in stride, and parents and caregivers often find that these children are what we call easy to care for. The parent of an adaptable child may comment that she sleeps well, and that he or she can predict what she will want to eat, sleep, and play. When you look at this temperament across the spectrum, about 40% of children fall into the adaptable category, and I'd like to think that, that's a good thing.

Attention span, and persistence describes the amount of time a child spends on an activity despite interruptions, or hurdles. A persistent child may stay with a task like building a tower even after it falls down several times. With this temperament, with the flexible temperament, you'll find that these children have a high degree of persistence, and also a high degree of paying attention to something. We'll go on to the next temperament, which is slow to adapt, I call it slow to warm, or withdraw.

If you remember the character Piglet, he had a more cautious temperament, and these are children we think of as being thoughtful, or quiet. Cautious children are usually not comfortable in new situations, and need time, and support to transition from one activity, setting, or caregiver, to another. The thoughtful, or cautious child can at times seem to have a somber, or serious mood, he or she will provide, probably be slow to warm to new people, and activities, and parents, or caregivers who feel in sync with a cautious child, may understand this behavior, and be more comfortable with it.

Other parents who do not share this child's cautious temperament, might be baffled, or frustrated by a cautious child. Research tells us that about 15% of children fall into this category, and then we'll go to the Tigger's. I'm sure everyone of you knows a Tigger in your life, so Tigger's have feisty temperament. These children usually react strongly to change, and have a high activity level. They can be unpredictable, and typically display strong reactions, both negative, and positive, and you never have to guess what they're feeling.

When they're happy, they are joyful, when they are sad, they wail, when they are angry, they cry. A parent, or caregiver who is also the feisty type, may enjoy the energy, and self-assertiveness of a feisty child, and others may have a hard time with the constant on the go behavior, and strong emotional reactions of the feisty child. The good news is, about 10% of children fall into this category. I want you to think about those children that are in your own programs, whether they be the flexible, or the cautious, or the feisty temperament.

You're saying, "Wait a minute, you said 40%, 15%, and 10%, what about the other 35%?" What we find in research, or what Thomas, Chess, and Birch found, was that the additional 35% of children represent a combination of these types. You may have already decided that you're a combination of these types. Just for the sake of interaction, how about if you tell me how many Tigger's, how many Piglets, how many Winnie the Poohs are out there? You can feel free to just put your information in the chat box, and just write down Tigger, or Piglet, or Winnie the Pooh, Pooh. [crosstalk 00:18:57]

Rijelle: All right, so we have a bunch of people inputting their stuff in there. I see Tigger, Tigger, Pooh, Pooh, Tigger, Winnie the Pooh, Winnie the Pooh, Tigger, oh, there's a lot of Tigger's in this Carmen. Oh, somebody says that they're a little combination of Piglet, and Winnie the Pooh, a combo of Tigger and Winnie, two Winnie the Pooh's in one place, lots of Winnie the Pooh's, lots of Tigger. Seems like fewer Piglets by my estimation. Definitely some combos of Piglet, and Winnie the Pooh, and just while the rest of you are putting your notes in, I hope you also I did put the links to the video, and the document in the chat box, if you didn't have a chance to see that yet.

It looks like that's about everybody in, so mostly Winnie the Pooh, and Tigger, a few Piglets, and a couple of combinations.

Carmen: Great thank you so much Rijelle, so now we're going to look at intensity of reactions. I just want to make sure that when we talked about the three characters, or the three temperaments, that there weren't a lot of us who are cautious temperament, and I just want to go back to that conversation that I had in the beginning, where I said environment plays a big role, and our experiences play a big role in whether or not that temperament type, how it actually unfolds. I know from my experience, my daughter who is slow to warm, the cautious temperament, she's gained confidence by being in groups.

She was in child care I would say from the time that she was one and a half years old, until she went to kindergarten, and so for her, she was able to by being in a group setting, gain confidence, and comfort level, so that her slow to warm temperament doesn't always play out like it used to. While biology plays a big role, experiences, and the environment also play a big role in what happens, and I want to point out that as caregivers, you have a big influence on that as well.

Let's talk about intensity of reaction, and okay, intensity of reaction describes how strongly we respond to various situations. On the low end of the spectrum would be those who have a mild reaction to situations, and stimuli, and although children at the low end of the spectrum may be less demanding, it does not mean that they do not need your attention. We may tend to put them on the mental back burner, because they seem to be okay, in fact you may need to remind yourself to attend to these children, and may have to work harder to get their attention.

The biggest take away that I want you to have with regard to temperament, is that you need to individualize with children, and you say, "I already do know that." Well, for children who are slow to warm, we need to tune in to what's going on with them, and we need to touch base with them on a regular basis, or watch, and observe cues, so that we

know low reactors are quiet, and rarely fussy, they sleep more, they have subtle emotional changes, and they tolerate a lot of stimulation.

We want to make sure that you're noticing all children, and so you may have to be more intentional in nurturing that those low reactors. Big reactors, we all know them. They express feelings with great intensity, they react to physical, and emotional stimuli intensely. Again, those are more your feisty children, and so you'll want to make sure that you're not only tending to the big reactors, but you're also noticing, and taking care of the low reactors. We'll go on to activity level, there are sitters, to movers, and shakers.

Sitter's, they look and listen, they explore with their hands, they're more observant, they like to do the observing. The movers, and shakers need space for movement, they move until they drop, they go for anything that is in reach, and again, please take note of the two individuals who researched that, Lerner and Dombro, so that you can find more information about these traits. Okay, did I do that? I'm sorry, yes, we did. I just want to say that these five traits help us to recognize specific characteristics in the children we care for, but not only in the children, but I'm sure that you're able to characterize yourself with this information, and think about yourself in terms of whether you're a sitter, and a mover, or your reactions, your intensity of reactions, where they fall on the spectrum.

Okay? Frustration level, again, I'm sure you can identify those children who give up easily, and those children who are willing to try it, and do it, and want to do it over, and over, and over again, so persistence, or frustration level, is the desire, and motivation to stick with a difficult task, while trying to find a solution. It also describes a person's ability to cope with a difficult task, and not get too frustrated to continue. Sometimes you even see the response of children getting angry before they give up, and so you might see things like a child may break a puzzle, or a toy while they're working on it, and children who exhibit low persistence can learn to manage their frustrations, but they may always have a hard time being patient.

This information helps us to figure out our role in supporting children, and getting them to the next level, and getting them to figure out how to manage their own emotions, how to regulate their own emotions. The next one is reactions to new people. Some children are let's take it slow, they need time, and support, they are happy to play alone, they're eager to hang out with you, and again, you may want to make sure that you're not pushing these children too much, because they'll slow down, and they can be more fearful if we're pushing them into an interaction, or a reaction that they're not ready for.

Then there's those glad to meet you people. I work for Montgomery Early Learning Centers, and we have our childcare center right next to our offices, so often I get to go over and see the infants, and care, and I'll tell you, those, "Glad to meet you," children just melt my heart, because their faces just engage you, and they put up their hands, because they want you to take them. These are the, "Glad to meet you," children, they draw people into their world easily, and effortlessly, and they seek out, and enjoy connecting with others, and building relationships, they are able to build relationships easily.

Glad to meet you adults are the ones who are skilled at making others feel comfortable, and welcome, so you may be one of those adults who is a glad to meet you adult. Then coping with change, or those children that don't change it up on me, I'm happy the way things are, and so they may have intense reactions to what we might consider relatively minor, or even positive changes, and children who find consistency in safety, and routines may respond with intense tantrums, or express a fear when confronted by change.

You might expect a lot of no, no, no's from children who do not adapt to change easily, and adults who are slow to adapt, may have trouble changing their route to work, or have difficulty being out of their normal routine. I tell my husband, he is a creature of habit, and I think he likes things the way they are, rather than change all the time. I'm a show me what's new person, find almost anything new, and interesting. Just appreciate the nuances of the world, and I enjoy novelty, and I'm excited about new things.

Children who thrive on change, they can transition easily from one activity to another, and enjoy, and anticipate changes in moving from one area to another, and just an aside, understanding where children fall on these five continuums, can help us respond to their needs in more sensitive ways. That's how you might use that information in your own world. There are three skills, and I love these three skills, because I think they help us to be reflective in the way that we interact with children.

You have a handout, I'm hoping that you printed out your hand out, and they give you more information about self awareness, careful observation, and flexible response. In fact, they give you definitions for those in that handout, so please take that information. I just feel that with regard to temperaments, these are three keys to your interactions with children. One of the mantras that I used every day before I went into the classroom, when I started in the field, was the National Association for the Education of Young Children's Ethical Commitment, which says, "Do no harm," and I took it one step closer, one step further, and I said, "Always be positive," so I want to make a positive influence on children in my interactions with them, and that's something that you may want to think about for yourself.

These three skills helps you to do that, it's self-awareness, how do I bring myself to the center, and what are the things that are triggers for me, and knowing that, and being aware of that helps you to regulate your responses, and your reactions. Careful observation, I think we're all asked to do assessments on children, and this is a piece of the work where you're just gaining more information, and you're using all of your senses to get that information, and you find out so many things by just looking at children, and watching for their cues.

From my perspective, you can even see a child when he is excited about something, and you can get more in tune with what motivates that child, what that child's passion is, and so careful observation plays a big role in our work, and it helps us to really tune in, and make sure that we're meeting individual needs of children, because we're really honing in on what it is they're excited about, or who they are as a human being.

Then flexible response is the third one of these, and flexible response is just really stopping a minute before you speak, and really thinking about what is the best guess you can make about a situation, and how can you reflectively think about what's going on in that moment in time, and what's the most positive way that you can respond? I hope you find that information useful, and I think it's just one of the skills in your tool box. I think about our work as having tools in tool chest, or I don't know, some people can think about when a carpenter wears an apron, and he has all those pockets in it, so this is something that you can tuck in that apron, so that you can be more aware, and intentional, and reflective about your interactions with children on a daily basis.

Children with special needs are children first, and you know, I went to a seminar recently, and we talked about inclusion, and we're in a world where we have children in our programs who may have special needs, and you may ask, "How does a child's special needs interact with his or her temperament?" You may find that there is no difference, that inclusion of a child with special needs is often no more difficult than meeting the diverse needs of typically developing children.

Inclusion can enhance staff member's knowledge of child development, and what can be done in a child care setting to enhance that development. Inclusion offers benefits to everyone involved in the program. The child with special needs, the other children enrolled, the parents, and the staff. I find that in including all children, you're honoring each child's needs, abilities, and strengths, and from my personal experience, I found that providing care for all children, and providing an environment that meets the needs of all children, means that you're really being reflective, and intentional about the way that you do programming.

I think that inclusion of an important aspect of the work that we do with children, and it allows us to meet the needs of all children in a respectful, and sensitive way. Just a question for those that are here. Are there any ... I would like to just get your reaction to children with special needs are children first, and have you share anything that you find is ... Just share your experience with that, and Rijelle, I'm going to ask you to step in, and tell me what some of the responses are.

Just from your perspective, having children with special needs in your care, with regard to temperament, is that different? Is it the same? Any reactions that you may have. I see that we have the attachment quiz up. I don't know if we're going to have time to do the question, Rijelle, are you there?

Rijelle: Yeah, I'm here, it doesn't look ... One person said that they've got some experience with inclusion of children with various levels, various places on the autism spectrum. React to the child as an individual, is a strategy that someone is saying they use, and also a parent educator with the PAT program said, that when they bring a parent-child activity, they've learned to keep in mind what the child likes to do, in order to get him to participate, so that he is willing to participate, otherwise he might not participate.

Carmen: All right, thank you so much. I appreciate that.

Rijelle: Your attachment is up there, and you're at 20 minutes left.



Carmen: Okay, thank you, so as we talk about temperament, we know that attachment is a primary goal of a child's first year of life. That's big, understanding what attachment is, how to promote its development, and the role that a child's temperament plays, and the establishment of a secure attachment can help us to support healthy parent-child relationship among the families we serve. We have the attachment quiz, and you have it as a handout. I would love for you to just jot down your responses to that.

We're not going to spend a little time, maybe just take the first three, and answer those three, a consistent attachment to at least one person should be in place by 4 to 6 months, true or false. Attachment to teachers is the same as attachment to parents, and crying is not an attachment behavior. If you want to record those for yourself, and then look at the rest of that, and tell me if you have any aha moments, or anything that you found interesting about these questions, and as you look at the responses, which are the next page of the quiz, any reactions to that.

Rijelle: Carmen.

Carmen: Any aha moments.

Rijelle: I see that one person said that number five, attachment takes place within relationships that both adult, and a child find satisfying, was one that one person wasn't sure about.

Carmen: Oh, okay, good, good. Yeah, we know that attachment is really an emotional dance between two people, it involves touching, and fondling, and eye contact, and cuddling, and talking, and so all of those things cannot only be beneficial to the child, but also to the adult, so it's that reciprocity that exists in that interaction. I find number seven, separation anxiety, is a breakdown in the attachment process, which is false, and that's because it's a sign that attachment, you're really doing a good job with attachment, because the child is connected to you in such a strong way, that they feel lost when they're not with you.

All right, so that's just a little view about attachment, attachment like I indicated, is a very important part of temperament. Whoops, okay, yeah, so we'll go on to talk about ...

Rijelle: Hey Carmen, someone put two things in. First, someone asked about the answers, so if you all go to the handout that's in the handout section of your bar here off to the right, you'll be able to download that quiz, and below the quiz questions are actually the answers, so you can take a look at that. Then another thought was, the secondary relationship between the child, like the attachment that happens between the child and the caregiver, so maybe in a child care setting, or the child and the home visitor, what can you do to keep that from interfering between the primary, with the primary attachment the child has with the parents, or how can you support the parent in developing that primary attachment?

Carmen: That's a great question. I think model, are you good Rijelle?

Rijelle: Yeah, oh yeah, that was it.

Carmen: I think in looking at the slide where attachment and temperament, I think it in part answers that question. Attachment occurs naturally, temperament can compromise the attachment process. We want to make sure there's a goodness of fit between the parent and the child. We talked about how a high activity level child, if the parent is a status quo, and doesn't like change, and is a low activity person, they may not be able to understand what's going on with that child, and why they're such a high activity level.

Understanding temperament can facilitate that attachment process, so my response, is helping parents to understand the connection of attachment, and temperament, is to recommend that it's important for you as a caregiver to make sure that you are being supportive of the parent, and responding to their needs, and maybe even helping them, giving them some articles, or some strategies for the importance of attachment, and how to build attachment with children, it's that looking the child in the eye, it's that dance that you have between the caregiver, or the parent, and the child.

I think there's even some great YouTube videos about attachment, in fact there is a great article on the Harvard Child Development Center, and it actually has some wonderful videos about what actually happens in the brain of a child when they're interacting with that attachment figure, whether it's a caregiver, or it's a parent. I think, in part, it's making sure that you're acknowledging the parent as the first teacher, and helping them to gain confidence in their abilities, and giving them some suggestions about attachment activities, or things that they can do to create attachment, it's such a critical part of parenting.

I would also open up the discussion to anyone else who might want to offer some responses to that, I'm certainly not the only expert, or the expert on this, and so I think that's something that you can look for more resources for how you support families with regard to attachment. I think that the temperament piece is critical, because we want to make sure that children are in a supportive relationship with their families, and if there isn't goodness of fit, I think, which is the next, one of the slides ... We'll be talking about goodness of fit in a little bit.

Attachment behaviors, you want to make sure you'll see that when a child can protest, or cry, and you can tell a child is attached to you when you see him engage in behaviors like these. Reaches to be picked up, touches base, smiles at you, follows you either physically, or with his eyes, so seeing these behaviors, you'll actually be able to pick out whether or not a child is attached to a parent, and hopefully you don't worry whether the child is becoming too attached, because you can be rest assured that it's not something to worry about.

A child who is very attached, is showing an important sign of healthy development, and furthermore, his attachment to you does not negatively affect his, or her attachment to parents. A child can form positive attachments to a small number of consistent adult caregivers, so you want to make sure that you're nurturing those attachment behaviors. Rijelle, were there any responses to my question about any suggestions for how to support a parent to gain some attachment behaviors, or strategies.

Rijelle: There weren't any specific comments to that, there was another question that I think is related, and if you'd like to answer it now, or if you want to wait until the end, but it's, how might you support adopted children, or foster children who have been pulled away from an initial attachment? I guess in developing that attachment with another caregiver.

Carmen: I'm going to respond to it now, and again, ask if anyone else has recommendations, or suggestions, that they should feel free to do that. That's a great question, but the good news is that children can form attachment to individuals who are nurturing, who help them in positive ways, but also set boundaries for them. Children are innately born with the need to please other people. I think it's important for us to figure out how we can get connected to that child, and that's by figuring out who you are as an individual, and paying attention, using those three skills of careful observation, and self-awareness, and flexible response as we work with children.

That's a strategy that you could actually share with individuals who are doing foster care. I gave it you with the handout, feel free to give it to others as a handout, and talk about how important it is to really cue in on a child, and make sure you're understanding who they are as a human being, and making sure that you're connecting, and building a relationship with them in a positive way, and finding out more, and more about who they are as a human being, by paying attention to the cues that they demonstrate in the behaviors that they're showing you. I hope that helps. Rijelle, was there any other responses?

Rijelle: One person wrote in that, as a home visitor, I try very hard to point out to the mother what she observes her doing, that we may not be aware of, such as good pacing, so really praising parents, and pointing out when parents are using some of those traits, and actions that help to build attachment. You have about 8 minutes left Carmen.

Carmen: Okay, so the next slide, if a community values its children, it must cherish their parents, and this is about making sure that we're not judging parents, making sure that there was a great article that I read recently, and it was about how, and it was on the Huffington Post, and it was about how an individual felt like she was attacked as a mom, and people were always telling her, "This is what you need to do," even when she was pregnant. She was reading, or watching a documentary about an infant in utero, and how stress impacts that child.

It's important for us to be supportive of families, and figure out how we support them, rather than judge them, and even when there isn't a goodness of fit, which is what we're talking about with this slide, how well a child's temperament matches the values, and expectations of the caregiver. I think it's important that because our expectations of what we have of children impacts our interactions with them, we need to make sure that we're creating strong bonds with children, and facilitating a parent strong bond with children, and helping that secure attachment to be in place, so that children have a warm, and continuous, enjoyable relationship with the mother, or the father, and figuring out when parents are frustrated, how it is that we can support them.

It's important for us to take note of that, when the parent is bringing the child into the center, what are those interactions? When a child is in play, how are they experiencing

the world? Even at the end of the day, when parents come back to us, what do we do to support them? Do we have a comfortable chair for them to sit at, and just de-stress themselves when they come back to us at the end of the day, of a long, hard work day. Paying attention to that, using those three skills that help us to be more connected to children, with our parents as well, so that we can understand how they're coming to us, and pay attention as to how we can support them.

Traits parents found hardest, negative mood, low distractibility, a child who is not easily soothed. For 1 to 3 years, low adaptability, negative mood, intensity high activity, withdrawing. I know parents with children who have colic, how frustrated they can get, and helping them to have some coping strategies for taking care of themselves, because the job of caring for an infant is a 24/7 job, and so it's important for us to be supportive of our families.

Risk factors in parents, immaturity, isolation, substance abuse, we all know what all of these risk factors are. There's been a lot of studies like the Asus study that identifies the traumas that impact our lives, and so again, making sure there's concrete support in families, connecting families to each other, so that they can be supportive of each other. Finding ways for them to participate in community events, or [inaudible 00:52:58] community events, or have a connection to others, that social piece, that's so important, so that parents have other people that they can rely on.

It does take a village to raise a child, and I think it's important for us to figure out how we create [inaudible 00:53:14] within our childcare communities, within our own home communities. Nature and nurture are partners in how developing people interact with the surrounding environment, so it's not just the fact what you're born with, what your genetics are, it's not just that, that predicts what your life will be in the future, but it's also the experiences, and so it's important for us to look at both of those things, and know that there's hope in that you can provide the best environment, and the best experiences that you can, for the children in your care.

Nature through nurture, strong early relationships matter, providing positive experiences matter, and children who begin life with a disadvantage do not have to stay that way, that's the good news. We're not going to have a lot of time to talk about culture, and temperament, and so just understanding that we all come from our own experiences. We make sense of the world from how we were brought up, and it's important for us to think about how that inter-plays with who we've become as human beings, and how we make sense of the world, and make sure that we're supporting the cultures of the children in our care.

How do you ensure that you're greeting families, and making sure that they're having a good experience in your program, and understanding, and bringing the culture into your facility, or into your communities. There's a dynamic interplay between culture, and temperament, and culture plays a critical role in how temperament traits are expressed by individuals, and viewed by others in the world. Culture influences those three skills, our self-awareness, our observation of others, and the way we respond to children and families in our program.

It is through the lens of culture that we understand our world, and relationships with others. I wanted to make sure I made note of that, so pulling it all together, I'm going to ask you to do this activity in one sentence that summarizes what you learned today. It was the tip of the iceberg, there's no way that we could have done this topic justice, but is there anything that you want to leave us with as you reflect on what we talked about?

Rijelle: Carmen, while folks are thinking about that sentence, or writing it down, we did have one suggestion come in, specifically about adoptive and foster parents, helping parents, and the adoptive, and foster parents be intentional in setting time aside to play with the children, and follow the child's lead, praising them often, the parents often when they are again engaging in their strategies, and activities that help to build attachment.

There was also a question that came in, and we have about a minute left, but Carmen if you're all right with taking a few questions if anyone else has questions we can see what we can get through here. One of the questions that came in Carmen, was how do you help parents deal with difficult, or feisty children? I see parents trying hard to meet these children's needs, but becoming frustrated when the child does not respond well, or does not appear to be soothed despite their best effort.

Carmen: This is where that concrete support in times of need is so critical, and I think we need to notice that this is going on, and then step in to support that parent, and we can have warm conversations about what happens in the Center when that child displays those same behaviors. I think it's figuring out how we support that parent in engaging in that dance with the child, and helping the parent understand that the temperament is, it is, it's not something that you're going to change about a child, but it's certainly something that you can help regulate, or help the child learn how to regulate, and cope with his own temperament.

Sometimes it's just giving a child words for the emotions that they're feeling, and it's putting that into words for them, not in a lecture, but just you must really be frustrated. I see the tears coming out of your eyes, I'm here to help you, I'm here to support you. Just being there is sometimes important, but also making sure that you're providing support to that parent. Maybe even providing an educational session on this very topic, feisty children, and how you support them.

I think it's important to let children let you know what their needs are, and how you can support them, but also give them boundaries. Temper tantrums are best de-escalated by either distracting the child, or allowing them to have their temper tantrum, and then once they're in a brain state, where they are able to pay attention, talking about how it felt, and what might be another way to handle that situation. We're talking about infants and toddlers, so you may not be able to actually have a conversation, where the child is responding back, but sometimes it helps you to de-escalate, if you will allow them to have the temper tantrum, and then soothingly, calmly talk about what you just witnessed. I hope that helps.

Rijelle: Thank you Carmen, so we are gonna wrap up here in just a minute. I wanted to read a few sentences that came in, which I think are really interesting to hear. The importance of parent-child attachment in the prevention of child abuse, is one thing that someone

learned from the webinar today. Identifying the child's temperament, and applying it to setting up the environment. I learned today that establishing the early relationships, and understanding how to adapt to temperaments, are key in helping the child the best you can.

We learned about different categories of temperament, and that we all affect our child's temperament. The importance of including the parent during bonding to consider, and educate the parent on temperament, and what it involves. The three skills, this person noting that, that's great information. Being self-aware, carefully observing, and responding flexibly to children of all abilities, and temperaments. Different temperaments need to be dealt with on an individual basis, and you cannot look for a one-size-fits-all answer.

This last person said that, he wanted to say that the webinar was great, and helped me to better understand children, and helped my parents to better understand their children, and also understanding how a child grows, and learns is important, and identifying both the temperaments of both the parent, and the child. There are still a few more coming in, but I do want to wrap up the webinar. I'm sure a lot of you are getting ready to go off to other things today, so I do want to take just one more reminder, check the handouts section, and the handouts will also be with the slides at the archived webinar recording, but there were some other handouts that Carmen provided that we talked about today, so be sure to look for those.

Then the only other thing I have to say, is thank you for joining us today, and the archives session will be up on the Parents as Teachers website within a week. You'll receive the evaluation in the mail today, for your email, not postal mail, we don't do that much anymore, do we? Please take a couple of minutes to complete that, your feedback is really important to us as we move to provide additional professional development.

Just a reminder, the professional development survey has gone out to Parents as Teachers, Providers, and Children's Trust Fund Grantees. You'll see that in your email box either yesterday or today, so please take a few minutes to fill that out, so it informs our webinar series, and thank you again for joining us. You'll see that we do not have, we will not have a webinar in August, and in September the topic is to be announced. Based a lot on the responses to your Parents as Teachers, and Children's Trust Fund Professional Development surveys that you'll be filling out hopefully in the next couple of days.

That is all we have for today. Carmen, thank you so much for sharing your expertise with us today, and your experiences, this concludes today's webinar.

Carmen: Thank you.