

Understanding a baby/toddlers sleep based on Temperament

Temperament is defined as the innate behavioral characteristics that we are born with. From these temperaments babies behaviors start to emerge and parents can begin to describe their child's fundamental traits. Nine temperaments have been described. A child demonstrates all nine temperaments to varying degrees. Below is each characteristic and how it relates to sleep

- 1) **Activity level:** Some children are super active and some like to sit back and watch. The super active children will need more day time activity to help them fall asleep. It is really hard for the active children to fall asleep if they have not moved their bodies a lot during the day. The more laid back child (the phrase that our culture tends to use to describe the less active child) does not need the same amount of physical stimulation.
- 2) **Regularity:** How predictable are your baby's eating and sleeping habits? Do they fall into a daily rhythm naturally, or do they need mom or dad to help build that rhythm for them?
- 3) **Approach/withdrawal:** How does your baby respond to new situations/environments/people? Does she brighten up or recoil? The child who is more withdrawn will have a harder time sleeping with there are guests in town, or they are traveling, or a parent has to go to back to work or travels for work.
- 4) **Adaptability:** How well does your baby respond to new situations or minor disruptions in her activities? Does he become upset or does he recover quickly? For the child who becomes upset, sleep can be disrupted. The parent of this child might want to consider limiting how many new situations they introduce to the child. As an example: the toddler who is starting preschool, needing to learn how to potty train, and learning how to sleep independently might really struggle with adapting to all of these changes. I recommend pacing these changes over several months.
- 5) **Sensory threshold:** How sensitive is your baby to bright lights, sounds, or scratchy clothes? The more sensitive child will need a dark room to sleep in. They might need a sound machine.
- 6) **What is your baby's mood?** Is your baby more serious? Is your baby happy all the time? Understanding your child's mood can help you better understand your child's sleep cues. If your child is happy all the time, their cues might not be as forth coming.
- 7) **Intensity:** How loud is your baby when she is either excited, happy, or sad? Does he explode with reaction, or is he pretty subdued? When making sleep changes, the baby who explodes with reaction might respond louder to making sleep changes than a child who is more subdued.
- 8) **Distractibility:** Is your child easily distracted? This can play out in how many calories they get during the day. The easily distracted child can pull away from the breast or the bottle when something changes in their environment. This has the potential to decrease the overall daily caloric needs. In return, this child will want to make up for those missing calories during the night when it is quiet and free of distractions.
- 9) **Persistence:** Does your baby play with one toys for a long time or does your baby prefer to go quickly from toy to toy.

At the Millette Method, we do understand that temperament plays a role in how babies and toddlers sleep. We takes these qualities into consideration when we develop an individualized sleep plan for your child.