

hiddensparks
without walls

Temperament

With Dr. Rona Novick

December 19, 2012



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Our Guest:



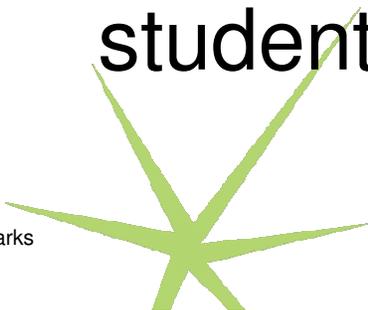
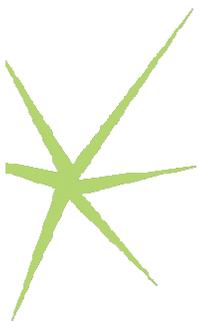
Rona Novick, PhD, is the Director of the Fanya Gottesfeld Heller Doctoral Program at the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration at Yeshiva University and Clinical Professor of Child Psychology at North Shore Long-Island Jewish Medical Center.

Dr. Novick also serves as a Co-Educational Director of Hidden Sparks, providing consultation to day schools and *yeshivot*. Dr. Novick developed the Alliance for School Mental Health at North-Shore Long Island Jewish Medical Center and served as its director for eight years, authoring the BRAVE bully prevention program for schools. Dr. Novick is the author of the book *Helping Your Child Make Friends* and editor of the book series *Kids Don't Come With Instruction Manuals*.



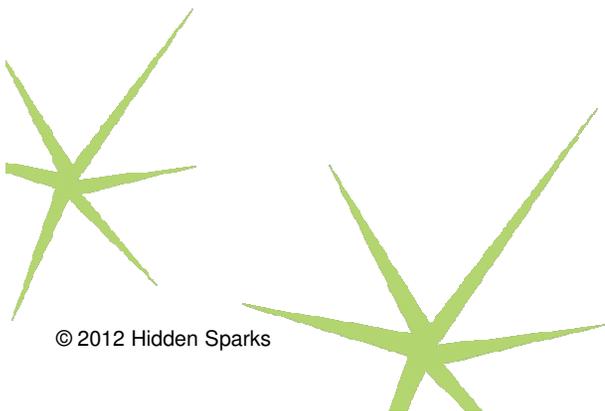
Overview of the Session

- We will learn what temperament is, and how it impacts us, our students, and our teaching.
- We will consider specific temperamental phenomenon, how they present in a classroom, and some strategies that can help students succeed.



Session Goals:

- Knowledge of temperament factors
- Knowledge of presentation of temperament types in classrooms
- Consideration of specific strategies
- Understanding of temperament-teacher fit issues



What Is Temperament?

- Temperament is about behavioral individuality.
- Just as babies are born with combination of physical characteristics such as hair and eye color, skin tone, and physique, each one has patterns of behavior, or temperament, that are also part of their uniqueness.

The study of temperament follows from the work of Alexander Thomas and Stella Chess and colleagues in the new York Longitudinal Study which began in the 1950s.

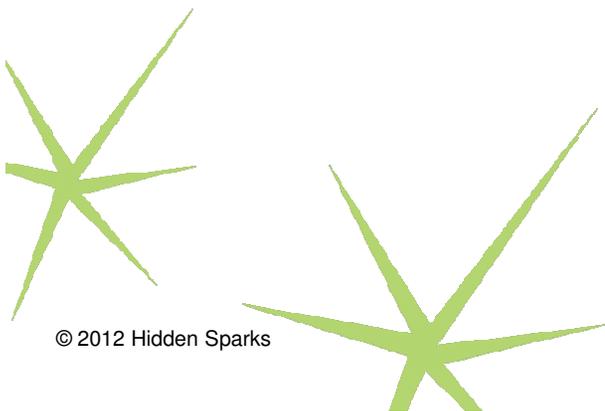


Why Does Temperament Matter to Educators?

- How would your teaching change if you were
 - In an outdoor classroom?
 - In a laboratory?
 - In a very overheated room?
- Just as these realities would impact your teaching, students' temperaments are a reality that will impact BOTH the classroom environment AND their learning

Is Temperament Unchangeable?

- Like height?
- Like weight?
- Like favorite flavor of ice cream?
- Like the programming on your TV



Temperament as our default settings

- Our natural tendency/inclination
- Our most comfortable way of being
- The most effortless way of responding
- Means responding differently takes effort and energy



The Commonly Recognized Temperament Factors



Activity



Regularity



Initial Reaction



Intensity



Mood



Distractibility



Persistence,
Patience, and
Frustration



Sensitivity



Temperament in the Classroom

HOW DOES IT MANIFEST: WHAT CAN EDUCATORS DO?



No temperament is by definition negative or problematic.

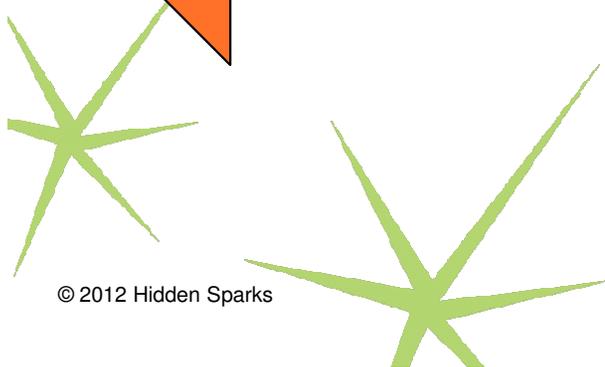
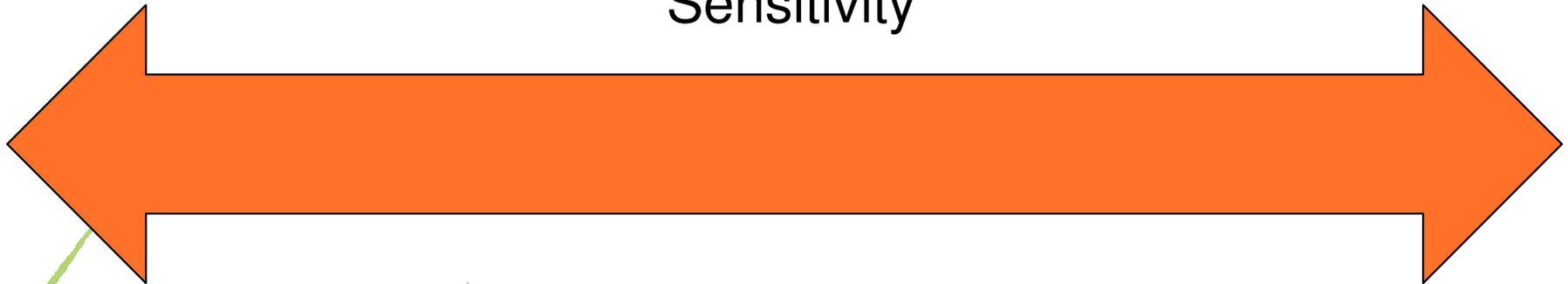
The issue is context, extent, and child's own sense of self.

On a continuum

Activity
Regularity
Intensity
Initial Reaction
Mood
Distractibility
Attention Span/Persistence
Sensitivity

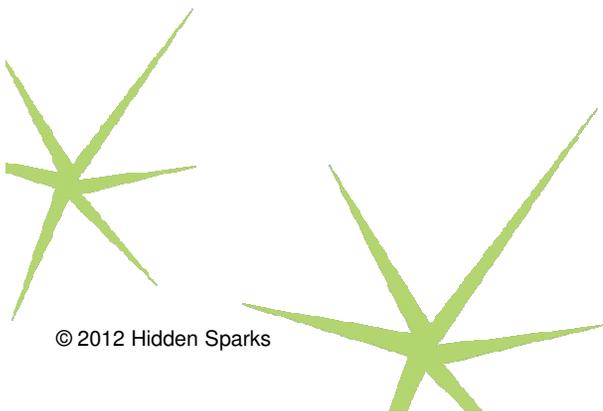
Low

High



What's Your Temperament?

- Why does this matter?
- How does your temperament impact your students?
- What is the pace of your classroom – how physically active can students be?
- How long do students need to work independently? To handle frustration?
- How predictable are your lessons and days?
- Are you generally upbeat, enthusiastic, bubbly, quiet?
- Do you mind the noise of students working? Announcements? The air conditioner?



It's About Fit



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Activity

Sitters

- Take the world in by looking or listening
- Prefer exploring with their hands (using their fine motor skills) instead of large muscles (arms and legs).

Movers and Shakers

- Quick to roll over, squirm, and crawl.
- Like to reach out, grab, and bat at the dangling toys
- Often develop into toddlers who are always on the go, crawling, running, and climbing.
- Love spaces that offer lots of opportunity for movement
- Often need a lot of supervision
- Are likely to keep moving until exhausted



Activity - Strategies

Sitters

- Respect pace and style
- Music may encourage movement
- Children may prefer to watch activity before joining

Movers and Shakers

- Offer ample opportunities for movement
- Capitalize on energy for helpful activities
- Allow extra time for winding down



Regularity

Routine

- Clear and regular patterns of sleep, eating
- Predictable for others and themselves
- May have difficulty when regular schedule is significantly disrupted

Erratic

- From infancy, no clear pattern for sleeping and waking
- May have widely disparate eating patterns (hungry and non-hungry days)
- Unpredictable to care-takers and themselves
- At school age – may have periods of fatigue

Regularity - Strategies



Routine

- Whenever possible, prepare for changes in schedule
- Offer options/support when stressed by changes that challenge regularity (Hurricane, school trip, overnights)

Erratic

- Be prepared to be surprised
- Help student understand and address their irregularity – when stuck, consider changing gears



Initial Reaction

Seekers

- Eager for new experiences
- Dives into unfamiliar
- Quickly adjusts to novel situations and new people
- Social and outgoing

Shrinkers

- Upset by the unfamiliar
- Approach new situations tentatively if at all
- Takes time to accustom to new situations and people
- May have a primarily negative approach to new things
- Generally shy



Initial Reaction - Strategies

Seekers

- Allow exploration
- Specify, in advance, rules for safety
- Anticipate, whenever possible, when exploration may be problematic
- Teach manners and social cues

Shrinkers

- Provide a safe “home-base” from which to explore
- Whenever possible – prepare students in advance for what will happen, what to expect
- Teach social skills



Intensity

Low Reactors

- Be quiet and rarely fuss
- Sleep more than average
- Show their emotions with only slight changes in facial expression, tone of voice, or body posture
- Tolerate a lot of stimulation

Big Reactors

- Express their feelings with great intensity (for example, showing supreme happiness by squealing with delight - expressing anger by shouting, throwing things, hitting, and biting)
- May react to physical stimulation intensely (for example, perhaps being unable to tolerate itchy tag on a T-shirt, the wrinkle in a sock, or an unpleasant smell).



Intensity - Strategies

Low Reactors

- Do not assume minimal reaction means happiness – discuss how student feels (these are easy students to ignore)
- Engage in physical activity, which can tune up greater reaction

Big Reactors

- Validate feelings
- Create calm in the storm
- Help student discover soothers and self-soothers
- Help student develop verbal communication that is appropriate



Mood

Happily Satisfied

- General positive outlook
- Easily pleased/satisfied
- Mood remains fairly even

Unhappy/Uncomfortable

- Mood often negatively tinged
- Mood may be volatile
- Difficult to please



Mood - Strategies

Happily Satisfied

- Avoid overburdening such students
- May be at risk when high stress situations arise – be prepared to provide support

Unhappy/Uncomfortable

- Validate feelings
- Problem solve with student around strategies/supports that improve mood
- Teach meta-cognitive strategies to help student learn to accurately evaluate



Distractibility

External Focus

- Tendency to be sidetracked by things going on around them
- Engaged by external events
- Has difficulty completing task at hand

Internal Focus

- Can concentrate despite the interruptions
- Completes tasks
- May be very focused on own interests



Distractibility - Strategies

External Focus

- Consider seat placement
- Help child discover best focusing conditions
- Explore focus objects
- May be more successful with shorter tasks

Internal Focus

- Help student to expand focus to related interests
- Help student with shifting away from a task in which they are engaged (when needed)



Persistence/Patience/Frustration

Long haulers

- Will work steadily, and for long periods, even on very challenging tasks
- Can wait turn, wait for assistance
- When things do not go well, remain calm
- Can get stuck using same strategy over and over – even if ineffective

Sprinters

- May give up when tasks are difficult
- May show clear signs of frustration when challenged
- May find it challenging to wait turn, or wait for assistance



Persistence/Patience- Frustration - Strategies

Long haulers

- Help students learn to take breaks
- Do not under attend to such students – they may be less likely to express needs
- Help students learn when they are “in a rut” and to try something new

Sprinters

- Break tasks into more manageable parts
- Consider offering time away from frustrating tasks to regroup
- Be a role model – exhibit patience and overtly share HOW you manage frustration



Sensitivity

Balmy

- Tolerates many sensory experiences without distress
- In some cases, may be less concerned about physical injury and therefore higher risk taking

Prickley

- Quite sensitive to feel of fabrics, textures of food, noises, temperatures.
- May respond intensely to negative sensory input
- May develop habits and preferences to minimize sensory issues



Sensitivity - Strategies

Balmy

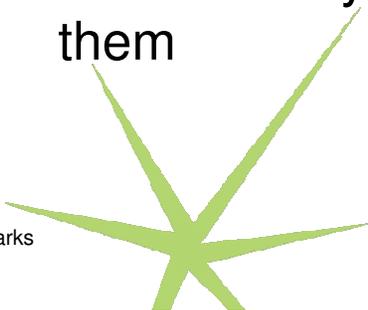
- Teach about safety
- Encourage/support the willingness to taste and try new things

Prickly

- Be sensitive to students' sensitivities, and avoid sensory overload
- When introducing new sensory experiences, go slowly, requiring small steps
- Help student understand own needs and learn how to advocate for self

Temperament Tidbits

- Consider what comes naturally and the effort/energy necessary to go against one's nature
- Having options lessens chance your class/assignments will be bad fit for a particular temperament
- Know and own your temperament
- When you see difficult to understand behavior, are puzzled by a students' response . . . Consider temperament
- Share what you learn about students' temperaments with them



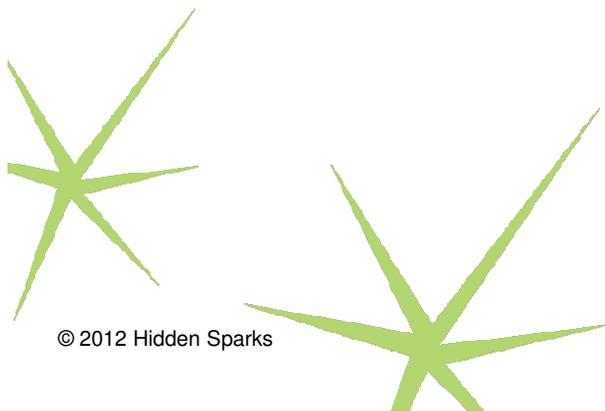
Teaching Temperament

- Share knowledge about temperament with students
- Share what you learn about students' temperaments with them
- Create ways for students to become more aware of their temperaments
- Teach self-management strategies
- Wonderful vehicle for teaching about diversity and acknowledging we are all different and no one way is the **RIGHT** way

Upcoming Hidden Sparks Without Walls Sessions

Wednesday, 2/13/13 8:00-9:00pm	Higher Order Thinking With Karen Kruger
Wednesday, 3/13/13 8:00-9:00pm	Internet Treasures and Tools for Literacy and Writing With Jeannie Crowley
Wednesday, 4/17/13 8:00-9:00pm	Focus on the Shy and Anxious Child With Meryl Silver

For more information visit: www.hidden-sparks.org



About Hidden Sparks

Hidden Sparks is a non-profit whose purpose is to help children with learning differences reach their full potential in school and life. Hidden Sparks develops and supports professional development programs for Jewish day schools to help increase understanding and support for teaching to diverse learners.

Guided by a philosophy that by helping schools meet the needs of children with learning and behavioral differences, ultimately all students will benefit, Using a coaching model, Hidden Sparks mentors provide professional development in neurodevelopment, temperament and behavior, and guide classroom teachers in understanding and helping the struggling students.

The Hidden Sparks coaching model and curriculum is currently used in 24 Jewish Day Schools/Yeshivot in New York and is beginning this year in Baltimore, through a partnership with SHEMESH. An additional 4 schools from southern US cities also participate with Hidden Sparks and more than 20 schools have been served by Hidden Sparks through the *No Child Left Behind*. Hidden Sparks is the proud recipient of a Covenant Foundation grant, recognizing excellence in Jewish education, and is honored to have been listed in SLINGSHOT among the 50 most innovative Jewish organizations in the US.

Contacting Hidden Sparks

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