

Exercise: Checking the fit and how it feels.

This exercise has two purposes. First, you see your temperament compared to your child's temperament. Then, you consider the attitudes you currently have about your child's temperament and label the ones that elicit strong positive or negative feelings. These are the ones that have the most potential to impact your relationship with your child and make it easier or more difficult to parent him.

In the chart below, fill in the spaces for parent and child with the temperament scores—(a), (b), or (c) from pages 27–31 in Chapter 2 and pages 96–106 in this chapter. (If you would like to add another child or a coparent's scores for later work, do so in the optional columns.)

Trait	Parent	Child	Optional	Optional
Activity Level				
Regularity				
Initial Response to New Situations				
Adaptability				
Predominant Mood				
Persistence				
Perceptiveness / Distractibility				
Intensity				
Sensitivity				

Now go back and star any of your child's temperament traits that elicit strong positive or negative attitudes on your part. You'll be using these in the next chart.

Before filling out the blank chart, next page, we recommend that you completely read the instructions first. See Suzie's mother's sample chart, page 117, for clarification.

Instructions: Using the blank chart below, write the starred traits from the previous chart in the column labeled “TRAIT”—one trait per row. Next to each trait, in the same box, include a brief description of how that trait manifests in your child. In the second column, labeled “REACTION,” write whether you react positively or negatively to this trait. In the third column, write why this behavior causes a positive or negative reaction. (For now, leave the fourth column empty; we’ll return to it later.)

TRAIT (And how it manifests in your child)	REACTION Positive or Negative	WHY?	

Exercise: Reframing your perceptions.

The purpose of this exercise is to practice shifting, expanding, or altering your perceptions about your child's temperament.

Go back to the first trait from the chart on previous page. The idea is to consider anything that helps elicit a different reaction. So, if you now experience the trait as negative, consider how it might be advantageous to him or her in the future, in different environments, activities, and careers where this trait could be an asset. Inject some humor. Reflect on the history of your own strong feelings or reactions. If you felt positive about it, play devil's advocate and find a negative side. Ask yourself if the trait will serve her in the world as well as it's serving her in the family. Maybe it's a shared trait with you and it reinforces an attitude that he is "just like me," which of course he isn't. The idea is simply to become more neutral and accepting.

Give it a try. There is a blank fourth column on the right of the chart you filled out on previous page. This is where you will write your reframed thoughts. Do this for all the traits you listed from that same chart. To give you a sense of how to proceed, we completed the last column for Suzie on page 119.