Using the Temperament Toolbox to Scaffold Children’s Compassion

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What are empathy and compassion?

• Empathy refers to our ability to take the perspective of and feel the emotions of another person, compassion is when those feelings and thoughts include the desire to take action to help.

• Difference between empathy and sympathy
  • Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Evwgu369Jw
  • Consider the difference between a required “I’m sorry” and an encouraged “Can you check on them to see if they are okay?”

• Scaffolding - supporting children until they can use skills independently
Why are empathy and compassion so important?

• Impact on later social functioning (Scrimgeour, 2016)
• Impact on academic outcomes
• Potentially less opportunities to practice in current culture
  • Passive media
  • Modeling – quality and quantity may not be present
What is temperament?

Rothbart & Bates, Kagan, Thomas & Chess

• Innate individual differences in reactivity and self-regulation, influenced over time by genes, maturation, and experience (Rothbart & Dayberry, 1981)
  • Self-regulatory
  • Reactivity
  • Attention (Rothbart & Bates, 1998)

Sources cited from the Handbook of Temperament.
What is temperament?

Rothbart & Bates, Kagan, Thomas & Chess

• Kagan (1994)
  • High reactivity with a low threshold of excitability
  • Behavioral inhibition/shyness
    • Tendency to experience distress and withdraw from unfamiliar people, events, or environments
  • Infant experiment

Sources cited from the Handbook of Temperament.
What is temperament?

Categories – variety of theorists

• Components
  • Emotionality
  • Reactivity
  • Approach-Withdrawal
  • Routines
  • Sociability
  • Effortful Control

More categories/components exist - these are some of the most relevant for working with young children

Sources cited from the Handbook of Temperament.
What is temperament?

Current Research

• **Reciprocal nature**
  • Makes contributions to the person’s interpretations, actions, and relationships, while they make basic contributions to the expressions of temperament (Rothbart & Bates, 2011)

Sources cited from the Handbook of Temperament.
Peer and Teacher Relationships

- Link between difficult temperament and poor peer relationships (Rudasill et al, 2009)

- Children’s higher quality relationships with teachers might support more positive peer interactions (Rudasill et al, 2013)
Reciprocal interactions between the child and his or her environment influence the adjustment of the child.

- A parent’s (or teacher’s) actions should be tailored to the child’s unique temperament (Thomas & Chess, 1977)
- Easy, Slow-to-Warm, Difficult
- Examples – transition warnings, sensory input, prepare for difficult situations

Sources cited from the Handbook of Temperament.
### Temperament Activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Emotionality</th>
<th>Reactivity</th>
<th>Approach/Withdrawal</th>
<th>Routines</th>
<th>Sociability</th>
<th>Effortful Control</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>YOUR STUDENT</strong></td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Very sensitive</td>
<td>Approach</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>Highly social</td>
<td>High control</td>
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<td>Negative</td>
<td>Not sensitive</td>
<td>Withdrawal</td>
<td>Irregular</td>
<td>Not as social</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>YOU</strong></td>
<td>Positive</td>
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How can educators and parents use temperament?

Empathy

• Use high sensitivity traits to encourage empathy
• Encourage peer relationships to build empathy
• Point out when a child’s actions impact another child and the resulting emotions
• Help children who struggle with attention to pay attention to feelings and reflect on another’s emotions
• Reflect on the idea that fair does not always mean equal
How can educators and parents use temperament?

Emotional Intelligence

• Understand their own temperament
• Help children to identify emotions
• Teach calming techniques/regulation of emotion
• Use traits as strengths – sensitivity, extraversion
• Take advantage of school programs like INSIGHTS
  • Link: http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/insights/
  • Evidence based, intended for teachers, parents, and children
How can educators and parents use temperament?

Prosocial Skills

• Encourage prosocial friendships - association between prosocial friendships and positive emotionality (Fabes et al, 2012)
• Help develop/encourage persistence - association between persistence and prosocial behaviors (Yagmurlu, 2009)
• Use trait strengths – approach, extraversion, emotionality
• Consider how to group children – size of group, make up of temperament traits
• Take temperament home
  • Identify temperament traits in your child/student
  • Create thoughtful transitions
  • Encourage peer relationships
  • Support skill building, encourage independence

• School tools: INSIGHTS, Environmental Rating Scales/CLASS through Nebraska Step Up to Quality
• Supplementary materials
  • INSIGHTS pamphlet
  • Step Up to Quality pamphlet
  • Short quiz for training verification


