Temperament Characteristics (Chess & Thomas, 1977)

Examining how we rank these characteristics in ourselves and others, helps in both our intrapersonal and interpersonal development. Look at each and on a scale of 1-10 rank each of the characteristics, both how you see them in yourself and how you notice them in others.

1. Activity Level- Some need lots of movement, even within the womb. Others can be still for long periods of time.

   1.....5.....10
   Not very active Very active

2. Rhythmicity- Some have regular cycles: eat, sleep, body systems are very regular. Others are more sporadic, less predictable.

   1.....5.....10
   Not very regular or rhythmic Very regular

3. Approach-Withdrawal- Some approach new things and others with great interest. Others are slower to warm up and can be somewhat wary.

   1.....5.....10
   Slow to warm up Approach easily

4. Adaptability- Some adjust quickly, enjoy changes. Others need more time and are uncomfortable when their routine is interrupted or changed.

   1.....5.....10
   Dislike change Changes easily

5. Intensity of Reaction- Some react with *great* joy or *great* frustration. Others respond more mildly.

   1.....5.....10
   Low key reactions Intense reactions

6. Threshold or Responsiveness- Some are sensitive to the environment around them, sight, sound, touch, taste. Others seem unaware of or unbothered by stimulation around them.

   1.....5.....10
   Low tolerance to sensory input High tolerance to sensory input

7. Quality of Mood- Some switch from one mood to another very rapidly. Others stay more even keeled or stay in one mood for what seems like a long time.

   1.....5.....10
   Even tempered Mood changes quickly

8. Distractibility- Some can be readily moved from one activity to another. Others stay focused on an activity and need additional prodding to move on.

   1.....5.....10
   Stays very focused Easily distracted

9. Attention Span- Some people stay on one task until its completion. Others move from one task to another and then return.

   1.....5.....10
   Stays very focused Needs distraction

Understanding the role of temperament characteristics helps us to appreciate the differences in ourselves and others. It helps explain why we may react the way we do and allows us to practice patience and understanding when conflict arises with others.