Greetings from the Stony Brook University Temperament Study!! This is our first issue of the project newsletter. We hope to send out new issues approximately twice a year. The newsletter will include progress reports, study results, information and resources for parents and families. If there is anything that you would like to see in the newsletter, please let us know.

Progress Report

We received a five-year grant to support the Temperament Study during the Summer of 2004, and launched the project in the late Fall of 2004. So far, almost 100 families with a three-year old child have enrolled in the project and come to the campus for the initial visit. Over 80% of the families have completed the second visit, and many others are scheduled. We’ve also completed telephone interviews with approximately 85% of parents. The parents’ questionnaires have been slowest in coming in, and we can understand why. They are long and take a lot of concentration, which can be difficult at the end of a long day. We are delighted that we have received questionnaires from about two-thirds of the parents so far, and that only about a dozen are more than two months late.

We really appreciate all of the time that you have taken to help us on this project, and are grateful for your contributions and trust!!
Future Plans

We plan to enroll approximately 500 more families with a three-year old child during the next two years (for a total of about 600 families). We hope to see all of the families again about two years later after your child has turned five. We hope that all families will continue in the project, even those who have moved out of the area. The age 5 follow-up will be very important in allowing us to learn how stable temperament is over time in early childhood, and to see which factors contribute to change in temperament.

Moving? New Phone?

If you move or change your phone number, we would greatly appreciate it if you would let us know. You can call us at 631-632-4115 or e-mail us at Jaifi.Lewis@stonybrook.edu. You can also contact us from our website: www.sbutemperamentstudy.org.

What is Temperament?

Child temperament is thought to be the foundation of adult personality. Temperament refers to early-emerging emotional and behavioral styles that are assumed to be at least moderately stable over time and at least partly biologically based.

Different researchers define temperament in different ways. However, there is fairly wide agreement that temperament includes at least three dimensions:

1. **Positive emotionality** - This includes a tendency to experience a joyful, exuberant mood; being sociable and extraverted; and a tendency to be very interested and engaged with things in the environment. Some children have a high level of these traits, and others have a lower level.

2. **Negative emotionality** - This includes being highly responsive to stress; and having a tendency to experience such emotions such as fear, anxiety, sadness, and irritability. Again, some children have a high level of these traits, and others have a lower level.
3. **Impulsivity versus constraint** - Children at the impulsive end of this dimension may have difficulty controlling their behavior and focusing their attention, while children at the other end of this dimension are more highly controlled and somewhat less spontaneous.

Children can range anywhere from high to moderate to low on each of these dimensions, so that no two children are exactly the same on all components of temperament.

**Questions About Temperament**

There are many important questions about the nature and implications of temperament that researchers are trying to answer. These include:

1. What is the best way of measuring temperament? Most researchers use either laboratory observations or parents’ reports. We use both. Both approaches provide unique and valuable perspectives on children's temperament.
2. How stable is temperament over time? Is temperament more stable during some periods of development than other periods?
3. What factors determine whether temperament remains stable or changes over time? How much of a role do the family, school, and stressful events play in stability versus change in temperament?
4. How similar are children's temperaments to their parents' personalities and emotional styles?
5. What is the role of genetic and biological factors in temperament?
6. What role does temperament play in later child adjustment, and in children's functioning in school and with peers?
7. Are there certain family or school environments or approaches to parenting that are better or worse matches for particular child temperaments? How can we use our knowledge about child temperament to help ensure children's healthy development and good adjustment and functioning?

We will discuss recent research on each of these questions in future newsletters.
Thank you for participating in the Play Room and Space visits. We really enjoyed meeting and getting to know you! We hope that you are having a wonderful summer!

During your first visit to Stony Brook University, Margaret had a great time playing a series of games and activities with you. It was fun building tall towers and then knocking them down; chasing and popping bubbles with our hands, feet, and elbows; surprising your mom or dad with a can of pretend snakes; discovering objects like the chirping robot bird inside the tent and lots of “gooey” toys inside the mystery box; watching you crawl through the tunnel and leap from the stool onto the mattress; and of course, having you race and beat me EVERY time with the remote control cars. I hope that you had as much fun as I did exploring and playing with all of these toys!

During your second visit to the Stony Brook campus, Jen helped you dress up as an astronaut and go on space missions in our special space room with the glow-in-the-dark stars. Many of you explored space on your missions and won cool space prizes, like a space ship and a big sparkly bouncy ball. However, some of you (about 20%) preferred to stay on earth and did not want to wear the astronaut costume. If you chose not to go on the space mission, we hope that you will come back for another chance to conquer space and win some space prizes. We have all the astronauts’ pictures up on our famous Stony Brook Astronaut Wall, and we hope that you will enjoy coming back when you are five years old and finding yourself still up there!

During the second visit, you also got to play games with your mom, or in some cases, with your dad, such as reading a book, building blocks, and creating a maze with the Etch-A-Sketch. Can you remember what else you did? (I’ll give you a hint, one game was about wheels and the other was about matching!)

We also hope that you enjoyed watching yourself be a movie star on your DVDs!
Resources for Parents and Families

Being the parent of a young child can be challenging. Several parents have expressed interest in reading materials and other resources for parents. We would like to recommend some books that address common problems parents and children may encounter. These books are available through Amazon and most major booksellers:

- "Incredible Years: A Troubleshooting Guide for Parents of Children Aged 3 to 8” by Carolyn Stratton.
- "Touchpoints: Your Child’s Emotional and Behavioral Development” by T. Berry Brazelton.
- "Good Friends are Hard to Find: Help Your Child Find, Make, and Keep Friends” by Fred Frankel.
- "How to Behave so Your Children Will, Too!” by Sal Severe.
- "The Emotional Problems of Normal Children” by Stanley Tureki.

For problems that may require professional attention, please contact your pediatrician or consider the following resources:

- SUNY Stony Brook, Department of Psychiatry 632-8850
- SUNY Stony Brook Psychological Center 632-7830
- Point of Woods Clinic, SUNY Stony Brook 634-7874
- Child & Family Psychological Services, Commack 543-0290
- Brookhaven Youth Bureau, Medford 451-8011
- Pederson Krag MHC, Smithtown 265-3311
- Family and Child Guidance, Deer Park 242-1366
- Family Service League, Huntington 427-3700
- Janet Fischel, Stony Brook Hospital - Pediatrics 444-2718
- Dr. Joel Bregman, North Shore (LIJ) 516-802-8600
Finally, some useful websites include:

- The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development
  - www.parentsoup.com
- A general source for health, parenting, and education issues related to children
  - www.kidsource.com

The Stony Brook University Temperament Study wishes you a great summer!

(631) 632-4115
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