

*solitary*, this is a figurative, not literal, term to denote one-sided play. The type of toys given to children is much less important than the quality of personal interaction that occurs.

## Temperament

An infant's temperament or behavioral style influences the type of interaction that occurs between the child and parents, especially the mother, and other family members (see [Temperament, Chapter 3](#)). In assessing a child's temperament, the parents' perception of the child and the degree of fit between their expectations and the child's actual temperament are important. The more dissonance or lack of harmony, between the child's temperament and the parent's ability to accept and deal with the behavior, the greater risk for subsequent parent–child conflicts.

Although most behavioral researchers agree that there is a strong biologic component to temperament, researchers also suggest that the environment, particularly the family, may modify temperament ([Gallitto, 2015](#)). Family interaction with the infant is perceived as a circular process wherein each family member affects the others and the family as a unit. With these concepts in mind, the nurse has an important role in helping the family understand the infant's temperament as it relates to family dynamics and the eventual well-being of the child and family unit.

Some researchers speculate that infant temperament may contribute to depression. Depressed mothers and fathers (vs. nondepressed mothers and fathers) rate their infant's temperament as more difficult at 3 and 18 months old ([Kerstis, Engström, Edlund, et al, 2013](#)). The researchers stress that depressed parents need to be identified early and provided with supportive programs to enhance the parent-infant relationship. When there is a lack of reciprocity between the infant and parents or when the infant's behavior does not meet parental expectations, there is increased risk for discord. Researchers have correlated fussy infant temperament with the introduction of complementary feedings at 3 months old ([Wasser, Bentley, Borja, et al, 2011](#)) and feeding infants foods that may contribute to obesity ([Vollrath, Tonstadt, Rothbart, et al, 2011](#)).

Several instruments can measure infant temperament. These instruments include the Revised Infant Temperament