

Information from your Patient Aligned Care Team

Parenting

What are the different types of parenting styles?

Authoritative parents provide high warmth and support, firm limits, good communication, and high supervision. Authoritarian parents are demanding, and provide low warmth and support, firm and inflexible limits, and one-way communication. Permissive parents have high warmth and support but place very few limits and poor supervision. Uninvolved parents provide low warmth and support, very few limits, little communication, poor supervision, and are considered neglectful. Research suggests that the **authoritative parenting style** is the best approach to parenting. Review table below for specific examples of behaviors associated with the different types of parenting styles. Which one are you most like?

Parenting Style	Typical Behaviors
Authoritarian	This type of parent values obedience. Commands the child about what to do and what not to do, rules are clear and unbending. The parent pours the "right" information into the child who is considered an empty vessel. Misbehavior is strictly punished.
Permissive	Instead of following the strict rules of parents, children are encouraged to think for themselves, avoid inhibitions, and not value conformity. Parents take a "hands-off" approach, allowing children to learn from the consequences of their actions. Misbehavior is usually ignored.
Uninvolved	These parents are "do nothing and say nothing" parents. Parents permit the children to do whatever they want to do, whenever they want to do it, without any rewards or consequences for their behavior. In extreme cases, this parenting style can develop into neglect or rejection of the children.
Authoritative	These parents establish basic guidelines for children. Clarifying issues, they give reasons for limits. Learning to take responsibility is a high priority. Children are given lots of practice in making choices and guided to see the consequences of those choices. Misbehavior is handled with an appropriate consequence or by problem-solving with the child to find an acceptable way to get desires met. Out-of-control children have "cool-off" time, not punishment. Children are part of deciding how to make amends when someone or something has been hurt.

Parenting Styles and some Daily Dilemmas

Annie, age 4, has grabbed a ball from Luisa, another child

- **Authoritarian:** You come back right this minute and give that ball back to Luisa immediately.
- **Authoritative:** The ball belongs to Luisa. I know you want to play with it, but why don't you talk it over with her and try and work out a system to take turns?
- **Permissive:** believing that Annie should be allowed to express her impulses freely, doesn't suggest a solution and does not use the opportunity to help her solve the problem.

Richard, age 12, wants to rent an R-rated DVD that his friends have been talking about

- **Authoritarian** parent gets mad and tells him he can't rent any more DVDs
- **Authoritative** parent says no and helps him find a more appropriate DVD
- **Permissive** parent lets him rent it when he pleads

Adapted from <http://www.aboutourkids.org/aboutour/articles/parentingstyles.html>

What's the big deal about parenting styles?

Children reared from the **authoritarian parenting style** often rebel from strict punishment, use violence as a solution to problems, and tend to copy others behaviors, including undesirable peer groups.

Children reared from the **permissive parenting style** are creative and original, but they often have trouble fitting into the work-force. These children typically become confused, feel insecure, and can make poor choices. Children reared from the **uninvolved parenting style** do not learn what is to be expected of them from others and continue to expect everything to go their way throughout life. Children reared in the **authoritative parenting style** learn to accept responsibility, become independent, make wiser choices, cope with change, and are better equipped to succeed in a work-force which relies on cooperative problem-solving. These children are typically work well with others, have high self-esteem, and high self-confidence.

Reciprocal Relationships and Temperament

A reciprocal relationship is one in which the individuals influence one another. This reciprocity in relationships also applies to the relationship between parents and their children. Infants are born with a temperament or a personality. Some infants are easy, some are difficult, and some take some time to warm up to people. The child's temperament and the parents' personalities often interact and can sometimes lead to injuries. For example, some parents interact very negatively with their children, like yelling at them, criticizing them, etc. Those parents may have children with many behavior problems. The question remains, did the parents treat the children negatively all along and then the behavior problems developed or did the children have behavior problems that lead to the parents' negative interactions?

Styles of Temperament

Researchers have delineated three broad styles of temperament, as follows:

- Easy children are calm, happy, adaptable, regular in sleeping and eating habits, positive in mood and interested in new experiences.
- Difficult children are often fussy, irregular in feeding and sleeping habits, low in adaptability, fearful of new people and situations, easily upset, high strung, and intense in their reactions.
- Slow to warm up children are relatively inactive, reflective, tend to withdraw or to react negatively to novelty, but their reactions gradually become more positive with experience.

So, I've got a child with a difficult temperament, now what?

It's the mix or the "goodness of fit" between parent and child that matters most. The match or mismatch between a child and parent determines the harmony between them. Temperament, however, is not set in stone. Although temperament has been shown to be consistent over time, family environment and life experiences can make a difference. Parents, who are sensitive to their child's temperamental style and can recognize the child's unique strengths, will make family life smoother. For example, when faced with a new situation, a parent of a slow to warm up child may need to be patient and allow him more time to assess a situation. A difficult child may need advance rehearsal of the expected behavior to help her deal with the new situation.

Positive Parenting

In most cases, verbal and corporal punishment (e.g., spanking) increases behavior problems in children. The goal of positive parenting skills is to decrease verbal and corporal punishment in order to decrease behavior problems in children.

STAR Parenting

STAR is an acronym to help parents to remember what to do when their children are engaging in behaviors of which they disapprove. It is an easy way to cue you to remember what to do when you may find yourself getting upset and a good tool to use to increase positive parenting.

S: Stop	Step away from the situation, take a few deep breaths, count to ten
T: Think	Clear your head and carefully consider your next words and step
A: Ask	What is expected of a child his/her age? Is this a fair expectation?
R: Respond	Use limit setting strategies

Challenging Cues

Every child knows who to push their parents' buttons. First, identify what your buttons are. Then, focus on your thoughts and feelings when your child pushes your buttons. What are the automatic thoughts or hot thoughts that are going through your head? What are you feeling? Have a specific plan for what to do when your buttons are pushed.

Child Development and Expectations

Every child is unique, and each child's development is different. Although there are norms expected for most children to reach, there are children that do not meet milestones at the expected ages and there are children who reach milestones earlier than expected. Parents have to focus on what is expected of their own child. What can *my* child do? What is he/she able to do at this age? Encourage the child to try new activities and provide reinforcement when he/she is successful. Remember that children have feelings too. So, when you are trying new activities with your child, make sure that some activities have a fairly high success rate. A child is like to get distressed with repeated failed attempts, just like an adult will. It is good to identify high, low, and fair expectations for your child.

Nurturing and Positive Reinforcement

Positive reinforcement is giving a child something (e.g., a toy, game, time to play, or verbal praise) to increase a good behavior. For example, if your child puts his dinner plate in the sink after he has finished his meal, a good positive reinforcement would be to tell the child good job or thank you for putting your plate in the sink. Other examples of positive reinforcement are stickers on behavioral charts. Young children love to show parents and teachers how successful they have been at their work. Having chore charts in the house with stickers when jobs are completed is a good way to positively reinforce good behavior. Giving a child a hug for nurturance and support after a long day is another way for parents to maintain good relationships with their children. Children get tired after a long day, just like adults and sometimes they need someone to lean on and to be there for them.

Discipline

Discipline works with positive reinforcement. As positive reinforcement increases, disciplinary actions typically decrease. Good behaviors should increase as a result of positive reinforcement. When applying discipline, be strong and firm. Do not challenge your children and avoid power struggles (e.g., when your children challenge your rules and argue against your point). Avoid yelling as it is a negative interaction. The more frequently parents yell, the more the children learn that it's okay to yell too. It increases negative interaction in the family unit. The most effective discipline is the one that should be used and the most effective method may not be spanking. Spanking, or any form of corporal punishment, should be avoided and only used as a last resort. Other methods of discipline include the removal of possessions or removal of time to play a game or watch TV. Each child is different. As a parent, you know what your child values. Removing valuable things in the child's life may be the most effective form of discipline. The final rule on discipline is that it must be consistent. For example, you

tell your child that if he goes to play outside, he will not be able to have ice cream after dinner. Your child makes the choice to go play outside anyway. After dinner he asks for ice cream. You have to be firm in your decision and not permit him to have ice cream. Additionally, in two-parent homes, both parents should be on the same page regarding disciplinary actions.

In summary...What parents should keep in mind

- Think about how your own parenting style meshes with your child's temperamental style.
- Be attuned to your child's temperament and encourage her/him to accomplish tasks at her/his own pace.
- Make your expectations clear. Setting limits will help your child develop self-control.
- Encourage children to work with you on generating solutions to problems.
- Make communication a priority. Be open to discussion; take time to explain your decisions and motives and listen to your children's point of view.
- Make them aware that their opinions are respected but remain firm in your decisions.
- Respect each child's individual strengths and don't compare children.
- Use the STAR approach to respond to challenging situations.
- Keep in mind what your buttons are and how your child likes to push them.
- Use positive reinforcement frequently.
- Be consistent with your reinforcement and discipline methods.

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