

PRESCRIPTIONS FOR PARENTS -

MAKING SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH PRACTICAL FOR FAMILIES



PARENTING STYLES

In the 1960s, Dr. Diana Baumrind studied over 100 preschool children and their parents. She identified four dimensions of parenting: disciplinary strategies, warmth and nurture, communication styles, and expectations of maturity and control. Based on these factors, Dr. Baumrind described three basic styles of parenting - authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive. (Other researchers have added a category for uninvolved parents - these parents are detached and may neglect to meet their children's basic needs. We will not discuss this style in our newsletter as it is not a healthy option.)

Most parents are strongly influenced by their own upbringing, but will also develop their own distinctive styles of teaching their children. The descriptions of authoritarian and permissive parents are meant to show the extremes of the spectrum. Studies demonstrate that children raised by affirmative / authoritative parents may have the best life outcomes with higher levels of academic success. In reality, children will usually thrive with any style of parenting as long as there is CONSISTENCY and the child feels loved and valued.

Turner EA, Chandler M, Heffer RW. "The Influence of Parenting Styles, Achievement Motivation, and Self-Efficacy on Academic Performance in College Students" Journal of College Student Development. 2009; 50:337.



AUTHORITARIAN PARENTS

The authoritarian parent is in charge, keeping the child safe and protected by making most of the decisions that affect the family and providing strict rules for life.

The authoritarian parent may fail to explain the reasons for the rules. This parent has high expectations for the child and may focus more on "obedience" than reasoning.

During adolescence, the authoritarian parent needs to know everything that is happening in the adolescent's life and may not allow the teen to take on age-appropriate decision making.

Children raised by authoritarian parents may be obedient but may not be as happy and may have lower self-esteem.

Do you often find yourself answering your child's question, "Because I said so?" You may be an authoritarian parent.



PERMISSIVE PARENTS

Permissive parents are sometimes considered indulgent as they make few demands of their children. Permissive parents prefer the freedom of few restrictions and often believe that what goes wrong could not be helped.

They believe rules are not really necessary because they inhibit growth and development. The permissive parents have low expectations of children and are lenient in their approach to discipline.

Permissive parents may have a difficult time providing their children with consistent limits and behave as their child's friend rather than the parent.

These parents are usually nurturing and communicate well with their children. Children raised by permissive parents often lack self-control and may not do as well in school. They may be less happy later in life.

Is it difficult for you to say "no" to your child or to set limits on his behavior? You may be a permissive parent.



AFFIRMATIVE PARENTS/ Authoritative

Affirmative parents (mentors / authoritative) provide rules and guidelines for their children just as authoritarian parents. But affirmative parents are more responsive to their children, allow questions and tend to be more nurturing and forgiving.

Authoritative parents establish basic rules for behavior and consistently enforce them. They set clear guidelines with consequences for misbehavior. This teaches children they are responsible for their own behavior.

Many studies have shown that children, teens, and college students raised by authoritative parents are more likely to achieve higher levels of academic success because they are achievement oriented and more motivated. Other factors must also be taken into account, including ethnic differences in parenting.

Do you provide your child reasons for your rules and set consequences for misbehavior in advance? You may be an authoritative parent.



WHAT IS YOUR PARENTING STYLE?

There are questionnaires you can take to help you evaluate your parenting style, but the reality is most of us don't fit neatly into one category. It might be more helpful to think carefully about how and why you make parenting decisions.

Are you trying to make sure your child is always happy? (By doing so, you are preventing your child from learning how to problem solve.)

Are you unable to provide answers for your rules? (You may not be helping your child learn reasoning skills.)

Take time to evaluate your parenting style and philosophy. What are your goals? What character traits do you want to foster in your child? What rules will guide your family's behavior?

Jane Anderson MD

National Physicians Center

000-000-0000

md@physicianscenter.org

www.physicianscenter.org