

Forms of Parenting

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Parenting styles represent the different strategies that parents use when raising their children. Clinical and developmental psychologist Diana Baumrind believed there were two basic dimensions to parenting: warmth and control. Baumrind identified three parenting styles: Authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive styles based on these two dimensions. Her work was later expanded by Maccoby and Martin to include neglectful parenting.

The two dimensions of warmth and control involve four elements: responsive vs. unresponsive and demanding vs. undemanding. Authoritative parenting is considered both responsive and demanding, authoritarian parenting is unresponsive and demanding, permissive parenting is responsive and undemanding, and neglectful parenting is unresponsive and undemanding.

Authoritative parenting uses a child-centered approach. These parents set clear standards through warmth and communication, while still retaining authority. Authoritative parenting lets the children know what is expected of them and explains reasons for discipline. When children fail to meet expectations, authoritative parents tend to be more nurturing and forgiving, listening to justifications and making exceptions to punishments. Research has found that this parenting style produces the best-adjusted children, specifically in terms of social competence. Children tend to be independent, socially responsible, self-controlled, and explorative.

Contrary to authoritative parenting, authoritarian parenting demands high obedience while providing little warmth. This style of parenting is restrictive and relies heavily on punishment. Parents enforce the rules through physical punishment or withdrawal of affection.

Authoritarian parents give little-to-no explanation for the standards the child is expected to abide by; the parent makes decisions for the child and tells them what to do. The overall goal of this style of parenting is to teach children to behave, survive, and thrive in an unforgiving society. As a result, children tend to be withdrawn, disconnected, and distrustful of others. Children raised in this style also tend to be less socially competent. However, they are also conformists and highly obedient, which are considered good qualities to possess in certain cultures.

A permissive parent is highly responsive to the child and places few demands on them. These parents exert little control over their children yet still show a high amount of affection. Children are allowed and encouraged to make their own decisions and are not required to regulate themselves or behave appropriately. As a result, these children have poor self-control, are more impulsive, and are more likely to misbehave.

Neglectful parenting, also called detached, dismissive, or uninvolved parenting, is neither demanding nor responsive. Parents are emotionally distant and disengaged from their children, resulting in a disruption of attachment in the child. However, parents may still provide basic needs, such as food and housing. Due to the lack of external structure, children also lack a sense of internal discipline. These children start to provide for themselves and become emotionally withdrawn once they learn they cannot rely on their parents. These children are also found to have low self-esteem and self-confidence.

There are several factors that influence parenting, such as the parent's emotional adjustment, marriage, social support, and socioeconomic status (SES). Maternal depression can often lead to ineffective parenting, resulting in children who are insecurely attached. Parental conflict has been shown to be a predictor of externalizing behaviors in children, such as acting out, as their parents devote less time to them. Research has shown that community support and

friendships influence the mother's behavior; mothers with strong social support structures are less dominating and more sensitive to the needs of their children. Low SES mothers are more likely to use physical punishment, withdraw affection, and be less supportive of their children.

There are several cultural differences in parenting styles that are important to note. For example, parents from collectivistic cultures tend to score as authoritarian on US scales of parenting. This is because they seldom seek the opinion of the child, exert high levels of control, and hold discipline and social order in high regard. However, these differences are just a reflection of cultural values and do not necessarily produce the negative outcomes seen in authoritarian parenting in Western cultures. The negative effects of authoritarian parenting are also absent in African-American children in the United States. Some studies have actually shown positive outcomes in low-SES African-American families. This contrasts with the negative effects of authoritarian parenting that are found in low-SES European-American children.

Further Readings:

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