

How Parenting Styles Impact Children

"Parents' lives change when a child is born. Right from the start they need to make decisions: bottle or breast feeding; carriage or stroller; nanny or daycare; work or stay at home; and the list goes on. As children grow older, the decisions don't stop; they change – school, meals, allowances, after-school activities, friendships and holidays. Although solutions to these individual daily dilemmas are important, it's the parents' overall style and attitude that count as they influence, teach and socialize their children." – NYU Child Study Center

There are many ideas and opinions on how to be a "good parent". Parents often receive advice and guidance on how to parent from their own parents, experts or friends. Some read books about parenting. Others take classes offered in their community. So how do we know what is right when not all sources agree? Learning what parenting styles are most effective can help lead to positive outcomes for children.

Descriptions of three types of parenting are listed below:

Strict (Authoritarian) parents are extremely demanding, highly controlling and not responsive to a child's feelings. These parents set strict rules to try to keep order. They expect their orders to be obeyed and do not encourage choices or options. They have low levels of sensitivity and expect their children to agree with their decision.

Results: Children with strict parents usually do not learn to think for themselves and look to others to decide what's right. These children rarely take initiatives, lack spontaneity and lack curiosity.

Permissive (Lenient) parents are accepting and warm but give up most control to their children. They do not set limits, and allow children to set their own rules, schedules and activities. They do not want to be tied down to routines. They tend to accept the behaviour of the child, good or bad, whether it is beneficial or not.

Results: Children with relaxed parents generally are immature. They cannot control their impulses and do not accept the responsibility for their own actions. The child simply blames someone else if they get in trouble.

Balanced (Authoritative) parents give their children lots of practice in making choices and guide them to see the consequences of those choices. They explain why rules are important and why they must be followed. They consider their children's point of view even though they might not always agree. Misbehaviour is handled in an appropriate manner. They are firm, with kindness, warmth and love. They encourage their children to be independent and often catch them being good rather than focusing on the bad.

Results: Children with balanced parents generally have higher self esteem, are independent and healthy. They learn to accept responsibility, make wiser choices, cope with change, and are better equipped to succeed in a work-force.

Why Balanced Parenting Works

- Twenty-five years of research have shown that parents who have a strong, positive connection with their kids and use a balanced parenting style have children and teens that are better off overall.
- Balanced parenting works because it does three things:
 - First, your warmth, love and involvement make your child or teen more open to your influence.
 - Second, by providing structure through limits and consequences, you help your child or teen develop the ability to control his behaviour and make good decisions.
 - Third, the open, two-way communication in your relationship helps your child or teen develop the thinking and social skills needed to succeed outside the family.
- Studies show that children and teens raised by balanced parents:
 - do better in school;
 - report less depression and anxiety;
 - have higher self-esteem; and
 - less likely to engage in risky problem behaviours, including drug and alcohol use or sex or violence.
- Research had found that children and teens with parents who are overly harsh, permissive and inconsistent or lacking in warmth are MORE likely to engage in risky behaviours, including drug, alcohol or tobacco use.

Research provided with permission by The Anti-Drug, 2007.

It is important to believe you can be a great parent!

For more information, visit beagreatparent.ca or call the Parent Talk Information line at 905-688-8248 or 1-888-505-6074 ext. 7555