

AUTHORITATIVE PARENTING: THE IDEAL PARENTING STYLE.

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BAUMRIND'S PARENTING STYLES

Parenting Types:

- 1. Authoritarian**
- 2. Authoritative**
- 3. Permissive**
- 4. Neglectful**

In the early 1960's, psychologist Diana Baumrind conducted experiments with parents. These experiments were designed to identify and understand how parents differ in their responses to their children. As a result of the Baumrind study as well as further research, four main styles of parenting were delineated. They are Authoritarian, Authoritative, Permissive, and Neglectful. Each style has its own characteristics as well as effects on children's development. This article, the third in a series, will discuss the impact on children of neglectful parenting.

AUTHORITATIVE PARENTING

Authoritative parents, like indulgent parents, desire a close relationship with their children. Also, as with authoritarian parents, authoritative parents also see the need for rules and controls on their children as they raise them. While they value the relationship, they also value their children's safety. It is this balance between rules and relationship that allows for the best possible outcomes for their children. Parents who display an authoritative parenting style establish rules and guidelines that their children are expected to follow. However, this parenting style is much more democratic than authoritarian. Authoritative parents are responsive to their children and willing to listen to questions. When children fail to meet the expectations, these parents are more nurturing and forgiving rather than punishing. This is not to say that there are no punishments. On the contrary, there are consequences to actions, but the consequences tend to be less harsh than those of the authoritarian parent.

In addition to benefitting the child during childhood, an authoritative parenting style can produce long-term benefits for the emotional development of the child even into adulthood. In addition, the impact of this style of parenting can also be felt in a positive way in the child's relationship with God.

CHILDHOOD BENEFITS

There are many benefits for children who are raised by parents who use an authoritative parenting style. The authoritative parent encourages a child's growing sense of autonomy by slowly increasing the freedoms allowed to the child based on the child's maturity, responsibility and trustworthiness. An authoritative parent's goal is to prepare children to live fully autonomous lives upon adulthood. As a result, when compared with the three other parenting styles, children who have been raised in authoritative homes score higher on a many measures including: competence, social development, self-perceptions, and mental health.

Children raised in authoritative families generally do well in school. Why? These children receive several benefits that are correlated with school performance. First, they receive parental interest and involvement from an early age. These children are used to seeing their parents

attending sports events, music recitals and school conferences. Second, their parents offer help, support, and counsel with school, emotional, and spiritual issues. This help is not always in the form of telling the child what to do. Rather, the parents trust the child to make appropriate choices. It should be noted that the trust placed in the child is earned and age appropriate. Third, there is an expectation that children will work to their potential. This is different than an expectation that the child will be the best or get straight A's. The expectations are based on a knowledge and understanding of their own child. This knowledge and understanding prevents these parents from living vicariously through their children. Fourth, these families discuss problems and find solutions together. When possible, parents give children choices to allow them to begin the process of considering alternatives. It does not mean that the family is a democracy. Rather, it is a benevolent dictatorship at first, moving to more of a democracy as the child gets older.

Childhood Benefits:

1. Competence
2. Social development
3. Self-perception
4. Mental health

RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

“...We project our image of our earthly father onto our heavenly Father.”

Often our view of God, who Jesus taught us to call Father, is similar to our view of our earthly father. Since our earthly father is visible to us and God is not, we project our image of our earthly father onto our heavenly Father. When children grow up with authoritative parents, they often begin to see God the same way. In the book of Hebrews, it says that the “Lord disciplines the one He loves” (12:6). When a child is raised by an authoritative parent, they learn that they are loved for who they are and not for what they do. They also learn that while there may

be discipline for things that they have done wrong, this discipline is in their best interest and is there because they are loved. These elements of our relationship with our parent are also a part of our relationship with God. Children raised by authoritative parents will tend to have a more accurate view of the character of God and their relationship with Him.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

The benefits of authoritative parenting are not just felt during childhood. Adults raised by authoritative parents tend to achieve more, have better psychosocial development, and fewer behavioral issues in adulthood. This happens in large part due to the way that they were treated as children. Since they were nurtured appropriately and learned to take responsibility for their own actions, they live as adults with what is called an internal locus of control. What this means is that they see themselves as capable of making change in their own lives. This is in stark contrast to those adults who are raised by authoritarian parents who develop an external locus of control. Having an external locus of control means that you are not an agent of change in your

own life. In order for change to happen, other people or circumstances must change. This is a very powerless and frustrating position to take.

Adults who were raised by authoritative parents tend to raise their children in the same way. In addition, they also tend to report having healthier marriages. One of the reasons for these two phenomena is that since they were nurtured appropriately as children, their emotional needs were met. In adulthood, instead of working to get the emotional needs met that were unmet as children, they are able to give to others and receive from others in a healthy way. As a result, their children display fewer problems and achieve more than children raised in indulgent, neglectful, or authoritarian homes.

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