

**NEGLECTFUL PARENTING:
THE IMPACT ON CHILDREN.**

BY MATTHEW J. MILLER, PSY.D.



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.

NEGLECTFUL PARENTING

For neglectful parents, they are consumed with their own needs so much that they ignore or neglect the needs of their children. While on the outside, neglectful parents may look like indulgent parents, there are many differences. Indulgent parents have few rules for their children. Rather, they tend to be very lenient with their children. Desiring closeness in relationship is a good thing. However, the way they go about achieving the relationship blurs the lines of the relationship. Instead of a parent/child relationship, the relationship is seen more as friend/friend. While they are extremely responsive to the needs and wants of their children, they often do not provide the structure necessary for healthy emotional development. Neglectful parents also place few rules and restrictions on their children. However, the lack of rules and controls is not designed to foster relationship. Rather, the lack of rules reflects a self-indulgence on the part of the parent and an overall lack of care for the child. A neglectful parenting style can have long-term effects on the emotional development of the child even into adulthood. In addition, the impact of this style of parenting can also be felt in the child's relationship with God.

CHILDHOOD CONSEQUENCES

There is a strong element of disconnect that pervades a neglectful household. While the basic needs of the children are met, there is a physical, emotional, and spiritual disconnect that the children endure from the parents. In their desire to meet their own emotional needs, often needs not met in their own childhood, these parents neglect the emotional and spiritual needs of their children.

In addition to disconnect, since the child is receiving only minimal attention, these children are often very lonely. Because they do not receive the necessary love from their parents, they often struggle to develop appropriate social skills with others, which lead them to loneliness. Parents are necessary in the development of social skills for the

Childhood Consequences:

1. Disconnect
2. Loneliness
3. Academic problems
4. Behavioral problems

child. Healthy parents encourage their children to be involved in activities and friendships and give of their time so that the child can have these healthy experiences. With neglectful parents there are no sports teams or play dates. This leads to a lack of social development and isolation.

Children with neglectful parents also have difficulty in school. Neglectful parents often shift the responsibility of monitoring the education of the child to another child in the family or the school system. As a result, when these children struggle in school, there is no parental guidance to get them the help that they need. In addition, because the children are not being monitored, truancy is also a consequence. Finally, when the school seeks out the parent to deal with problems with school, neglectful parents are often unresponsive.

The final consequence in childhood of neglectful parenting is behavioral issues. Without proper guidance and with the anger that develops as a result of the neglect, these children often act out their emotions in ways that get them in trouble with school or with the law. In addition, children that are neglected are prime candidates for gang involvement due to their desire for some semblance of family. Gangs, although unhealthy for children, provide for them the sense of connectedness that they desire.

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 neglectful parents, they often begin to see God the same way. They act out toward God due to their anger from their family of origin. In addition, they often struggle to see God as desiring to be involved in their lives since their parents were not involved. As a result, children who grow up with neglectful parents

often have a view of God that is skewed. While they may submit to God, their submission is out of fear rather than love.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

In addition to the impact neglectful parenting has on the current relationship with their parents and their relationship with God, children who grow up in this type of home often experience long-term consequences. The long-term issues are similar to the childhood consequences. The emotional disconnect, loneliness, and behavioral problems can continue. However, the problems can become more severe.

Children who grow up lonely and disconnected can become lonely and disconnected adults. These adults have difficulty engaging in any type of healthy relationship. As a result, they often end up alone or in difficult marriages. Since their emotional needs were not met, they continue to seek to have their own needs met. This seeking can lead to the person becoming a neglectful

parent themselves. The child who never had a birthday party becomes the parent who is uninvolved with their children's birthdays. In addition, the psychological problems can become larger than loneliness. Depression, anxiety, and other chronic psychological diagnoses are prevalent among this population.

The second problem these adults struggle with is continued behavioral difficulty. If their behavioral issues are not dealt with appropriately when they are children, these children can grow to act out more and more which can result in legal problems. If the parents do not deal with the issues when the person is younger, society will eventually deal with the problems through incarceration. Even if they do not have legal problems, these adults often have difficulty finding and keeping gainful employment.

Not all children of neglectful parents end up this way. There are some intervening factors that can prove helpful. One factor is if the child encounters health adults who are genuinely interested in their growth. The second factor is a child who is more "resilient". Psychological resilience is the ability to cope with extremes of stress. Those who are psychologically resilient have the capacity to make something of their lives even in the face of childhood neglect. It is in large part for this reason that some children of neglectful parents go on to have successful lives while others, sometimes living in the same childhood home, remain stuck throughout their lives.

Future Consequences:

1. Psychological problems
2. Behavioral problems