

PARENTING STYLES: WHICH IS YOURS?

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		Classification of Parenting Styles		
		Accepting, responsive	Rejecting, unresponsive	
Demanding, controlling	Authoritative:	Parents encourage child's independence but still set limits and controls on their actions; associated with child's social competence	Authoritarian:	Restrictive punitive style; associated with children's social incompetence
	Indulgent:	Parents highly involved with children and place very few demands or controls on them; associated with children's social incompetence	Neglectful:	Parent uninvolved in the child's life; associated with child's social incompetence
Undemanding, uncontrolling				

BAUMRIND'S PARENTING STYLES

Tyrone is 4 years old and has a sister named Tyeesha who is 6 years old. They were playing a game together when they got into an argument. Their parents heard them yelling at each other and even heard them throwing things around the room. As a parent, how would you handle the situation? Your answer to this dilemma may indicate your individual parenting style.

In the early 1960's, psychologist Diana Baumrind conducted experiments with parents. 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.

AUTHORITARIAN PARENTING

Using the example of Tyrone and Tyeesha, the authoritarian parent would likely burst into the room, yell at the children, and send them to their rooms. Their punishment would be harsh and immediate. Authoritarian parents have many rules and they enforce them. However, they often fail to explain the reasoning for the rules. In fact, they do not engage in much conversation with their children regarding the rules. When children ask, "why?" the response is, "Because I said so." While the rules are often to benefit the children and provide for their safety, this is not always so. Sometimes the rules are to benefit the parents alone. The home of an authoritarian parent can have much in common with an authoritarian regime. Think Saddam Hussein. Saddam Hussein had rules. He had control of his people for a generation. However, you would be hard pressed to find many Iraqis who believed that his rules were to benefit the people. Instead, they were to benefit Saddam. Now, authoritarian parents are not all bad. They do exert control over the family, which is often much needed, especially when raising teenagers. They do typically care about the well-being of their children, but the way they go about it may not be best for the development of their children.

AUTHORITATIVE PARENTING

You walk into the room with Tyrone and Tyeesha. You separate the two of them; send them to their rooms for a time out. Afterward, you speak with both of them explaining why you punished them. You spend time listening to them and trying to understand their feelings. You even offer for them alternate solutions that they could try in the future to work out their problems. The authoritative parent has rules. They enforce the rules. The rules are typically for the benefit of the children. In addition, they engage in explanatory nurturing conversation with their children. Rather than just wanting their children to follow rules, they want to teach their children why the rules are there. The authoritative parent wants to give their children their mind. They want to teach them how to think, not just what to think.

PERMISSIVE PARENTING

The permissive parent will walk into the room where Tyrone and Tyeesha are fighting. Their desire is for their children to be happy with one another and happy with them as a parent. If Tyrone and Tyeesha are fighting over a toy, the permissive parent may buy two of the same toy so that they will not have to fight. That is how a family ends up with multiple computers, TVs, Wiis, etc. The permissive parent is very involved with their children. However, sometimes they desire to be a friend more than a parent. As most parents know, there are going to be times when

our children barely tolerate our existence. Then, there are going to be worse times. The permissive parent wants the relationship with their children to be healthy so badly, that they set very few, if any, limits on the behavior of their children. An extreme case of the permissive parent would be the mom who buys a keg for her teenage son so that he and his friends can drink alcohol at the house. The reason they would give is that her son is going to be drinking anyway, so it is better that he do it at home where he would be safe.

NEGLECTFUL PARENTING

When Tyrone and Tyeesha are fighting, the neglectful parent will typically do nothing. They will attempt to ignore the fighting and hope it stops on its own, unless the fighting impacts what the parent is doing, then they might intervene. If they cannot hear the television, they might come in the room and yell at the children and punish them. This interaction would be rare. Typically, they are uninvolved in the lives of their children. They do not go to their child's school events (sports, concerts, meetings with teachers, etc.) They are not responsive to their children's needs. They provide little to no emotional support or feedback. The neglectful parent may provide for the basic physical needs of their children, but the emotional and spiritual needs of the children go left unmet.

Of the four parenting styles, the healthiest for the child and the parent is the authoritative style. This style addresses the emotional, spiritual, and physical needs of the parent and their children. So, which style of parent are you? Which style of parent is your spouse? In future articles, I will discuss the consequences to the children of these parenting styles. In addition, I will discuss the patterns of parenting styles in spousal relationships.

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