

## **PARENTING STYLES**

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One of the questions that comes up often when talking to parents, in a world where there are as many parenting books as there are parents, is “Is there any real research around effective parenting?” Interestingly enough, there is. One of the most widely known studies took place in the 1970’s, by developmental psychologist, Diana Baumrind, who conducted extensive research in adult-child interactions. Baumrind identified four primary styles of parenting. Her research focused on the difference in the way children from each of the four parenting styles functioned, socially, emotionally and cognitively.

### **Authoritarian Model**

In this vertical or top down relationship, the adult exhibits a high degree of control and firmness, but a low degree of kindness. Adults make all decisions and rules, and children are expected to follow the rules. This is the “because I said so” model. There are high expectations set by the adults and with little flexibility. The onus of seeking understanding is on the child, not on the adult. The result of breaking rules is usually punishment, and the result of following rules is often a reward or praise.

Children from authoritarian environments may be obedient, but they also tend to lack independence, show signs of aggression or withdrawal, may have low emotional self-regulation and low self-esteem, and can have difficulties academically.

### **Permissive Model**

The permissive adult-child relationship is also a vertical relationship. However, it is not the adult that is on top, but the child. There is a high degree of kindness, but not much firmness or control. The adults in a permissive home or classroom cater to the needs of their children and indulge them in an effort to make them happy and avoid disappointment or discomfort. There are few rules in this environment, and the adults have low expectations of maturity, independence and self-regulation. The adults are responsive and friendly, but inconsistent, lenient and rarely discipline the children. Children are involved in most decisions, and often given more authority than they are capable of being responsible for.

Permissive environments often foster low self-regulation and low self-discipline. They tend to perform poorly in school, have difficulty with social boundaries, have increased levels of aggression and anxiety, and tend to be self-involved and demanding. Children from permissive homes also show a higher rate of drug and alcohol use and delinquency in adolescence.

### **Uninvolved Model**

The uninvolved model is characterized by low firmness and low kindness. These adults are detached from their children’s lives, and while there are few rules and expectations there is also a low degree of involvement by the adults. In more extreme situations, the adults may abuse or neglect the child and ignore the basic needs of the children.

At its extreme, uninvolved parenting styles may lead to more severe psychological problems such as anxiety, depression and trauma disorders. In less extreme cases, children from a home with uninvolved

parents have low self-esteem, low self-regulations, exhibit antisocial behavior and less perform poorly in school.

**Authoritative Model**

The authoritative model is kind and firm at the same time. Baumrind described authoritative adults: "They monitor and impart clear standards for their children's conduct. They are assertive, but not intrusive and restrictive. Their disciplinary methods are supportive, rather than punitive. They want their children to be assertive as well as socially responsible, and self-regulated as well as cooperative" (Baumrind, 1991, p. 62). This model of parenting or working with children focuses on freedom with order, limited choices and involving children in decision making. Authoritative homes operate with a high degree of warmth and kindness, but there are rules and an underlying respect for the dignity of both the adults the children. This adult-child relationship is horizontal. While the adult is comfortable leading, guiding and being the authority, he or she is also responsive and willing to listen, and exercises democratic leadership and problem solving.

Baumrind, and others, found that children from authoritative environments tend to be happy, self-confident, possess a high degree of self-regulation, high achievement, independence and self-motivation. Children from these backgrounds are also more likely to be confident, socially responsible and more readily accepted by their peers.

<b>Permissive</b>	<b>Authoritative</b>
Low self-regulation Aggressive Demanding Undisciplined Dependent Anxious Poor social competence Potential drug and alcohol abuse Low social responsibility Poor academic performance Entitlement	Happy Confident High academic performance High social acceptance Self-disciplined Low rate of alcohol and drug abuse High social responsibility Self-regulation Self-motivated High self-esteem Assertive
<b>Uninvolved</b>	<b>Authoritarian</b>
Poor academic performance Depression Anxiety High rate of alcohol and drug abuse Poor academic performance Social difficulties Psychological problems Potential trauma	Obedient Dependent Low self-esteem Withdrawn Aggressive and angry Low self-regulation Potential academic difficulties Low social competence

Next month we'll explore the authoritative model of parenting, and begin to discover what the magic is behind the authoritative style of parenting!

Until next time...