

Parenting Styles

By Myra Stroup, Licensed Social Worker and Parent Educator

You will take on many roles in your lifetime, you might be a brother, sister, son, daughter, employee or boss. But none will be as important as the role you assume when you become a parent. What does it mean to be a parent? Being a parent involves providing daily care, support, love, and guidance. Accepting the responsibility for a child's physical and emotional needs which leads to a nurturing environment that builds a strong parent-child relationship. This environment is filled with loving care, attention, and encouragement for development of the child.

The role of a parent can be a very difficult one since children don't come with any daily instructions telling you how to take care of them. We all have a parenting personality that dictates our parenting. Do you know what your parenting personality is?

Ron Huxley, marriage and family therapist, who authored, *Love and Limits: Achieving a Balance in Parenting* has three parenting styles that are easy to understand.

I. Permissive

- Inconsistent discipline.
- Difficulty in setting firm limits.
- Over time children learn to manipulate and get their way.
- Parent and child are in friend relationship not in a parent-child relationship.
- The child may become disrespectful, spoiled, and demanding.
- Children tend to be self-centered with selfish behavior.
- Parents end up feeling like slaves and martyrs to their children. Parents resent being taken advantage of.
- This builds into anger and can lead to verbally abusive behavior towards the children.
- **Is this your style?**
 1. Does your child refuse to follow your orders?
 2. Is reasoning and talking a regular part of interaction with your child?
 3. Have you ever begged your child to comply with you?
 4. Do you feel that your child take advantage of you or does not appreciate what you do for them?

II. Authoritarian

- Child obeys but might not learn about the correct behavior.
- Values obedience and often children fear their parents rather than respect them.
- Most children of authoritarian parents do not feel they had a close, warm relationship with their parents.
- This style is often seen as abusive by today's standards.
- Uses punishment rather than discipline and punishment is an external force Used by controlling parents. Children will obey when the external force is present but often rebel when the force isn't present.

- Children don't develop an internal sense of what is right or wrong.
- Tends to use spanking as an external force for controlling children's behavior.
- **Is this your style?**
 1. Do you believe there is no difference between discipline and punishment?
 2. Is obedience from your child what you value the most?
 3. Have you told your child to do something because I said so.
 4. Have you ever used your belt on your child?

III. **Balanced or Democratic**

- Based on democratic concepts of equality and trust. Parents and children are equal in terms of their need for dignity and worth but not in responsibility and decision making.
- Parents present expectations not demands.
- Based on cooperation and respect.
- Follows the golden rule: to treat others, as you would have them treat you.
- Believes consequences are inevitable and some frustration is O.K.
- Blaming and shaming a child is not acceptable.
- **Is this your style?**
 1. Do you allow your children to voice their opinions but make the final decision?
 2. Is the most important part of parenting teaching your child about responsibility and life?
 3. Do you decide what family issues are open for negotiation and which are not?
 4. Do you feel it is important for parents to model the kind of behavior they want from a child?

Parenting styles are learned from the parent figures in children's lives, and children develop belief systems from their environment. The parenting attitudes that we hold today are instilled in us at a young age and we practice them as adults when we become parents. It is important to work on your parenting thoughts as well as your actions. There are not many parents that are "naturals" at being parents most people benefit from parenting education or information. Being a parent is an enlightening experience. Parents need to function as a role model and a teacher with the child as the learner. Children learn more from parent's actions than their words. You are the most important teacher your child will ever have.

Ms. Myra Stroup is a licensed Parent Educator and has facilitated parenting classes for a variety of groups. Her focus has been in the areas of adoption and birth parent, where she has written curriculums for both.