

Parental Styles

by Sophia Tutorial



WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, we'll discuss the importance of the parental relationship in developmental psychology, through the lens of several different parenting styles.

The specific areas of focus include:

1. Parental Styles
 - a. Authoritarian
 - b. Permissive
 - c. Authoritative
 - d. Negligent

1. Parental Styles

Arguably the most important relationship that a person can have throughout his or her life, particularly as a young child, is with his or her parents.

Correspondingly, a lot of developmental psychology research has gone into determining the effects that parents can have on their children, as well as how to improve those kinds of relationships.

In the 1960s, a psychologist named Diana Baumrind observed a large number of preschool children and interviewed their parents. Through all of this research, she identified that there were three different parental styles that the parents tended to gravitate towards. A parental style is an identifiable pattern that parents can take on with their children through caretaking and interaction.

These three styles are:

- Authoritarian
- Permissive
- Authoritative

Through other research, later on, a fourth category of negligent parenting style was added. Let's look at each category in more detail.

1a. Authoritarian

The authoritarian style of parenting is identified by the strict rules that the parents enforce, as well as the idea that the parents want complete obedience from the children.

Generally, **authoritarian parents** use punishment as a response to any disobedience on the part of the children. This can be thought of as the military style of parenting; the idea is that the parents are generally obedience- and status-oriented.

Authoritarian parents usually don't give any reasoning behind the discipline that they enforce, aside from "because I said so." These parents also don't provide many choices or options for the child.

While children of authoritarian parents are obedient--which can be a positive thing or negative thing, depending on how you look at it--they're also emotionally distant. These children tend to be withdrawn, as well as apprehensive, particularly about social interactions. They also generally lack curiosity, and they're not very outgoing.

Thus, in Baumrind's research, she didn't see this as being a very positive approach to parenting.



TERM TO KNOW

Authoritarian Parents

Control and evaluate behavior and attitudes of their children; set strict rules with little flexibility

1b. Permissive

Secondly, on the other end of the spectrum, there are overly **permissive parents**. Permissive parents give little guidance, yet they give a lot of freedom to their children.

They also don't generally hold their kids accountable for anything that they do; there aren't really any consequences or discipline involved. These are typically nontraditional types of parents, and they allow their children to engage in a lot of self-regulation--letting them do what they want.

This style can be described as the laissez-faire, or hands-off, version of parenting. Permissive parents generally try to avoid confrontation, so the rules that they do set are usually not enforced, and the children get their way most of the time.

Most children of overly permissive parents tend to lack any self-discipline. They also tend to be very self-involved and demanding; they ask a lot of other people.

Consequently, these children are often very immature in their social interactions with others, and they misbehave a lot as well. This acting out tends to be a way of getting attention or trying to get what they want. Often, later on in life, they're aimless as they don't tend to have very set goals.



TERM TO KNOW

Permissive Parents

Less controlling, fewer demands with no clear guidelines for their children, consult with children about decisions, less enforcement of rules, and may use reason instead of direct power

1c. Authoritative

The third parental style, and probably the most positive, according to Baumrind, is the authoritative style.

While authoritarian and authoritative sound very similar, it's important to differentiate these two.

An authoritative style is a style in which the parents are very democratic or very child-centric, meaning they respond to the child's needs.

Authoritative parents can be very flexible in their rules, but at the same time, their rules are fair and consistent. They provide limits and consequences that are overtly communicated to the children. In other words, they have certain expectations for the child's behavior, even if they are going to be responsive or flexible.

Authoritative parents tend to be very warm and nurturing, and they allow their children to express their own opinions and to discuss their different options. They provide reasoning for the consequences they give, and if that reasoning is in question, they might change it as a result.

Therefore, children of authoritative parents tend to be very self-controlled and independent. They have good emotional control, and they understand how to regulate themselves, unlike the children of permissive parents.

These children also tend to have good social skills, be very self-confident, and are inquisitive and curious, as opposed to children of authoritarian parents.



TERM TO KNOW

Authoritative Parents

Committed, loving and supportive while maintaining firm boundaries; rational, intelligent, verbal “give-and-take”; discuss rules and policies with their children

1d. Negligent

Finally, on the very low end of the spectrum, are the negligent or neglectful parents. These are parents who are completely, or to a very large extent, uninvolved in their children's lives.

Negligent parents make no demands of their children, and they don't have any expectations or rules. They're very indifferent and dismissive; they have no emotional involvement with their kids, or they may just avoid their kids altogether.

While this is obviously a very sad situation, it's important to know the specific consequences of this style of parenting. Children of negligent parents are very independent because they've had to make their own way over time.

However, these children are also very afraid of being dependent on others, so they tend to be very emotionally withdrawn. They don't get into relationships with others, and there is often a fear or anxiety attached to their lack of social support because they're all on their own.

Additionally, children of negligent parents generally have an increased level of delinquency later on in life, in adolescence and adulthood. There is a higher incidence of substance abuse among them as well.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that parental relationships can have a huge effect on the developmental psychology of children. According to the psychologist Diana Baumrind, there are three main **parental styles**: **authoritarian**, **permissive**, and **authoritative**. There was also a fourth style, **negligent**, that was identified through further research later.

You now understand that of these styles, authoritative is considered the most positive. This is because authoritative parents allow flexibility while also providing clearly explained rules and limits with reasoning behind them. Children of these parents thus tend to have good social skills, higher self-esteem, and curiosity.

Good luck!

Source: This work is adapted from Sophia author Erick Taggart.



TERMS TO KNOW

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Permissive Parents

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