

PARENTING STYLES AND OUTCOMES

Most parents can be classified into three main types by the style in which they guide their children. As we discuss each, think about where your own parents fit most appropriately. Do each of your parents use the same style? Do you fit the outcome?

AUTHORITARIAN: Limits without freedom

Definition:

- Parents' word is law, parents have absolute control
- Misconduct is punished
- Affection and praise are rarely given
- Parents try to control children's behavior and attitudes
- Children are punished for not meeting parents' standards
- They value unquestioned obedience
- Children are told what to do, how to do it, where to do it, and when to do it

Outcome:

- Obedient
- Distrustful
- Discontent
- Withdrawn
- Unhappy
- Hostile
- Not high achievers
- Often rebel

Children from authoritarian homes are so strictly controlled, either by punishment or guilt, that they are often prevented from making a conscious choice about particular behavior because they are overly concerned about what their parents will do.

PERMISSIVE: Freedom without limits

Definition:

- Parents allow their children to do their own thing
- Little respect for order and routine
- Parents make few demands on children
- Impatience is hidden
- Discipline is lax
- Parents are resources rather than standard makers
- Rarely punish
- Non controlling, non-demanding
- Usually warm
- Children walk all over the parents

Outcome:

- Aggressive
- Least self-reliant
- Least self-controlled
- Least exploratory
- Most unhappy

Children from permissive homes receive so little guidance that they often become uncertain and anxious about whether they are doing the right thing.

DEMOCRATIC: Freedom within limits

Definition:

- Middle ground between the two above

- Stress freedom along with rights of others and responsibilities of all
- Parents set limits and enforce rules
- Willing to listen receptively to child's requests and questions
- Both loves and limits
- Children contribute to discussion of issues and make some of their own decisions
- Exert firm control when necessary, but explain reasoning behind it
- Respect children's interest, opinions, unique personalities
- Loving, consistent, demanding
- Combine control with encouragement
- Reasonable expectations and realistic standards

Outcome:

- Happy
- Mostly self-reliant
- Mostly self-controlled
- Content, friendly, generous
- Cooperative
- High-achievers
- Less likely to be seriously disruptive or delinquent

Children whose parents expect them to perform well, to fulfill commitments, and to participate actively in family duties, as well as family fun, learn how to formulate goals. They also experience the satisfaction that comes from meeting responsibilities and achieving success.