



# Developing Compatible Parenting Styles

Parenting is a very complex issue that can cause conflict in relationships. Your [parenting style](#) is in part the accumulation of the various parenting [strategies](#) you utilize. It also involves a person's values, experiences from their unique upbringing, and their ability to manage conflicts with their co-parent/spouse when they occur. While co-parents or spouses will rarely agree on all parenting decisions, developing compatible parenting styles helps your children.

## In the Beginning...

Adding a child to the family affects the marital relationship in unpredictable ways. As a parent you have a great deal of responsibility for your children. Parenting decisions have consequences and can become emotionally charged when you and your partner don't agree. It can become worse during conflict, divorce or separation or where pre-existing conflicts in style or substance exist.

Parenting styles are a result of learning from your own parents' styles, defining mutual and conflicting values, and identifying and finding ways to manage these conflicts. This means, the more effective your parents were, the more effective you will be. All parties should agree to seek outside assistance when they are unable to solve parenting issues or conflicts on their own. Parenting is not always a natural process!

## Parenting Styles 101

There are four major recognized parenting styles: authoritative, neglectful, permissive, and authoritarian. Each one has different characteristics and affects children in different ways.

### **AUTHORITATIVE** PARENTING IS CONSIDERED THE MOST EFFECTIVE FOR PARENTING NORMAL CHILDREN.

Authoritative parents have high expectations of their children, yet are understanding and supportive. As a result, this style of parenting creates a healthy environment for a growing child by promoting a mutually beneficial relationship between parent and child. Authoritative parents value open communication, understanding, mutual support, and the development of empathy.

### **NEGLECTFUL** PARENTING MAY BE THE MOST HARMFUL OF ALL THE STYLES.

Neglectful parenting is damaging as a result of disregard, inattention, and carelessness. A child raised in this home has no foundation for trusting or connecting which is disabling as one attempts to develop healthy love relationships with a partner or as a parent to a child. This upbringing may make it difficult to empathize or have faith in a partner's style.

### **PERMISSIVE** PARENTING CAN CREATE DEFICITS FOR FUTURE PARENTING.

Parents raised in permissive homes are responsive but don't guide or mentor. They tend to be lenient as a way to avoid conflict. Additionally, they have difficulty establishing the structure needed by children to become resilient. These nurturing and loving permissive parents are inconsistent and, at times, clueless. For this reason, children grow up with little self-discipline, self-control, or goal orientation. Children raised by permissive parents are often insecure, have under or overdeveloped social skills, and have generally experienced poor academic success. They tend to clash with authority and develop unstable relationships because they do not have a history of learning how to follow rules and expectations.

### **AUTHORITARIAN** PARENTING IS SOMETIMES ALSO CALLED STRICT PARENTING.

Authoritarian parents are demanding, but lack compassion. Furthermore, authoritarian parents reject open communication in favor of their children following the rules and expectations. While structure and rules are necessary for healthy child development, relying on punishment (rather than explanations) to maintain control can be destructive.

Adults raised in an authoritarian home often have serious personal deficits. These include low self-esteem, being fearful or shy, associating obedience with love, and possibly becoming rebellious when away from their parents.

## Establishing Mutual Effective Parenting Styles

The concept of developing a conscious parenting style is essential to co-parenting. Moreover it gives parents a blueprint for parenting and a structure. A good first step to healthy parenting is based on a concept you may remember from the book "7 Habits of Highly Effective People" by Stephen Covey.

Covey states, "Begin with the end in mind." What kind of adult do you want your child to become? Agreeing on parenting goals will give you a focus on this principle and help you through rough patches.

### 3 STEPS TO START

Sit down with your partner and discuss:

- What are we trying to accomplish as parents?
- What is in our child's best interest?

If you agree on everything, you are in good shape. Continue to have the conversation periodically to check in.

If you disagree on any of your answers, ask:

- Do we share common parenting values?
- Are our goals different or is it our style?

Resolve your differences:

- Managing different goals may involve creating or reworking priorities or increasing your parenting skills by reading books or blogs or seeking out community resources or counseling.
- Style differences are resolved by understanding the risks and rewards of each style and making steps towards becoming more effective parents.

## The Negative Side of Parenting-Style Conflicts

- Children can become confused about what to do and how to act.
- Conflicts between parents result in children having the power to manipulate. This behavior has serious negative long term effects.
- Children can feel responsible for the conflict and experience unnecessary guilt.

- Serious conflict can lead to undue anxiety and/or depression.
- Children choose sides and devalue one or both parents based on who or what gives them the most privileges.
- As adults, children who come from families with great differences in parenting styles often mindlessly repeat this pattern by marrying someone with a very different style and repeating past mistakes.

In conclusion, parents who have similar parenting styles experience less stress and promote a healthier environment for their children. This can also reduce the risks of substance abuse disorders in your family. Should substance use disorders still occur with your teen, having the same parenting style will help get your adolescent the best treatment available in a timely way.