



Parenting

We all know that parenting is a tough job; one must be a caregiver, teacher, playmate, protector, provider, cleaner...the list is endless, and unique to each relationship. Yet many parents strive for impossible standards of perfection in fear of otherwise harming or failing their children; accordingly, they harm themselves by worry.

One of the most important roles of a parent, as head of the family, is to socialise each unique child and to prepare them for the world; a task easier in the early years as there are less outside influences and resistance from the child. As children get older, they are further socialised by their siblings and extended family, peers, school, media, and the community, and their own unique personality, identity, and set of experiences that develops, so it can be hard to maintain the role of primary influencer in the child's life.

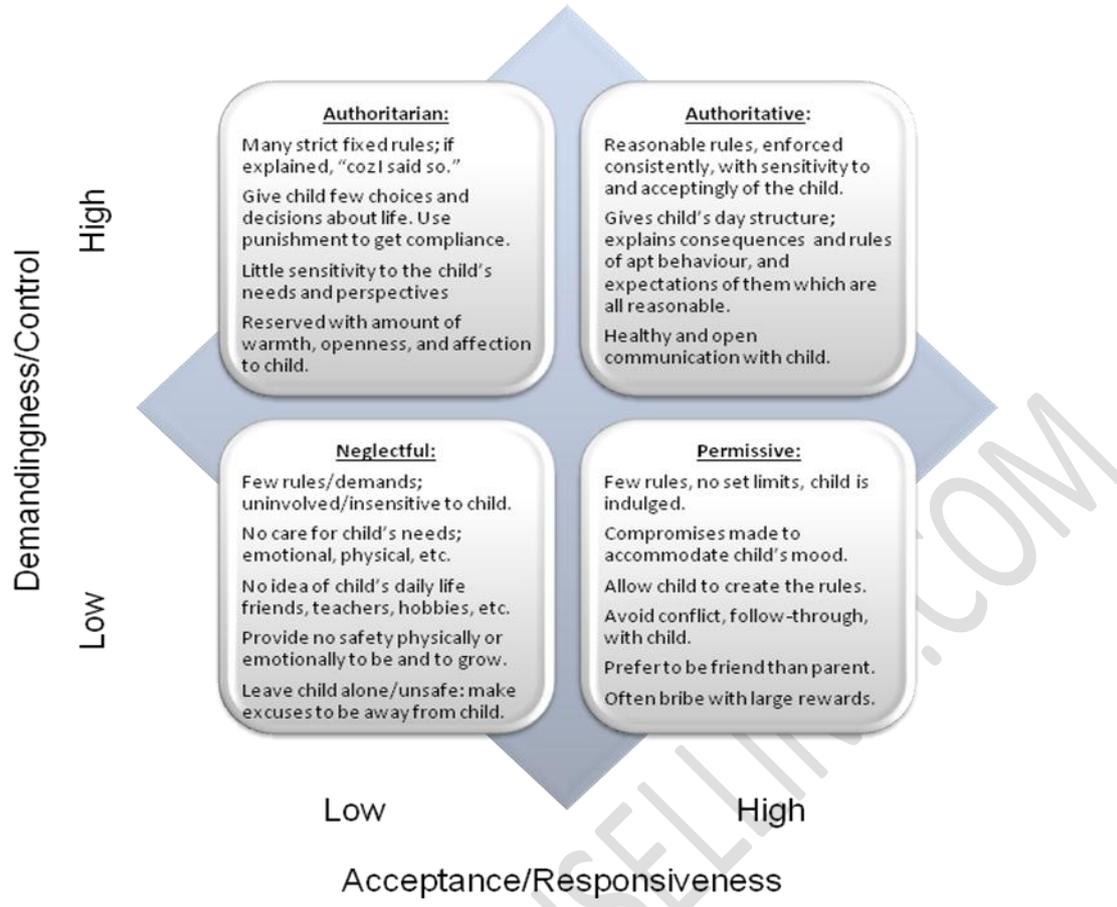
However, whilst research suggests that there are many effective ways of raising children that go well beyond the traditional Western nuclear family (e.g., blended families, same-sex parents, single parents, separated parents, stay-at-home Mother and/or Father, working parents, inter-generational, and community based), key to effective child development go beyond socio-economic status and instead focuses on the dimensions/continuums and overall styles of parenting. Two important theories are briefly outlined below to reflect upon; these are intended to be informative about outcomes that are typical, not definite—and are especially not intended for shaming or blaming parents who typically do their best with the resources, skills, experiences, and beliefs that they have.

The two dimensions to parenting, according to Erik Erikson, are:

1. Acceptance/responsiveness: The extent to which a parent is supportive, sensitive to the needs of children, willingness to provide affection, encouragement, and praise, and chastisement when warranted. Less accepting and responsive parents are quick to belittle, punish, or ignore and rarely communicate that they love their children.
2. Demandingness/control: The extent to which a parent regulates and controls their children by setting rules, expecting children to follow them, ensure rules are followed, and monitor their activities. Less controlling and demanding parents are less restrictive, make fewer demands, allow considerable freedom to pursue interests and to make own decisions.

The four general parenting styles and their likely outcomes for children, according to Diana Baumrind, are:

1. Authoritative: Regarded as most effective and beneficial; a controlling but flexible style in which parents make many reasonable demands upon their children. Explain the “whys” and ensure children follow set rules. Accepting and responsive to children's views and seek children's participation in family decision-making.
 - ❖ This style recognises, respects, and empowers children and promotes their developing high cognitive and social skills, high self-esteem and academic skills, and strong moral/pro-social concerns.
2. Authoritarian: A controlling and inflexible style in which parents make many demands upon their children, demanding strict obedience, rarely explaining the “whys”. Often relying on punishment (power, withdraw love) to gain compliance; not accepting and not responsive to children's views and do not seek children's participation in family decision-making.
 - ❖ This style is rigid and demands obedience and dis-empowers children and promotes their developing average cognitive, social, and academic skills, and rigidity towards rules and authorities.
3. Permissive: Potentially harmful; a non-controlling and lax style in which parents make few demands upon their children, avoid confrontation, and are inconsistent. Allows freedom for children to express feelings, impulses, etc. without monitoring their activities, behaviour, and consequences. Denies structure that children crave.
 - ❖ This style is careless, applying no control and dis-empowers children and promotes their developing low cognitive, social, and academic skills, poor self-control and frequent substance abuse.
4. Neglectful: A very damaging style as no trust is formed; non-controlling and neglectful style in which parents demands are often parent-centred. Few rules, if any, and parents are insensitive to children's needs and feelings and uninterested in their activities or behaviour and their consequences.
 - ❖ This style is neglectful, non-controlling, and non-interested in children and promotes their developing low cognitive, social, and academic skills, poor self-control, aggressiveness, selfishness, anti-social behaviour, and substance abuse.



My Overall Parenting Style

