



Does My Parenting Style Affect My Son's Academic Ability in School?

Q. Does my parenting style affect my son's academic success? My mother thinks I'm too relaxed with my son and therefore he doesn't feel the need to do well in school. I don't agree with her. I don't think I need to be hard to motivate him to do better in school. What do you think?

A. If there was one recipe for success when it comes to parenting, it would be so much easier to raise kids. However, parenting styles differ just as much as each individual and each child. Parents soon learn that one technique, like time-out, may work for one child but not for another. Our parenting styles are often affected by how we were raised, what we swore we'd never do that our parents did, our religious beliefs and values, our ethnicity and culture, our level of education and our quest for good parenting skills. For example, if music education is important to musically inclined parents, they will put their efforts and money into music lessons and practice to ensure that their children succeed as good musicians. If college is the goal, then those parents will focus heavily on education and the children in that house will know early that their parents don't play when it comes to school. But here are the facts: nearly 50 years of research have found that some parenting styles are more effective than others and show far better outcomes for children. [Studies have identified four major parenting styles: permissive, authoritarian, authoritative, and hands-off](#)

. Of these styles, child development experts have found that the **authoritative parent**

is the most successful in raising children who are both academically strong and emotionally stable. But the truth is, most parents tend to be a combination of several styles. The trick is to be flexible enough to make adjustments to your basic type — adapting your style by including some techniques from other styles proven to work in specific instances with different types of child personalities.

How Parenting Style Relates to Academic Achievement!

Research from the University of South Florida suggests that **Authoritative parenting** is the style most strongly correlated with academic success. The following are the characteristics of authoritative parents that breed academic success in kids:

1. Acceptance: Parents who are highly accepting of their child's successes and failures and are affectionate, liberal with praise, responsive to their child's emotional needs and involved in their child's life are more likely to help their child succeed in school.

2. Psychological Autonomy: A high level of psychological autonomy - giving kids the freedom to think what they want - is an important characteristic of authoritative parents. These parents create a home environment where ideas can be expressed and genuinely considered, and children are loved and respected for having different ideas and opinions than their parents. For example, authoritative parents would ask their child how she learns best and give her a chance to prove herself rather than dictating how to study or set up a productive learning environment. Children of authoritative parents know how to stand up for their opinions when their parents aren't around, which sets them up for success in dealing with peers.

3. Behavior Control: A moderate level of behavior control, which is defined as strict rules and supervision, is important for a child's academic success. Authoritative parents set clear rules and expect their child to behave in a mature and responsible way. When kids know their parents are in charge, they feel safe. This grants children the freedom to be kids without feeling pressured to set their own boundaries and consequences. In the University of South Florida study, students who reported high acceptance from parents, high psychological autonomy and moderate behavior control from parents not only felt they performed better in school but did in fact have higher grade point averages. By contrast, the other parenting styles - authoritarian, permissive and uninvolved - produced children who not only felt they performed poorly in school but actually did earn poor grades.

Other factors that have been associated with academic achievement include higher parental education levels and per-capita income, and the child's level of self-reliance, self-esteem and life goals.

What is Permissive Parenting?

This is the parent who is busy working hard, tired and often feels guilty about not being able to spend as much time with his/her children as he/she would like and so he/she has a hard time saying NO. Unfortunately, indulging our children's every wish can have unfortunate consequences both for the child and the parent. Children can end up feeling entitled to getting what they want, not what they need: the self-restraint, patience, and other character traits that will help them succeed in life. Parents who give in to the short-term battles about the extra toy or the chore that never gets done face bigger battles down the road when the child is used to running the show: fudging on homework, back talking parents, or simply not behaving responsibly. ☐ Permissive parents create children who become selfish because they are not taught how their actions affect others. These children tend to be impulsive, aggressive, and low in taking responsibility, as well.

The Hands-Off, Indifferent or Uninvolved Parent!

The hands-off parents often detach from ensuring that their children are doing their work and homework and staying organized. All of the responsibility is placed on the child with a 'whatever' attitude. ☐ The child may also be punished for not doing his/her work or failing a test when the parent never helped or guided the child.☐ This approach only

works with children who have strong academic skills and can survive without parental involvement. The child who needs help in math and doesn't get it and is then punished for not doing well may begin to internalize this as being 'dumb' or 'stupid' and either give up or become frustrated and act out. This approach has one plus; it teaches children to face and learn from their own mistakes and to gain independence. The danger of this approach is it's not good for young children who haven't developed this skill yet and still need parental guidance to learn independence. Otherwise you're setting the child up for failure.

The Authoritarian Parent!

The authoritarian parents are the bosses in their homes. "No means no and we don't have to explain why! Say one more word and see what happens!" No doubt, authoritarian parents do not accept the notion that the home is a democracy with the loudest voices winning. Old-fashioned rules help their children understand where they stand, what they are allowed to do, and what is expected of them. Unlike permissive parents who always want to be liked, authoritarian parents expect to be respected. Authoritarian parents demand certain behaviors without explaining why and often do not listen or provide adequate emotional support.

The hitch is that strict, rule-based parenting can erode the affection and communication that makes children and parents stay connected emotionally. When children are very young, the strictly run household can look quite orderly and admirable, but as children grow into teens, experimenting with independence, they may be so afraid of their parents' censure that they become secretive. *

Authoritarian parents can also raise children who never learn to speak up or think for themselves – two indispensable skills in the work world. Research shows

the use of punitive and forceful measures to enforce proper behavior may cause anger, resentment, and deceit and impair wholesome parent-child relationships (Bettelheim, 1985). In Baumrind's 1967 research, preschoolers with authoritarian parents are withdrawn and unhappy. They appear anxious and insecure with peers and react hostilely if frustrated. These children often model their parents' inflexible thinking as well (Dekovic, Genis, and Janssens, 1991).

The Authoritative Parent!

The authoritative parents have been found to have the most effective parenting style in all sorts of ways: academic, social emotional, and behavioral. Like authoritarian parents, the authoritative parents expect a lot from their children, but also they expect even more from their own behavior. They are willing to say, "No," or lay down the line, but they are careful to remain calm, kind, and patient about empathizing with the child's perspective. It's not easy to toe the authoritative line – it takes energy and time and sometimes Herculean self-control. But there are great benefits to raising children who know you have high expectations and who maintain close emotional ties to you because there's always been a strong bond of trust.

Characteristics of the Authoritative Parenting Style include:

- Listen to their children
- Encourage independence
- Place limits, consequences and expectations on their children's behavior
- Express warmth and nurturance
- Allow children to express opinions
- Encourage children to discuss options
- Administer fair and consistent discipline

Parents who are nurturing and set, discuss, and enforce developmentally appropriate limits are the most successful in helping their children become autonomous, independent, self-controlled, self-confident, and cooperative (Grusec and Lytton, 1988; Baumrind, 1969; 1971). These children are also more likely to have high levels of competence and high self-esteem during middle childhood and adolescence (Coppersmith, 1967; Loeb, Horst, and Horton, 1980). They also have internalized moral standards (Holmbeck, Paikoff, and Brooks-Gunn, 1995) and their academic performance in high school is superior to that of children from either authoritarian or

permissive homes (Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, and Fraleigh, 1987; Steinberg, Dornbush, and Brown, 1992). Some info gathered from **Education.com** and **Psychology.About.com**.

So you can be strict and understanding at the same time! You can still say 'No' but showing understanding and listening to your children's view point goes a long way to a lasting family bond and trust. □ Take the time to explain 'Why' something is off limits!□ They may not agree with you but they will feel that you at least listened to them. Obviously, if you're mostly authoritarian, it doesn't hurt to be permissive once in a while and to spend more time showing love and understanding and if you're authoritative there will be times when you need to be authoritarian when your child's pleas are unreasonable. I think that parents should totally avoid the uninvolved parenting style! I think good parenting has a little mix of all parenting styles with the authoritative approach being applied most of the time!□ It's all in a days work!

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