

Understanding Parenting

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Parents love their children and similarly children love their parents. One cannot measure who loves more – children or parents. The core thing is that parents and children love each other and due to such reciprocal feelings the relationship is so significant. Moreover kids are greatly influenced by their parents. Therefore, our role as parents as well as a person in front of children is very significant as children watch their parents and imitate their actions. So if we want to raise our children in the best possible manner, it is important to understand the concept of parenting and how different parenting practices affect our children's mental and psychological growth.

Why it is important to know about parenting

Parenting differs from person to person or from culture to culture. As a parent, we may think - I am a parent, so I know all about parenting and what kind of parenting is good for my child. I

don't need to know it from others. Yes, you are right to some extent. You are a parent and you know better what is good for your child. But the fact is that as a human being we cannot know everything. There are a lot of researches related to parenting that can help a parent to communicate better with his/her children. Also, sometimes due to lack of knowledge, we cannot treat our children in the way which is best for them. It is also important to remind ourselves that as parents we may know the right way, still we can make mistakes. So, it is indeed important to gather knowledge about different issues related to parenting.



Concept of parenting

Parenting is an essential process that activates and lays out one's life depending on how an individual is treated from infancy. An effective parenting can give the ability to adapt people according to their society and surroundings. Jane B. Brooks (2012) defines, "Parenting or child rearing is the process of promoting and supporting the physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development of a child from infancy to adulthood. Parenting refers to the aspects of raising a child aside from the biological relationship." American Psychological Association (APA) mentioned, "Parenting practices around the world share three major goals: ensuring children's health and safety, preparing children for life as productive adults and transmitting cultural values. A high-quality parent-child relationship is critical for healthy development." It is mentionable that the initial responsibility for developing a healthy relationship is on parents.

Styles of parenting

There are different types of parenting styles. Diana Baumrind (1967) identified three initial parenting styles: authoritative parenting, authoritarian parenting and permissive parenting. Maccoby and Martin (1983) expanded this parenting style model and divided it into four types. The four parenting styles were defined as authoritarian, permissive, neglectful, and authoritative.

Authoritarian parenting

Authoritarian parenting, also called strict parenting, is characterized by parents who are demanding but not responsive. The authoritarian parenting style involves parents' strict rules without the explanation or reasoning behind those rules. Parents punish their children for

disobeying the rules and maintain decorum and control over the children by verbal threats or physical punishments. When a child questions the reasons behind a rule, authoritarian parents usually say, “Because I said this.” They are not interested in negotiation and their focus is on obedience.

For example - Mr. Rayan (pseudonym) and Ms. Sara (pseudonym) have a family with two children (a 25-year-old son and a 20-year-old daughter). Apparently it is a very structured family with love, effort and expenses. But in terms of rules, parents never share the reason. Mr. Rayan decided that his son will take science in his Higher Secondary Education but commerce was his son’s choice. Ms. Sara never disagrees with her husband and never agrees with her children in this kind of situation. Same thing happened to their daughter. While selecting subject at the university level, Mr. Rayan imposed his choice. All other members of Mr. Rayan’s family have to obey the decisions made by Mr. Rayan. They do not have any other choices.

As a result of such parenting style, children become proficient but they also develop a low level of self-esteem. They are not at all open to communicate with their parents and sometimes they view their parents as the enemy. Moreover, they become confused about what is right and what is wrong. The children of authoritarian parents may become hostile or aggressive. The most common traits are children becoming liars as they lie to their parents to get saved from their punishments. Studies also show that they may become good liars, as they may grow with condition to lie to avoid punishment. The reason behind these behaviours is because this parenting style does not give any space to the children to share their thoughts and feelings with their parents. Even the children growing up in such families are less likely to be very happy.



Permissive parenting

In the permissive parenting style, parents have no rules at all. They are lenient. They accept their children as they are. Permissive parents usually take on more of a friend role than a parent role. They often encourage their children to talk with them about their problems, but they usually do not put much effort to inculcate some positive things into children. They are quite forgiving and they adopt an attitude of 'it does not matter, children are like this'.

In the process these parents allow their children to do wrong things. This parenting style makes the children dependent, irresponsible and immature. They are also at a higher risk for health problems, like obesity. These children tend to struggle academically. They may exhibit more behavioural problems in the workplaces as they do not appreciate authority and rules. They often have low self-esteem and may report a lot of sadness.

Uninvolved parenting

Another parenting style is uninvolved parenting. Uninvolved parents basically expect children to raise themselves. They usually do not give much time or energy to meet children's basic needs. These parents tend to have little knowledge of what their children are doing. They are often neglectful. But sometimes, it is not intentional, such as, a parent with mental health issues or substance abuse problems. They may not be able to take care of their children's needs. In some other cases, uninvolved parents are busy with other problems such as job, household works and other family crises.

Children may not receive much guidance, nurture, and parental attention from uninvolved parents. They struggle with self-esteem issues. Their academic performance is not also good. They face difficulties while communicating with others and they may not feel happy internally.



Authoritative parenting

Authoritative parents are supportive and get involved with the children. Like authoritarian parents, they use rules, but they allow for reasonable exceptions to the rules. Moreover, they explain and discuss the rules. Authoritative parents sometimes make use of discipline to prevent unhealthy behaviour and to reinforce healthy behaviour.

Children raised with authoritative parenting style are good at making decisions. They are responsible and feel comfortable while expressing their opinions. These children tend to be happy with themselves and the world.

Well, we often ignore the issue of parenting in our society but the fact is that understanding the concept of parenting is the first step towards being a good parent.

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