

What's your Parenting Style

How would you describe your approach to parenting? Fill out this questionnaire and find out for yourself. Choose (✓) only one answer from each category.

1. Parenting

- a) I believe children should be seen and not heard.
- b) I enjoy the chaos of parenting.
- c) I believe children can be children and also practice good manners.
- d) My children keep to themselves and don't bother me much.

2. Behaviour

- a) I think my children need a firm hand to direct them so they behave properly.
- b) I believe my children need freedom to discover who they are.
- c) I love watching my children discover things for themselves – and I am there if they have questions.
- d) My children learn how to behave in school.

3. Saying "no"

- a) I don't have a problem saying "no" to my children.
- b) I hate saying "no" to my children.
- c) Sometimes I need to say "no" to my children.
- d) Mostly I just ignore my children's bad behaviour.

4. Rules

- a) Every rule – big or small – must be followed.
- b) I don't believe in too many rules – when I am with my children I want to enjoy the moment and have fun, not be a disciplinarian.
- c) I have rules that are really important, and I expect them to be followed. But I am willing to be flexible about smaller issues.
- d) Having a lot of rules is too complicated – sometimes it's just easier to ignore some behaviour.

5. Discipline

- a) I think discipline is correcting your children when they misbehave.
- b) I don't believe in strict discipline – my children need freedom.
- c) I think discipline is an opportunity to teach your children.
- d) My spouse does most of the disciplining.

6. Being liked

- a) I am okay if my children are unhappy with me.
- b) I want my children to like me.
- c) Sometimes I need to be unpopular with my children to keep them safe and ensure they do what needs to be done.
- d) I am not sure how to get my children to like me.

7. Respect

- a) Children must respect their parents.
- b) I like it when my children are respectful of me, but I must admit, that doesn't happen very often.
- c) Parents need to model the respect they expect from their children.
- d) I wish my children respected me more, but since that's not happening, I try to ignore it.

8. Communication

- a) I don't tell my children much – these are adult matters.
- b) I can tell my children just about anything.
- c) I let my children know what is going on, especially if it affects them, but some things are not suited for their age.
- d) My children don't need much information; they seem to be doing fine.

9. Mistakes

- a) I don't tolerate mistakes – maybe once or twice is fine, but more than that, they need to be punished.
- b) I think that if children don't feel successful, they will not have the confidence to do well in life.
- c) Some of the greatest lessons for children come from their mistakes. I try to help my children learn from their mistakes.
- d) Everyone makes mistakes – I don't get too upset over my children's mistakes. They will figure it out eventually.

10. Friends

- a) I don't believe parents should be their children's friend – you will lose your authority over them.
- b) My children are my best friends.
- c) My children are friends with other children; I need to be their parent.
- d) I really don't understand how parents and children could be friends – we are so different from each other.

11. Where they are

- a) I know exactly what my children are doing, who they are with and where they are all the time.
- b) I try to keep up with my children's comings and goings, but sometimes they won't tell me.
- c) My children and I have an agreement – I will always let them know where I am and they will do the same for me.
- d) I don't keep track of what my children are up to – they seem fine and have teachers and child care providers to watch over them.

... so what is your parenting style?

Add up the number of times you responded to a question with an (a), (b), (c) or (d) and write it down in the table below. The highest score in the table corresponds to the parenting style you practice. For example, if you answered most of the questions with an (a) you are an authoritarian style parent.

Options	Number of times	Parenting Style
a.		Authoritarian
b.		Permissive
c.		Authoritative
d.		Uninvolved

What is your parenting style? (and why it matters)

A parenting style is a psychological construct that represents strategies and perspectives that parents use in raising their children. Psychologists have identified four parenting styles:

Authoritative (characterised by warmth and strictness)

Authoritative parents set clear rules that children are expected to follow. However, they do allow for exceptions to the rules as they are more willing to consider a child's feelings when setting limits. They also take the time to explain the reasons for those rules.

Authoritative parents tend to teach their children proper behaviour by allowing them some flexibility in making their own decisions. They also reinforce good behaviours by using praise and rewards. Children raised with authoritative parenting tend to grow up to be responsible adults, who are often good at making decisions.



Permissive (characterised by warmth but not strictness) – Permissive parents tend to not discipline their children as they prefer to be more lenient. There are few, if any, consequences for misbehaviour as parents will say “kids will be kids.”

Permissive parents may take the approach of being a friend rather than a parent to their children. Although they may get along well with their children, they are less likely to set boundaries and therefore, ignore negative behaviours.

Children who grow up with permissive parents tend to struggle academically because they receive less motivation to excel. They may also exhibit more behavioural problems because they are not able to adjust well to rules and authority in society. This often results in them having low self-esteem.

Authoritarian (characterised by strictness but not warmth) – Authoritarian parents set the rules and expect their children to follow them without exception. If children challenge the rules, they are usually told, “Because I said so.” There is usually no room for negotiation and parents do not feel obligated to explain the reasons for the rules because they know what's best for their child.

Although children of authoritarian parents tend to follow rules, they may lack decision-making and problem-solving skills or may act out, become hostile or alienate themselves. This happens because they tend to focus their frustration at their parents for being punished.

Uninvolved (characterised by neither warmth nor strictness) – Uninvolved parents tend to repeatedly neglect their children by not meeting their basic needs. In fact, they expect their children to raise themselves. This could be due to a parent's mental health issue or substance abuse problem. They typically lack knowledge about parenting and may feel overwhelmed by life in general.

Uninvolved parents are oblivious to what their children are doing or who they are with. Rules are also limited and expectations are low, if any at all. Children of uninvolved parents may lack parental guidance and attention which would prompt them to turn to outsiders for support. They also lack self-esteem and perform poorly in academics.

As you can see, parenting styles significantly affects a child's welfare which is why adopting an authoritative parenting style has been found to increase a child's chances of success. Nevertheless, parents may not fit neatly into just one category but may find success in varying their style, according to the situation or even between individual siblings.

In addition, both parents may naturally adopt different parenting styles. For example, the father may be very strict and the mother may be more lenient. However, this has a negative effect because the father may become even stricter as he attempts to counterbalance the mother's leniency. Therefore, if parents do not share identical parenting styles, they should discuss matters between themselves and come to an agreement about how to deal with the child.

How to Be More Authoritative

- **Establish a list of house rules and expectations** to help your child learn what type of behaviour is acceptable and what is not. Add rules if and when necessary but explain to the child why the rule is important.
- **Decide together with your child** on the type of consequences involved for breaking the rules.
- **Link privileges to good behaviour** by teaching the child that she needs to earn them. This rule should be consistently applied to all your children.
- **Be firm and follow through with the limits that were set.** If you say that you are going to take away a privilege, it is essential that you honour your word. By providing consistent and firm discipline, you show him that you mean business.