

What are the different styles of parenting and how to use emotional intelligence to become a better parent

Parenting styles differ from family to family, culture to culture and may even vary from day to day within one family. Each family has its own strategy for raising children, and these strategies fall into different styles. Parents may be curious how these styles compare to one another. Knowing the differences between these parenting styles might prompt you to make some changes in how you raise your children.

A family's social class plays a large role in the opportunities and resources available to a child. Today, parenting seems subject to trends and changing styles.

The dismissive parents

They don't

- Feel certain about how to address the child's emotions
- Problem-solve with the child
- Focus much on the meaning of emotions; more interested in how to get over them
- Have great self-awareness or social awareness
- Like to focus on negative emotions

They do

- Tend to avoid or dismiss emotions; minimizing the child's feelings
- Feel worried, uncomfortable, fearful, irritated, or overwhelmed by the child's emotions
- Believe that focusing on negative emotions will make things worse
- Ignore the child's feelings; treat them as unimportant
- Believe negative emotions are reflected badly on them

Consequences on the children

- They learn that their feelings are wrong, inappropriate, not valid
- They may learn that there is something inherently wrong with them because of the way they feel
- They may have difficulty regulating their own emotions

The disapproving parents

They do

- Believe expression of negative emotions should be time-limited
- Believe the child uses negative emotions to manipulate
- Believe emotions make people weak; children must be emotionally tough for survival
- Believe negative emotions are unproductive; a waste of time
- Judge and criticize the child's emotional expression
- Reprimands or punish the child for emotional expression, whether the child is misbehaving or not
- Show many of the dismissing parent's behavior, but in a more negative way

Consequences on the children

- Same as the dismissing style

The laissez-faire parents

They don't

- Teach problem-solving methods to the child
- Set limits
- Help with problems
- Teach the child about emotions
- Offer much guidance on behavior

They do

- Believe there is little you can do about negative emotions
- Manage negative emotions by encouraging the child to release them and the work is done
- Offer comfort to the child experiencing negative feelings
- Easily accept all emotional expressions from the child

Consequences on the children

They don't want to regulate their emotions. They have trouble concentrating, forming friendships and getting along with other children.

Because they are accustomed to getting most of what they want from their parent, they tend to be the main decision makers in terms how they are raised. They become demanding and have little respect for adult authority.

The emotion-coaching parents

They don't

- Make light of the child's negative feelings
- Feel they have to fix every problem for the child

They are not

- Anxious about the child's emotional expression; they know what needs to be done

They do

- Value the child's negative emotions as an opportunity for growth
- Tolerate spending time with a sad, angry or fearful child
- See the world of negative emotions as-important for effective parenting
- Respect the child's emotions

They use emotional moments as a time to:

- Empathize with soothing words and affection

- Help the child label the emotion he or she is feeling
- Listen to the child
- Offer guidance on regulating emotions
- Teach problem-solving skills
- Set limits and teach acceptable expressions of emotions

Consequences on the children

- They learn to:
 - Trust their feelings
 - Regulate their own emotions
 - Solve problems
- They have high self-esteem, learn well, get along well with others.

Becoming an emotion coach

Use the following steps to build empathy into relationships with your children, enhancing the children's emotional intelligence.

- Recognize the emotion as an opportunity for intimacy and teaching
- Be aware of the child's emotion
- Listen with empathy and validate the child's feelings
- Help the child verbally label emotions
- Set the limits while helping the child problem-solve

Additional tips:

- Don't be too negative: excessive criticism, humiliating comments, or mocking your child are destructive to parent-child communication and to children's self-esteem.
- Use *scaffolding* and praise
 - Give children just enough information to get started, talking in a slow calm manner
 - Wait for the child to do something right and offer specific praise for their action
 - Add just a little bit more instruction and repeat
- Be honest with your child
- Be patient with the process
- Don't try to impose your solutions on your child's problem
- Ignore your "parental agenda"
- Share in your child's dreams and fantasies

When not to be an emotion coach

- When you're pressed for time
- When you have an audience
- When you are too upset or too tired for coaching to be productive
- When you need to address serious misbehavior
- When your child is faking an emotion to manipulate you