

Parenting Styles

There's no such thing as perfect parenting. But by understanding different parenting styles, we can better support our children in healthier and more effective ways.

Most of us parent as a blend of our own upbringing, lived experiences and external influences such as books, podcasts or parenting websites. And while parenting is always a challenge, it can become even more complex through divorce, separation, blended families, trauma or bereavement. Not to mention life's many other hurdles.

The concept of "parenting styles" was first introduced in the 1960s by Diana Baumrind, a clinical and developmental psychologist. She identified four main categories: **Authoritarian**, **Permissive**, **Authoritative** and **Uninvolved**. Each style shapes a child's development in different ways and comes with both strengths and challenges.

The four classic parenting styles

Authoritarian

Strict rules, high expectations, low warmth. Children may appear disciplined but often struggle with self-esteem and independent decision-making.

Permissive

Warm and nurturing but with few boundaries. Children may lack structure and struggle with responsibility.

Authoritative

Balanced approach: clear boundaries with warmth and responsiveness. Strongly linked to positive outcomes in academic, social, and emotional wellbeing.

Uninvolved

Minimal guidance or support, often due to external stresses. Can negatively impact a child's development and confidence.

Modern variations of parenting styles

Helicopter

Hovering and overprotective, limiting independence.

Tiger

Strict, achievement-focused, often at the expense of emotional wellbeing.

Lawnmower

Removes every obstacle, preventing resilience and responsibility.

Snowplough

Extreme version of obstacle-clearing, leaving children unprepared for life's challenges.

Although well-intentioned, each parenting approach can have drawbacks in a child's development. Every child is unique, and their needs change as they grow. An authoritative style may suit younger children, but teenagers often require a greater balance of guidance and independence. The goal is to create a secure environment where children feel respected, heard, and supported.

Parenting is a journey of growth for both parents and children. Embracing a flexible, responsive approach, one that respects boundaries while fostering independence, can help us raise resilient, emotionally intelligent young people.

Strategies to help you achieve this goal:

1.

Practice empathy:

Understanding your child's emotions helps you respond appropriately. Empathy doesn't mean giving in; it means acknowledging their feelings, which strengthens your relationship.

2.

Encourage open communication:

Make it a habit to discuss your child's day, feelings, and opinions. This fosters trust and makes them more likely to come to you when facing difficulties.

3.

Teach problem-solving skills:

Instead of solving every problem for them, guide them through the process. Ask questions like, "What do you think you could do about this?" Teaching problem-solving is invaluable for lifelong resilience.

4.

Be consistent:

Consistency in rules and expectations helps children feel secure. They know what to expect, which reduces anxiety and improves their ability to self-regulate.

5.

Model positive behaviour:

Children learn by observing us. Show them how to handle stress, resolve conflicts and express emotions healthily. Our behaviour sets the foundation for their future relationships and coping mechanisms.

6.

Self-care is essential:

Parenting can be demanding. Taking care of yourself, physically, emotionally and mentally, is just as important. It means you can be there fully for your child. Remember, you can't pour from an empty cup.