

PARENTING STYLES

Parents are an integral part of their children's decision to use substances. But how can you as a parent guide your child in the healthy direction? This section will review different parenting styles and some different skills that have been shown to be pivotal in substance prevention and intervention.

In psychology, four different types of parenting styles have been recognized: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful. While all relationships are different, and different children need various levels of support- below is a guide to identify your parenting style and some suggestions on ways to support your child.

Authoritative Style

The authoritative style has been regarded as the most beneficial for most children. This style is marked with parents having high expectations of their child but tempering it with empathy, understanding and support for their child.

How to recognize if this is your parenting style- answer the questions below, if the majority of your answers are "yes," likely this is your parenting style:

- Does your child's day have structure?
- Are there acknowledged and specific rules in your household?
- Are there fair consequences for disrupting the structure or breaking the household rules?
- Do you have reasonable expectations of your child's behavior AND does your child recognize these expectations?
- Does your child feel comfortable discussing things with you? (ie. - do they know they can come to you without fear of judgement or discipline?)

Authoritarian Style

Authoritarian style is most notably marked as being very strict. These parents tend to hold very high expectations of their children but are not responsive to their child's needs. There tends to be very little communication between parent and child, punishment is often used to teach a lesson.

How to recognize if this is your parenting style:

- Do you have rules that are strict and you believe should always be followed?
- Do you believe that you should not explain your rules to your child/ren beyond "because I said so"?
- Do you give your child very few choices?
- Do you often use punishments to get your child to obey?
- Do you withhold affection and warmth from your child?

Permissive Style

The permissive style of parenting is a form of indulgent parenting where parents are highly nurturing and responsive but set few expectations and rules.

How to recognize if this is your parenting style:

- Do you not have set expectations and rules for your child?
- Do you avoid conflicts with your child?
- Do you desire to be your child's best friend?
- To get your child to do something do you bribe them with large rewards?

While permissive parents are highly nurturing, the costs tend to outweigh the benefits. This style of parenting is correlated to substance use and abuse in teens. While being empathetic and nurturing is important, setting rules and expectations is even more critical.

SECTION 3

PARENTING STYLES & SKILLS

Neglectful Style

Neglectful parenting is the most dangerous of all the parenting styles. Here's how to recognize if you are a neglectful parent:

- You don't know the emotional, physical, and mental needs of your child
- You don't know what is going on in your child's life
- Your child spends long periods of time at home alone
- You don't regularly engage with your child
- Your home is not a safe place

There can be many contributing factors as to why a parent is neglectful; if you find yourself or someone you know using this style, getting assistance could be helpful in reengaging and forming a healthy parent/child relationship.

Having a healthy relationship with your child is key in their happiness and development. Healthy parenting is an intricate balance of warmth, open communication, realistic expectations and clear boundaries. Now we will discuss some important parenting skills which have been shown to be effective in substance prevention.

PARENTING SKILLS

Below are parenting skills which have been found to be important in preventing a child's experimentation and progression of substance use.

1. Good communication

Having open and direct communication in a family is the foundation for strong parent and child relationships. Having good communication with your child can help you detect if there is a problem, provide encouragement and support, and know what is happening in the life of your child.

Key communication skills include:

- Showing an interest in their lives and ask questions
- Being understanding and showing empathy
- Encouraging problem solving - instead of saying "you never think" or "you need to make better decisions" ask them "how would you have handled that differently?"
- Listening - your child will be more likely to talk to you if they feel like you listen and that they won't be judged or blamed
- Staying calm

2. Encouragement

Giving your child words of affirmation and encouragement is important in forming a positive and healthy relationship with them. You can provide your child with encouragement by doing the following:

- Remind them of their strengths and the things they are good at
- Remind them of times they have worked hard and been successful in the past
- Listen to what they have to say
- Ask for their input when making plans
- Attend extracurricular and school events
- Display their work and accomplishments
- Make time for them each day
- Praise positive, desirable behaviors

3. Negotiating Problems

Negotiating solutions to problems with your child will help them in developing skills in problem solving, healthy relationships, conflict resolution, and communication. Before solving a problem with your child be sure to pick a neutral time; when both parties are angry very little can get accomplished. It's also important to:

- State the problem neutrally
- Own your part of the conflict
- Restate what the other person said and allow them to correct, if needed

Now that you have identified a problem and stated the problem neutrally it is time to negotiate a potential solution. The model you can use is BAM:

Brainstorm – come up with potential solutions, try to come up with at least three ideas (even if they're out of the box), go back and forth when proposing ideas.

Assess – go through your list of ideas and assess the pros and cons of each one.

Make a choice – everyone should agree on the chosen solution. You can combine ideas/solutions if needed!

After coming to a decision together be sure to follow-up. Make sure the solution is working for all parties and it is successful. If not, go back to the list of ideas and choose another idea OR start over completely with the BAM model.

4. Setting Limits

Setting limits and boundaries with your child is important, your ability to set clear limits and boundaries teaches your child how to use self-control, responsibility, and shows that you care. Setting limits is a two-step process: set rules and follow-up.

1. Set rules - make sure your rules are clear and simple, make sure your child understands your rules, and come up with consequences.

2. Follow-up - the most important part of setting limits is following up and through with them. If your child breaks a rule, provide an immediate consequence and if they are following the rules offer encouragement. It is important to be consistent. Tips for making consequences:

- Small consequences are better
- Do not choose a consequence that punishes you
- Make sure they are not rewarding to your child and are under your control

5. Parental Monitoring

An important predictor of risk is parental supervision and the strength of child-parent bonds. Teens who are supervised by their parents and have strong bonds with their parents are less likely to misuse or abuse drugs.

Teens who have been prescribed opioid medications are at an increased risk of opioid misuse. If your child has a prescription for opioid medications, dispense the medication and check the bottle regularly to ensure that the prescription is being used at the prescribed rate. Pay attention if your child requests an early refill after "losing" the bottle or "dropping" the pills in the sink.

Parental supervision is a strong influence for preventing opioid misuse and abuse.

Teens who are left with long periods of unsupervised time are at greater risk. That can be challenging since teens begin to spend more time with friends and less with family. However, it is important to stay aware of what your child is doing. Ask questions when something does not seem right. Look for the warning signs listed above, and check up on your child to ensure they are where they say they are.