

HEALTH

Good parenting: It's all about style

YOU'RE NOT ALONE



DR. BRAD KLONTZ

Clinical psychologist

The long-awaited day has finally arrived. Your child is born. As parents you finally get to take your baby home. It is all very exciting and joyful. As you walk in the door, you suddenly realize they didn't give you an instruction manual. What do we do from here?

Several decades ago, psychologist Dr. Diane Baumrind identified four types of parenting styles. These styles were classified on two dimensions — warmth and control. Indulgent parents are loving and affectionate, but permissive and lenient. They don't set limits. They avoid confrontations with their children, preferring to act more like a friend than guardian. Like indulgent parents, uninvolved parents avoid enforcing rules; however, they also don't show love or affection. In the extreme, uninvolved parents neglect their children. It comes as no surprise that children of uninvolved parents tend to be the most troubled. Authoritarian parents are strict and punitive. They demand obedience but don't show much warmth or affection. In terms of child adjustment, authoritative parents are the ideal parents. They set and enforce limits but are also very warm and loving.

Surprising to many, the second worst parenting style is not the authoritarian parent but the indulgent one. Children of indulgent parents may feel loved, but like children of uninvolved parents, they often exhibit behavior problems. Because they have never had to obey rules, they lack respect for authority. Since they can run roughshod over their parents, they don't learn to regulate their emotions. As a result, they

often experience anger problems and struggle in relationships. Indulgent parents often realize their mistake when in early adolescence their children begin disobeying curfew, skipping school, using drugs, and defying authority. Oftentimes teens of indulgent parents may perform well in academics, sports or the arts, but are secretly involved in risky behaviors without their parents' knowledge. Unless indulgent parents are willing to set and enforce limits, society often has to step in and do it for them. The result can be traumatic for both the child and parents, and can result in arrest and incarceration. When the child is eventually locked up, he or she is often shocked, having never had to experience any real consequences before. This is a hard way to learn.

Indulgent parents are usually permissive because they want the best for their children. Sometimes they are reacting to overly strict parenting they received as children. They don't want to stifle their children; instead they want to empower them. Some give their children excessive freedom due to guilt, perhaps trying to make up for an uninvolved parent. Without structure and consequences, however, indulgent parents hurt children more than authoritarian parents, who show little affection, but are strict and punitive. The children of authoritarian parents may also have relationship problems in the future, being unpracticed at giving and receiving love, but

they typically comply with basic rules of conduct and do well in society.

Children of authoritative parents tend to be the best adjusted. They feel competent and confident. They are well behaved, conscientious and socially skilled. What follows are suggestions for implementing an authoritative-type parenting style:

Set limits. It is essential for your children to learn to follow rules. Structure makes the world predictable and helps them feel safe. Children crave it. It teaches them to control their behaviors and manage their emotions. When you do not set limits, your children are given more power than they have the skills or judgment to use appropriately.

Enforce consequences. Children need to experience consequences for their misbehaviors. If you shield your children from this, you will set them up for failure. If your child swears at the principal and is suspended, it is not helpful for you to step in and try to circumvent the consequence. Doing so gives your child the message that he or she is above the law. Learning this is not true outside of the home can be profoundly painful for everyone. A better lesson is to hold him or her accountable for swearing, and teach him or her better ways for expressing frustration.

Rethink the use of corporal punishment. Research shows that punishing children through violent means increases the chances they will engage in delinquent

behaviors, bully and victimize others, and experience mental health problems. The skillful use of time-outs and loss of privileges are equally effective in discouraging problem behaviors, and are not associated with such negative results.

Give them time. Children grow up fast. You will never regret spending time with your children. They want time with you more than they want things. Get involved in their lives.

Show affection. Hug your kids. Cuddle with them. Tell them you are proud of them for their unique talents and strengths. Tell them you are glad they were born. Never let a day go by without telling them you love them.

Lack of parental affection and/or parental control leads to various levels of maladjustment for children. Children benefit most from parents who express affection and maintain and enforce rules. If you have trouble instituting an authoritative parenting style, consider seeking professional help. Someday, your children will thank you for it.

Dr. Brad Klontz is the president of the Hawaii Psychological Association and coauthor of "The Financial Wisdom of Ebenezer Scrooge." He can be reached by e-mail at brad@klontzcoaching.com. For free, confidential referrals to a psychologist in your area, contact the HPA online at www.hawaiiippsych.org or call 808-521-8995.

How to organize your business contacts

ARACONTENT

Are you still storing your business contact info in your e-mail program or on your cell phone? Or, worse yet, is your "database" a collection of business cards stashed in a shoe box? Stunning as it may seem, a significant number of small business owners still use outdated methods to store important business contact information.

Tom Stearns, a data organization expert with CardScan, offers the following tips for small business owners looking to organize their contact data with software applications:

- Look for programs, like CardScan, that make it easy to input data. CardScan actually allows you to highlight contact information in an e-mail or v-card, drag and drop it into the CardScan program. The software automatically recognizes data fields and organizes them accordingly.

- Be sure your database software can be synched with your other electronic devices or software, such as your mobile device, Blackberry, smart phone or e-mail application.

- Consider an online service to backup your data.

- Choose software that prompts you to check the accuracy of information, rather than one that just drops it into another program.

To learn more about data organization for small businesses, visit www.cardscan.com



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