

WHAT'S *your* PARENTING STYLE?

What's your parenting style: firm expectations...or laid back? Strict rules...or go with the flow? Chances are, you're a combo. Check out the four classic types of parenting —and see where you fit in.



The Boss (*Authoritarian*)

The “my house, my rules” advocates stress discipline first before all else. They're in charge and help their children follow directions by setting high expectations.



The Friend (*Permissive*)

Fun-focused parents love their kids with every fiber and give their children freedom to figure out problems independently instead of creating limits and boundaries.



The Minimalist (*Uninvolved*)

These busy parents take a hands-off approach with few rules or expectations. Their often full plates keep them further away from their children more than they'd like to be.



The Teacher (*Authoritative*)

These sticklers for rules and expectations practice what they preach, and often problem-solve with their children and listen to what they have to say.

Getting to Know Your Parenting Style Reflection Worksheet

Use this worksheet to reflect on your approach, your parenting goals, and your child's needs to help you understand your own unique style. You can print one for yourself and your spouse or parenting partner to share answers with each other.

Tune Into Yourself

Who am I — as an individual and as a parent?

What are my parenting goals?

What kind of parent do I want to be?

Tune Into Your Child

Who is my child?

Am I more responsive or reactive?

Am I giving my child what he or she needs?

Positive Guidance

Parenting Tips

Parenting can be profoundly rewarding, but it can also be challenging. Every child and every family is different. Parenting styles and attitudes vary, and there is *no one "right" way to parent*. It is important to guide children's social and emotional development through mentoring, example, and direct teaching.

Here are some simple solutions to common parenting challenges:

- **Look for the reasons behind behavior.** Remember, behavior is communication. Children's challenging behavior is usually caused by: 1) a lack of knowledge or experience, 2) a need for attention, 3) physical triggers, such as fatigue or hunger, or 4) emotional triggers like boredom or fear. If you can find and alleviate the cause, the behavior typically stops.
- **Tell your child specifically what to do, rather than what not to do.** The words, "Put your crayons in the box and put the paper in the drawer," are much more helpful than, "Don't make a mess with the art supplies."
- **Point out positive behavior.** Let your child know when he gets it right. "You put your shoes in the closet and hung up your backpack. You're a hard worker." Clear, descriptive encouragement rather than praise helps your child understand your expectations and builds confidence.
- **Try the "when/then" strategy.** For example, you could say "When we put away the books, then we can go outside." This provides incentive and clear direction for your child.
- **Divert a behavioral issue by offering two choices that are both okay with you.** For example, perhaps your child runs away from you in the store. You could say, "You can walk next to me or I can hold your hand. Which would you like to do?" If your child refuses to comply, you gently but firmly make the choice. "Okay, I will help you. I am going to hold your hand."
- **Encourage your child to use words to solve problems.** Give verbal prompts such as, "You don't like it when Sophie takes your toys. Can you tell her how you feel?"
- **Learn nonverbal techniques.** Make sustained eye contact; use gestures, such as shaking your head; stand close to your child or gently touch your child on the shoulder or head. If you find yourself unable to manage a situation even with the use of these ideas or feel angry, frustrated, or overwhelmed, let your partner or a friend know. Sometimes it takes more than one person to guide a child's behavior and that's okay.

Positive Parenting Tips

There is a fine line between *encouragement* and *praise* when it comes to reacting to your child's accomplishments. Children who come to rely on praise take fewer risks, because they are unwilling to lose their praise-worthy status.

Children seeking praise tend to avoid anything they won't get "right," which is unfortunate because mistakes, trial and error, and risk-taking are critical elements of any *learning process*.

Instead, work to encourage your child. Encouragement can be *inspirational and motivating* — a gentle, supportive nudge that helps children meet important goals — instead of self-defining and limiting.

Here are some ways to incorporate encouraging phrases into everyday conversation:

Generic or Person-Centered Praise

- You are always so beautiful.
- Good job!
- What a smart kid you are!
- What a pretty picture.
- You sure are strong.
- You are so organized.
- I am so proud of you.

Encouragement or Genuine Praise

- I like the combination of patterns you chose to wear today.
- You really stuck with that — your hard work paid off.
- I can tell you're working hard on reading because you finished a longer book.
- The colors you chose for that sunset are unique.
- That was the first time you've jumped rope without stumbling.
- I appreciate the way you organized the shelf, it makes it easier to find everything.
- You look proud of yourself! You really proved you can do it.

Reflective thoughts and words of encouragement on your child's effort and growth will ensure their joy comes from their developing abilities and confidence in their own skills.