

PARENTING WITH INTENTION: Living a life you love!

PART 8: "DETERMINING YOUR STYLE"

Quiz: What's Your Style?

Want to know more about your personal parenting style? Take this short quiz.

Each question presents a situation that you've probably been in or one you've seen other parents in. For each situation, pick the response that you would be most likely to give on a typical day. Circle your answer or simply jot them down, then go to the scoring charts below and add up your score to get an interpretation of your parenting style.

1. *When your kids whine and have tantrums you...*
 - a. get mad and send them to their rooms
 - b. give in to stop the whining
 - c. don't give in and afterwards explain better ways that they can express their frustrations

2. *Your son wants a new toy at the grocery store, so you. ...*
 - a. get mad and tell him he can't have any new toys
 - b. buy it so that he doesn't have a tantrum
 - c. tell him no, but explain that you will bring him back to buy it when he saves enough of his allowance

3. *The main goal of parenting and discipline is to...*
 - a. get your kids to listen to you no matter what
 - b. make sure everyone is happy and doing whatever they want
 - c. teach your children why your rules are important and help them learn to make good choices on their own

4. *If your kids get in trouble, you...*
 - a. get mad and yell or spank them
 - b. don't do much of anything
 - c. discipline them and later explain better choices they could have made so they don't get in trouble again

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Answers:

As you may have already guessed, the answers followed a pattern:

a) Authoritarian	b) Permissive	c) Authoritative

To find your score, simply review each answer (a, b, or c) and place a tally mark it in the appropriate box above. The total number of marks in each box will show you your approximate tendency towards each style of parenting.

Note: *This quiz was designed to give you a very broad overview of your style. Given the small sampling of questions and scenarios, your results may not be a true representation of your overall style.*

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Permissive parents fall at the other end of the parenting continuum. While they may demonstrate great amounts of warmth and love, they make very few demands on their children, and/or set very few limits. Unfortunately children of highly over-indulgent or over-submissive parents can become quite impulsive and demanding. They may become passive, bored, and even discontented even in the midst of the indulgence. These children often exhibit tantrums when their demands are not met, and in some cases have difficulty acknowledging the rights of others.

Authoritative

- Moderate
- Sets limits and relies on natural consequences for children to learn from mistakes
- Explains why rules are important and why they should be followed
- Reasons with their children and considers the children's point of view even though they might not agree
- Firm with kindness, warmth, and love
- Sets high standards and encourages children to be independent

Authoritative parents fall somewhere in the middle of the two extremes. While demonstrating warmth and caring, they also display considerable control—setting age appropriate limits for their children. These parents often use negotiation (when appropriate) to help solve issues, and encourage appropriate levels of independence in their children.

As you may have seen from your quiz results, many parents blend aspects from each to form their own unique style. Is one better than the other? Ultimately, that is a decision you will have to make for yourself.

But what if you are not alone in your parenting? While you might both have similar styles, what do you do when your styles clash or conflict with a co-parent?

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Here are some tips offered by Dr. Charles Sophy, the Medical Director for the Los Angeles Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS):

Communication: Take time to discuss each other's parenting styles and values. Work on listening to your partner as carefully as you would like them to listen to you.

Awareness (self and others, especially your child): Be aware if your own childhood is influencing how you are reacting to your child or your co-parent, and assess if your reaction is a fit for today's situation. Ask yourself: *Why did you react that way? Why did they?*

Ownership (your actions/non-actions): Don't play the blame game. Examine what role *your* actions or non-actions played in the conflict.

Control (who has it; who needs it): Understand each other's needs for this vital resource. Strive to be more flexible and to not have to always be in control. Never undermine your partner or your partner's parenting in front of your children.

Resolution (bring issues to closure): Unresolved issues are a sure course to dissolution. Don't put off dealing with the important conflicts.

Keep in mind: Despite your differences, you both want what's best for the children. This wasn't the first conflict and it probably won't be the last. The next time you and your spouse lock horns over a parenting matter, remember to relax, be compassionate, and know that your kids need you both.

(Source: Dr. Charles Sophy, author of the "Keep 'Em Off My Couch" blog, provides real simple answers for solving life's biggest problems. He specializes in improving the mental health of children. To contact Dr. Sophy, visit his blog at <http://drsophy.com>.)

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Worksheet #1

Identifying Your Parenting Triggers

On the list below, check off any actions or situations that act as "triggers" for you.
Feel free to add additional examples to the list.

Next rate the intensity of your reaction to each of the identified situations using a scale from 1-10, with 1 being mild and 10 representing an extreme response.

Rating: **Action / Situation:**

- | | |
|-------|--|
| _____ | When my child is verbally disrespectful to me or others. |
| _____ | When my child lies to me. |
| _____ | When my child embarrasses me in public. |
| _____ | When my child ignores or purposefully disobeys me. |
| _____ | When my child physically hurts others. |
| _____ | When my child has a tantrum or asks spoiled. |
| _____ | When my child is physically aggressive towards me. |
| _____ | When my child _____ |
| _____ | When my child _____ |
| _____ | When my child _____ |
| _____ | When my child _____ |

(Based on an exercise in the article, "ParentCop vs ParentCoach: Repairing the tear in parenting styles" by Dr. Steven Richfield, a child psychologist in Plymoth Meeting PA.)

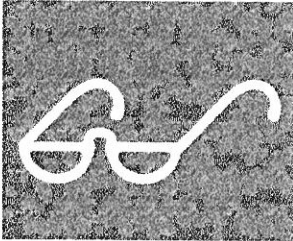
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Identify your parenting blind-spots ...



As mentioned earlier, your past experiences have helped to shape who you are today, including how you parent. As part of your growing awareness about yourself as a parent, consider the following questions:

What experiences from my childhood continue and show up in my own parenting? (Both positive and negative)

Are there any past mistakes I have not learned from and keep repeating?

How free and I to choose or change the way I parent?

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Summary / Key Points:

A parenting style refers to the broad overall pattern of your parental actions, as opposed to how you respond in just one instance. Three main types include: *authoritarian*, *permissive*, and *authoritative*

- **Authoritarian**

- Extremely strict & highly controlling
- Stresses obedience to authority and discourage discussion
- Demanding and directive—expects their orders to be obeyed
- Does not encourage give-and-take
- Does not expect children to disagree with their decisions

- **Permissive**

- Indulgent
- Accepting and warm but exerts little control
- Does not set limits—allowing children to set their own rules, schedules and activities
- Often uses rewards and bribes to motivate children
- Does not demand the high levels of behavior as authoritarian or authoritative parents

- **Authoritative**

- Moderate
- Sets limits and relies on natural consequences for children to learn from mistakes
- Explains why rules are important and why they should be followed
- Reasons with their children and considers the children's point of view even though they might not agree
- Firm with kindness, warmth, and love
- Sets high standards and encourages children to be independent

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Additional Resources:

Ideas / additional tips:

- **Think about how your own temperament or style meshes with your child's.** A youngster's temperament is only a problem when it clashes with the expectations of family, friends, or others. Acknowledge the differences (helping to lessen feelings of "blame") and work to modify your parenting practices to help achieve a "better fit". At the same time you can help expand your child's repertoire of acceptable responses and socially acceptable behaviours.
- **Avoid labeling.** Whether dealing with conflicts in style with either a co-parent or a child, try to avoid labeling him or her as difficult or bad. Labels only promote negative feelings and, in the case of children, can stick and adversely affect his/her self-concept or esteem. Accept the current situation for what it is, and work to change it for the future.
- Respect each other's individual strengths.

Books / Web sites:

Redirecting Children's Behavior.

Kathryn J. Kvols. Parenting Press. 1997.

Dr. Spock.

<http://www.drspock.com>

Find more information about parenting styles (a.k.a. "types" on this site). Simply type "parenting type" in the search box to find relevant articles.

Dr. Sophy

<http://www.drSophy.com/>

The site of Dr. Charles Sophy who serves as Medical Director for the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS).

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