

Identity Formation - What Every Child Needs (Part 4)

7. Healthy Discipline

The word discipline means to train or teach and this should be evident from the approach we have to disciplining our children. The type of discipline needs to be appropriate for the mis-demeanour. At the same time misbehaviour needs to be dealt with. Some parents are inclined not to set boundaries for their children because they don't want their children to grow up with strict parents, like they may have experienced. Having the resultant approach that would be termed 'compensation parenting'. You, as the parent, are compensating for the childhood you had. Try to look at the way you are parenting and ask yourself if anything you do is a reaction to how you were parented. I remember asking a lady how she disciplined her children and she responded saying they use a boundaryless approach, I asked her if she came from a home where her parents were very strict. She responded saying that her parents were very strict, explaining why she was now operating from the other extreme. God didn't call kids to raise themselves. Child headed households was not His idea.

Prov 22:6

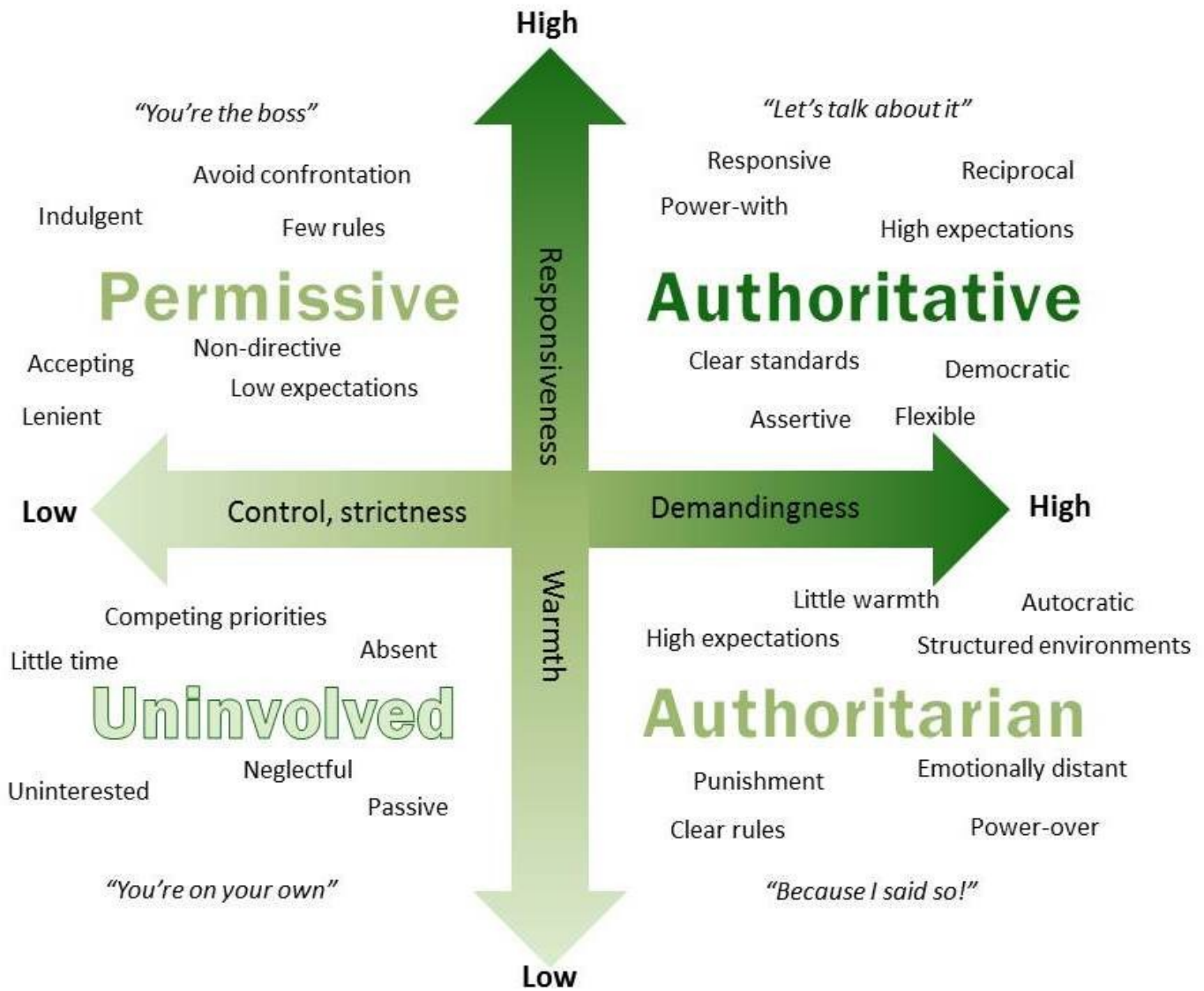
Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.

This verse shows me that discipline is instrumental to identity formation.

What are the different Parenting Styles?

Research has found that different parenting styles produce different kinds of children. Although it's all on a continuum there are definite patterns that have been found. Your parenting style will affect factors in your children such as social skills, delinquency, mental illness, self-esteem, impulsive behaviour, and egocentric behaviour. In other words your parenting style will impact your child's identity.

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When people are whole and secure adults it is often because they experienced loving discipline.

Authoritarian Parenting

- You believe kids should be seen and not heard.
- When it comes to rules, you believe it's "my way or the highway."
- You don't take your child's feelings into consideration.

Authoritative Parenting (Recommended)

- You put a lot of effort into creating and maintaining a positive relationship with your child.
- You explain the reasons behind your rules.
- You enforce rules and give consequences, but take your child's feelings into consideration.

Permissive Parenting (Indulgent)

- You set rules but rarely enforce them.
- You don't give out consequences very often.
- You think your child will learn best with little interference from you.

Uninvolved Parenting (Neglectful)

- You don't ask your child about school or homework.
- You rarely know where your child is or who she is with.
- You don't spend much time with your child.

For further study on this you can see the work of Diana Baumrind and also Maccoby & Martin.

What does Discipline do for a Child?

1 Discipline teaches a child to submit to authority

Part of your identity is SOCIAL IDENTITY. You learn that you belong somewhere where there are rules and you are accountable. You are not a law unto yourself. If a child doesn't learn this early in life that child can become very anti-social in their behaviour and attitude. Discipline helps the child to yield.

2 Discipline gives a child moral boundaries

This is a key factor in identity formation

Discipline reinforces and trains a child's conscience

Discipline teaches a child to live by convictions and not by their emotions

We identify people by their convictions

3 Discipline embeds the principle of sowing and reaping

Gal 6:7-8

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. 8 Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

Children begin to see that there are consequences for their behaviour. Sadly, those that are not disciplined often think they can get away with anything.

4 Discipline communicates love

Hebrews 12:4-9

⁴ *In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.*

⁵ *And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says,*

"My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, ⁶ because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son." ⁷ Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? ⁸ If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. ⁹ Moreover, we

have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live!

The child feels that someone is looking out for me and has my best interests at heart. This is why you sometimes have children misbehaving just to get attention, even if it is discipline. They don't view it negatively when it is done properly. In fact the Bible says they respect you for it.

5 Discipline protects a child

They are protected from themselves and for others. Sometimes we see how something desperately needs to be uprooted from a child for their own sake.

Discipline will protect them from going astray (Ps. 119:67; Pro. 22:6).

Ps 119:67

Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word.

Discipline will save them from hell and from the calamity of the wicked (Ps. 94:12-13; Pro. 23:14; I Cor. 11:32).

Ps 94:12-13

¹² *Blessed is the one you discipline, Lord, the one you teach from your law;* ¹³ *you grant them relief from days of trouble, till a pit is dug for the wicked.*

Prov 23:13-14

¹³ *Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish them with the rod, they will not die.* ¹⁴ *Punish them with the rod and save them from death.*

1 Cor 11:32

Nevertheless, when we are judged in this way by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be finally condemned with the world.

6 Discipline trains a child to make sound moral choices

Discipline will make them wise

Prov 22:15

Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far away.

7 Discipline produces fruitfulness

Discipline will help them to enjoy life more fully (Heb. 12:11)

Heb 12:11

No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

Discipline will make their lives fruitful (John 15:2).

John 15:2

He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes^[a] so that it will be even more fruitful.

Crafted Prayers to do with Discipline

Your Word says that the rod of discipline will drive folly far away (Prov 22:15) so I thank you for the impact of discipline in our home.

Your Word says in Isaiah 54:13 *“all your children shall be taught by the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children.”* I receive this for our children in Jesus’ name. They will indeed know complete peace and shall be taught directly by the Holy Spirit.

Give us wisdom in helping them to respect authority figures and help us to know how to respond when they question authority figures.

Today I choose to stop sweating the small stuff. Not everything has to be on 100%.

(Good grades and avoiding drugs are important battles to fight, NOT how fast they eat or their preference in hairstyles). Help me to keep the main thing the main thing. May we not fight about small things.

Forgive me Lord for compensation parenting, where I have tried to be the extreme opposite of what I didn’t like in my parents. Help me to parent in a manner reflecting your heart and not in reaction to what I have experienced.

Help us to remember that we are their parents first before we try to be the popular kid in the house.

Forgive me for the debilitating rules that I have created for my children, based on my own fears or ignorance. May you give us empowering rules that bring life, protection and security.

Deliver us Lord from passive parenting; the tendency to show too much affection and no discipline at all.

Deliver us Lord from authoritarian parenting; too much discipline and no affection.

Deliver us from being the absent parent, where we show no affection or discipline to our children. Forgive us for when we are physically present but emotionally absent.

Help us Lord, to be authoritative parents who show lots of affection and lots of discipline.

Help us to create a distinct culture in our home Lord. Show us how to do this by the things we teach, model, measure, inspect, reward, and celebrate. Show us how to create culture by how we respond or react to situations. Show us how to create culture by what we discipline our children for. Give us creative ways of creating rituals that reinforce and embed the culture you want for our family. Help us to create culture by design not by default Lord.

Help us to establish healthy boundaries with our children by clearly communicating to them guidelines and rules for various spaces at home. Give us clarity as we communicate how we want various areas (Car, bedroom, bathroom, neatness, ambiance, general noise levels etc)

Help us to establish healthy boundaries by setting appropriate limits where necessary. May we be clear when it comes to minimum and maximum boundaries.

May we be clear with regards to moral boundaries. Show us how to prepare our children for the world and show us how to protect them from the world.

As parents we choose to set boundaries to protect what is important in our lives and avoid the stress that comes from collapsed boundaries and enmeshment. Thank you Lord that our children will feel secure because they have boundaries.

May we model healthy self-respect boundaries in order to protect our children from abusive situations. May we show them how to be assertive and not passive. May we show them also how to be assertive but not aggressive.

May we model good boundaries with regards to stewardship of our health. May this be outworked in what we eat and drink. May we be responsible as role models Lord.

Give us wisdom and insight in instilling healthy body boundaries. May our children grow up with a clear sense of what they can permit people to see and what is private.

May the information boundaries be clear as we parent our children. Forgive us for unwise over-share. Show us what is just between the parents and not for children.

Help us as parents to be self-aware with regards to our energy levels. May we have healthy task and energy boundaries. May we also pass this on to our children. May they know when it is time to stop. May our whole family know what is draining us and how this is impacting others. May we as parents know how much work is too much. May we never become workaholics.

Help us Lord to accurately diagnose the root problems with our children. We know that how we diagnose a problem determines how we solve it. We pray for accuracy especially during times of conflict.

Help us Lord to help our children to fight fairly. We pray for effective conflict management in our home.

Help us when there is conflict around status. When I feel dishonoured by my children show me how to respond and not react. May I never lower my standards when they push my buttons.

Father show me how to enforce my authority in a godly way. When there is conflict around a task or goal give me wisdom in managing this type of conflict.

When there is conflict around a process or methodology may you help me to keep the main thing the main thing. Help me to pick up if there are any negative attitudes but may I always keep the big picture in mind.

Help us with handling interpersonal conflict in our home. May we never fight destructively in front of our children. May we model effective conflict handling skills.

Father may you help us all to grow in emotional containment. Show us how to deal with emotion dis-regulation that results in escalation and takes time to return to balance. Teach us all how to self-soothe and not act out in destructive manners.

Father I pray that in parenting our children we would have the courage to have difficult conversations. May we talk about the elephant in the room. May we confront issues with our children. Forgive me for being *the subject changer* because of my own emotional discomfort.

Father may I never withhold affection from my children as a form of discipline. May they always know that they are loved unconditionally. Forgive me for sometimes being a *with-holder*.

I commit to trying to catch them doing something right and then celebrating it

I commit to giving my children feedback on positives and not just negatives

I commit to teaching my children pro-actively instead of reactively

I will help my children to pre-decide their behaviour

Help us to find creative and effective ways of rewarding our children.

I embrace the authority you have given me Lord. No will mean no.

I commit to only giving a consequence that I am willing to enforce.

I commit to working as a team with my spouse. Help us to be in agreement as we raise our children.

Help us to work together knowing that disciplining children can be more stressful for one than the other.

May we never lead our children astray. If we are doing so in any way, may you please show us Lord. May we not wound them emotionally and let us never teach or model things that are against your Word.

Father may you help us to be role models for our children. May they see us praying. May they see us overcoming trials. May they see us being generous. May they see us loving each other. May they see our tenderness and respect. May they imitate the good you have done in us.

I commit to avoid all unbiblical forms of discipline, such as slapping, pulling ears or hair, jerking, shaking, lifting them suddenly off of the floor, grabbing suddenly, squeezing arms too tight, pinching, biting or any other eye-for-an-eye method.

In a world where many do not believe in discipline, I choose to continue disciplining my children biblically. I declare that my children will experience the positive life-giving fruit of loving biblical forms of discipline. I choose to renew my mind concerning child discipline.