

Get connected; Enriching parent-child bond in the contemporary society

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Abstract

Changes in all walks of life of our contemporary society have reflected in the family life also. Focus on raising the economic standard in the changing society might have changed the interaction pattern in the modern family too. Even though the children spend majority of their waking hours with school, parents play an important part in shaping their perspectives of life through their everyday experiences. Now, parenting children who have global exposure is highly demanding and challenging. The expectation of both the parties have changed a lot over the years. Lack of proper social support system have pushed many parents to acquire information available in the internet to clear their doubts and shape their parenting style accordingly which results in Intensive parenting. Another set of parents who found difficult to update themselves with the technological advancement eventually surrender themselves to their children results in Indifferent parenting. Identifying the proper beneficial parenting approach and thus creating a congenial family bonding will nourish a child's life. This paper tries to explain the parenting strategies which will be helpful to narrow down the gap between intensive parenting and indifferent parenting with respect to technological influence. The paper

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uses the existing documented data and observation done during the author's career as School Counsellor.

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Introduction

Art of parenting have no blueprint. As experience is the best teacher a good parent is evolved through daily experience. Good parenting skills and strategies play an important role in the personality development of the child. It starts from infancy when children develop an attachment to their caregivers in a very natural way depending on their interaction and how the caregivers positive parenting is influencing in terms of responding to the infant's needs. Positive parenting provides them security, guidance and knowledge in the childhood and it helps in promoting competence and socio-emotional well-being during adolescent years also. Security of attachment is an important cornerstone of social and personality development, because infants and young children who are securely attached have been found to develop stronger friendships with peers, more advanced emotional understanding and early conscience development, and more positive self-concepts, compared with insecurely attached children (Thompson, 2008). Parenting in the digital age has even small steps toward healthier unique benefits and challenges that no prior generation of parents has faced before. We are the first generation of parents who are raising children born to the era of digital devices. We can't deny that gadgets definitely have made some things easier, at the same time the reality is that they brought a whole new world of challenges for us to direct while raising our children. Taking device use today will yield benefits for your children now and into the future. Digital literacy is important to be at par with today's generation. Parents should take an interest in developing Digital illiteracy to have proper awareness for themselves.

Parents influence the most part of a child's development during the early years of development. There need to be a balance between discipline, maturity, warmth and responsiveness while making a child integrate into the social

system. Children are found to have a multitude of adjustment issues when parents fail to have a balance on the above mentioned spectra. To understand various parenting styles will help in guiding to create a balance between sensitivity and control while being a parent.

Types of parenting

Parenting style is seen as a sum total of attitudes or a pattern of parental authority towards the child which are conveyed to the child, creating the emotional context for the expression of parent behavior. It was the work of Diana Baumrind that the parenting styles commonly used in psychology today, are based. She was a developmental psychologist at the University of California at Berkeley, in the 1960s. Later, Maccoby and Martin refined the model in the 1980s. Baumrind understood that preschoolers were showing distinct types of behavior. Each type of behavior was highly corresponding to a specific kind of parenting. On the basis of extensive interviews, observations and analyses, Baumrind identified three parenting styles: authoritative parenting, authoritarian parenting and permissive parenting. Although Diana Baumrind is known for her work on categorizing parenting styles, it was Maccoby and Martin (1983) who expanded this 3-parenting-styles model using a two-dimensional framework. They divided Baumrind's permissive parenting style into two different types: permissive parenting (also known as indulgent parenting style) and neglectful parenting (also known as uninvolved parenting style). These four parenting styles are sometimes called the Baumrind parenting styles or Maccoby and Martin parenting styles. Research shows that genetics and environment contributes roughly fifty percent each toward a child's development. Parenting styles fairly determines the environment of a child.

Authoritarian parents (High demandingness, Low Responsiveness)

- They believe kids should follow the rules without exception.
- They don't allow kids to get involved in problem-solving challenges or obstacles.

- They make the rules and enforce the consequences without taking child's opinion.

- Instead of discipline authoritarian parents may use punishments.

- Therefore, rather than teaching a child how to make better choices, they tend to make kids feel sorry for their mistakes.

Children who grow up with strict authoritarian parents tend to follow rules much of the time, but tend to have self-esteem issues and hence their obedience comes at a price

Authoritative parents (High Demandingness, High Responsiveness)

- They have rules and they use consequences, but they explain reason behind the rules.

- Authoritative parents invest time and energy into preventing behavior problems before they start.

- They also use positive discipline strategies to reinforce good behavior, like praise and reward systems.

Researchers have found kids who have authoritative parents are most likely to become responsible adults who feel comfortable expressing their opinions.

Permissive parenting (Low Demandingness, High responsiveness)

- Permissive parents often only step in when there's a serious problem.

- When they do use consequences, they may not make those consequences stick.

- They often encourage their children to talk with them about their problems, but they usually don't put much effort into discouraging poor choices or bad behavior.

Kids who grow up with permissive parents are more likely to struggle academically and also have behavior problems as they do not follow authorities.

Uninvolved parenting (Low Demandingness and Low Responsiveness)

- Uninvolved parents tend to have little knowledge of what their children are doing.

- Children may not receive much guidance, nurturing, parental attention or even get basic needs satisfied. This might also be unintentional as the parent might be ill, single parent (overwhelmed with work pressure and bills) or alcoholic.

Children with uninvolved parents are likely to struggle with issues. They tend to perform poorly in school. They also exhibit frequent behavior problems and rank low in happiness.

Sometimes parents don't fit into just one category, so don't despair if there are times or areas where you tend to be permissive and other times when you're more authoritative.

Also, Parenting styles and Parenting Practices are two different components, that can impact the outcome of parenting. There is a distinction between parenting style and parenting practice.

Parenting style is the emotional climate and control in which parents raise their children.

Parenting practices are specific actions that parents employ in their parenting.

Even for parents with the same parenting style, they may choose to utilize different parenting practices which may affect the degree of outcomes.

Impact of different parenting style

Parenting is a big responsibility and can impact the self-confidence, self-esteem and social skills of children. The impact can be positive or negative de-

pending on the parenting styles. Even though all parents want their children to be successful adults, their conduct and behavior can sometimes harm the child's normal psychological and social development without even the parent knowing it. There are a variety of strategies that researchers give to successfully connect with their children so that parents do not go wrong while aiming for their kid's development.

Even experienced parents may need to explore new techniques and strategies in terms of strengthening the bond between parents and children.

Strategies for Getting connected with Children

Mindful parenting

Parenting is a subjective doing which is influenced by many internal and external factors and we usually do not attempt to observe how we behave to children. The prime task of parenting is to raise healthy, happy, independent, confident human beings who are capable of making rational choices in life. Mindful parenting is done by evolving the qualities of attentive listening while interacting with children, promoting emotional awareness and self-regulation in parenting, and expressing compassion and unconditional acceptance in the interactions. Mindful parenting behavior is about setting an ongoing intention to be present at the given moment. This presence can take many forms: for example, it may look like paying attention to your child, noticing your own feelings when you're in conflict with him or her, pausing before responding, and listening to your child's viewpoints, even if they differ from your own.

The model of mindful parenting we offer extends the concepts and practices of mindfulness, defined here as "the awareness that emerges through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment" (Kabat-Zinn 2003, p. 145), to the social context of parent-child relationships. The aspect of mindful parenting necessarily involve self-regulation and self control in the parent-child relationship. Hence, mindful parenting is the foremost strategy to be connect-

ed with your child. Spend quality time with your child everyday discussing his day and parts of yours. Listen to your child with the attention and focus you would give another adult. Be fully present – make eye contact; stop multitasking; concentrate on what they are trying to say. Show with your body language that their words and thoughts are your priority in that moment. Attention is a big part of connection. Follow your parental instincts, even though it might be tempting to stay best friends with your children, especially if your communication now is often on a cell phone, set boundaries for both yourself and your child. Encourage developmentally-appropriate independence. Every time your child heads off on their own, they will feel the pull to return to you, thus strengthening your connection with each other. Sometimes a little time apart, especially in the case of older children and young adults, helps both child and parent find new perspective to appreciate the other's strengths and contributions.

Being a mindful parent will help to become a more positive responsive parent and the whole family will be benefitted from the healthy and happy way of parenting.

Self –control and self regulation begins with parent, then children

Becky A. Bailey (2002, p. 26) defines self-control as mind control. She writes, “It is being aware of your own thoughts and feelings. By having this awareness, you become the director of your behavior. We need to be aware about how to be ourselves with clarity and purpose before we confront all of the “doing” of parenting. Being fully attentive and developing an internal representation of the child's perspective are important when parents and children are involved in direct interactions (Ainsworth et al. 1978; Maccoby and Martin 1983) and serve a protective function for young children who require the watchful eyes of an attachment figure to keep them from danger (Fonagy and Target 1997; Siegel 2001).

When you allow your children to disagree with you, children will feel se-

cure in having their own opinion, and they may need to experience this over and over as they grow. You may need to help them learn to express their differences appropriately, and practicing this with them helps them grow into young adults who can remain connected and secure even through difficult conversation.

Communication

Communication between the parent and the child involves more than just simple expression. The quality of every social relationship depend upon the quality of communication. Communication is a two-way process of giving and receiving ideas, information and emotions between persons. Communication between the parent and the child involves more than just simple expression, it involves some significant interaction. Communication between parents and children is not essentially difficult but needs certain skills in the contemporary era. Effective daily communication with the child helps the relationship parent and child to be harmonious and complex development. Few things are more valuable to the child than the chance to talk with one of his/her parents (Maurice Elias. Steven Tobias. Brian Friedlander, 2007: 215).

Communication is done on three levels: logical, verbal and nonverbal. Out of these, the logical level (of words) is only 7% of the total act of communication; 38% occurs at the para verbal level (tone, volume, speed of speech) and 55% at non-verbal level (facial expression, position, movement between these levels, communication can be effective otherwise the message will have no effect (PetronelaPracsiu, 2008).

Parents need to focus on building an affectionate relationship through warm and empathetic communication with children. If the parent is possessing a critically judgmental style of communication with the child, he will always try to defend himself. Positive communication which involves active listening as well as respectful and considerate style will result in well-being of children. Parents need to model good communication skills. Discuss with children about the behaviours that you would like to see developing in your

family and explain the boundaries of acceptability. Be specific about negative consequences when there is intolerant behavior happens in family. Allow children to take decisions in minor things related with them by considering their age. Be realistic while discussing conflicts, choose what to focus on and what to let go. Accepting and appreciating will help children to keep the communication open. Listen carefully and assist them in a problem-solving process but keep adult preaching to a minimum level. It is very important to use your communication to enhance your child's self-esteem.

Creating opportunities for conversation is very important. Car rides can be great for this when children are old enough to ride up front. Working quietly side by side at dishes or yard work, or a leisurely walk outside, can also set the stage for talking and listening. Allow for quiet and potentially long pauses as you wait for each other to fill the space with thoughts and feelings. If nothing is forthcoming, ask an open-ended question and listen to your child's response without interrupting or overriding their viewpoint. Show with your body language that their words and thoughts are your priority in that moment. If they have a hard time getting words out, let them take the time they need, without giving up on the conversation.

Tech –free family time

Technology has grabbed most of our treasured family time. Gadgets have become our constant companions. Today's children are growing in a digital world and so learning the healthy style of digital use and teaching the children the same is important.

• Make your family laws

Gadgets when used appropriately enhance our daily life. But too much of screen time can hamper the natural happenings in a family such as face-to-face interaction, playing time, casual discussions, a walk together or eating together and sleep. Make your family plans for thoughtful use of social media and gadgets.

- **Be attentive about your child's virtual world**

As you attempt to know about your child's real world friends you should know about your child's virtual friends too. Apply your parenting guidelines in their virtual platform use also. Be aware of the social media platforms, apps or software your children are using and monitor their online activities also.

- **Set time limit**

Like any other activities, in the terms of gadget use also some reasonable limits have to be maintained. Media use, like all other activities, should have reasonable limits. Make outdoor playtime a daily priority, especially for small children. Encourage freeplay which stimulates creativity and find time to appreciate your child's artistic talent also so that they will not be glued to the screen when they have leisure time.

- **Make use of screen time also as family time**

Parents can interact and create a bonding time during screen time also by watching together and playing together on screen. You have a good opportunity there to demonstrate their good sportsmanship. You can discuss your life experience and memories so that they get to know your perspectives also and thereby a guidance too.

- **Be good role models**

Creating family meal time, sleeping time and family conversation time as no-phone zones is important to taking back family time. Children usually observe the parents and learn habits than picking from their instructions. When parents limit their screen time and spent time with kids, it also sets an important example for our kids.

- **It's OK for your adolescent to be online.**

Using social media as a teen will help them to explore more about themselves, just be sure your kid is presenting an appropriate behavior in both the real and online worlds. Kids are kids, they may not know about the privacy

issues in social media. so it is important to educate children about the significance of privacy and the dangers of social media platforms predators and sexting. Teens need to know that once content is shared with others, even if they delete or remove it completely, still it is part of digital footprint. When a problem is spotted communicate with them well and handle their mistakes with empathy. Gadget free time, indulging in outdoor activities together and reading books together nourishes parent-child bonding. A parent and child can bond over things that bring you both joys, make you both smile; leave you both feeling great afterward. Find shared interests and spend time doing them together. If you find it difficult to get a common ground, start by sharing things that one of you enjoys and expects the other might like.

Promote self evaluation

Children can take decisions in minor matters related to them which improve their confidence. Let your child take the lead once in a while. It may mean things will be slower, messier, or less efficient. Give your child the gift of your patience and the opportunity to spread their wings and feel your trust in them. As their confidence grows, so will their effectiveness. Believe in them and they will believe in themselves. Let your children learn through their mistakes, as you once did yourself and love them unconditionally for it. When they are ready to do a self analysis about the mistake they made listen to them with compassion. Attention is a big part of connection. Self assessment helps children be confident, take ownership of their actions and develops increased high order thinking. This can be done by asking simple questions during family time; like how many times were you ready on time for school this week? How many times there was an argument among siblings when mom/dad had to interfere etc. Cognitive input, such as exposure to words, music and puzzles, promotes the ability to learn. Emotional input, like hugs and praise, fosters a nurturing and supportive relationship between child and caregiver. If one type of input or the other is lacking, it hampers the child's development.

Conclusion

Parenting is not about thrusting your opinions on the child but helping a child create a niche of his own. It's a learning process for both child and parent. Parenting is an opportunity for self realization and self awareness for the parent as an individual and also a learning process too, therefore being true to yourself is of immense importance.

Honestly acknowledging a parenting error conveys a message to children that they are not themselves "bad" or to blame for their parents' behavior, and fosters trust between parents and children. When a parent recognizes and own their mistake, it gives a chance to show children, ways to make things right when one has erred. Apologize gently and thoroughly, and give them opportunity to see that nobody is perfect, not even the most capable, experienced, confident people. When our children are made to connect with the less-than-perfect side of ourselves and see us recover from a setback, we reassure them about their own vulnerabilities and their capacity for recovery.

Honesty and credibility comes as a package. You need to be credible for your advice to resonate with young people. It's also about being open to the positive sides of the technology and the ways in which young people are learning and connecting to one another through these technologies. It is highly advisable for parents to learn about technology to guide their children and lay down proper rules that can resonate with young people. The parents have to be a role model in gadget and social media usage too. The connected parent has to learn new things all the time to keep track of technological developments and understand how their children are using technology, with its risks and possible benefits.

Researchers have found kids who have authoritative parents are most likely to become responsible adults who feel comfortable expressing their opinions. Children raised with authoritative discipline tend to be happy and successful. All the other three parenting types namely authoritarian, permissive and uninvolved tend to make children develop into adults with issues like self esteem related, discipline issues or other behavioral problems.

With genuine dedication and commitment to being the best parent you can be, you can maintain a positive relationship with your child while still establishing your authority in a healthy manner and over time, your child will reap the benefits of your authoritative style.

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