

Why Authoritarian Parenting May Not Benefit Children

Consequences of Authoritarian Parenting

By: R. Renée Bembry

Children of authoritarian parents are often sad, frustrated, anxious, rebellious, withdrawn, and have self-esteem issues.

Developmental psychologists have been studying parental influence on child development, and social and *instrumental competence for more than 85 years. The most vigorous aspects of the studies have been conducted in the area of *parenting style*.

AtHealth.com, "Parenting Style and Its Correlates" (PSIC) describes parenting as a "complex activity that includes many specific behaviors that work individually and together to influence child outcomes." PSIC also suggests that although individual aspects of parenting such as spanking a child or reading to a child have an influences on child development, individual aspects of child rearing should not be considered as playing major roles on their own accord.

PSIC places parenting styles in four categories as described below:

- **Indulgent** otherwise known as Permissive or Nondirective
- **Authoritarian** as summarized below
- **Authoritative** otherwise known as Democratic.
- **Uninvolved** parents are practically unresponsive and non-demanding

Primarily, the Authoritarian Style will be addressed here. However, since the Authoritarian and the Authoritative styles appear similar and in fact are similar, it is fair to point

out that the *key differences in these two styles lie in how each type of parent controls their children*. Both types of parents have high expectations of their children in regard to behavior and achievement. However, unlike authoritarian parents, authoritative parents allow free exchange of information with their children, tend to explain things to their children, and do not place psychological pressures on their children.

Whereas the Uninvolved parenting style lies at one extreme in the area of parenting, the Authoritarian parenting style lies at the other end of the spectrum. Also, as extremes go, whereas Uninvolved parent means almost exactly what it says, little to no parental involvement, Authoritarian parenting means almost total parental control of a child's physical, intellectual, and psychological life.

Authoritarian parents tend to form relationships with their children in which discipline is enacted without love or affection. Children are expected to "do" and scolded should they ask "why". Furthermore, Authoritarian parents will use any means necessary to make their children conform including spanking and humiliation. Consequences of Authoritarian parenting are aplenty and may lead to:

Children's Increased Inability to Discuss Problems with Parents

The authoritarian "do as I say without question" notion doesn't offer much for children to learn in the way of problem-solving because they are taught to "act" and to "respond" as opposed to being taught to "think" and to "understand" in regards to how one must conduct his life. As a result, when time comes for many of these youths to deal with problems, usually during teenage years, the children are as good as forced to seek outside-the-home help due to their parents' adamant refusal to discuss concrete issues with them on "real" terms.

An example of this is the child who says he joined a gang because no one at home listened to or cared about "him" only about what he did. The fact that a gang-joining child must submit to a gang initiations, even if the process involves breaking the law, is not always enough to deter a child from subjecting himself to the initiation if that child has been living under a dictatorship that he cannot understand. The fact that gang members assure one another that they "care" about one another, and they "accept" each other as they are can be all the convincing needed to sway a wayward child.

Children's Ability to Think for Themselves Becomes Stifled

Because children raised by authoritarian parents are forbidden to question authority under any circumstances, they grow up with a stifled ability to think for themselves, and have low social skills. In fact, one could argue that children taught to obey authority without question are placed at risk of becoming abused by their superiors; and to make matters worse, these children, may be without an adult to talk to since they fear their parents; and most children will not share major problems with adults outside their home.

Abusive Parent-Child Relationships

Another major consequence of authoritarian parenting presents itself when misplaced punishment, which authoritarian parents tend to confuse with discipline, leads to physical abuse, emotional abuse, or both. The fact that authoritarian parents tend not to discern differences between discipline and punishment coupled with the fact that they tend to utilize spanking as a means of discipline/punishment on a regular basis, leaves them without out "real" means of discipline/punishment when major problems occur. This lack of "back up" proves to be a catalyst to physical and emotional abuse. Children of authoritarian parents are more likely to be subjected to punishment for even the smallest of offenses than to be disciplined in a means that will allow them to learn and

grow from their mistakes.

Children Believe their Success is More Important to Parents than They Are.

Other consequences of authoritarian parenting stems from the verity that these parents often hold their children to extremely high achievement levels; in fact so high that their children often come to believe the parents are only concerned with the children's successes or lack thereof as opposed to having concern for the children.

Children May Repeat Undesirable Lifestyle with their Own Kids

The most alarming consequence of Authoritarian parenting may lie in the fact that children learn what they live and grow to raise their children using the same tactics that were imposed on them. For many, breaking away from an undesirable lifestyle can be difficult, to say the least.

*Instrumental competence is the ability to maneuver about your surroundings in order to achieve your goals.

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