



Can Negative Parenting Styles Harm Adolescents: The Answer is 'Yes'

Most of us know the importance of a positive parenting style.

Much research has been done into the effects of parenting styles on young children, but what about adolescents? Can a parenting style affect them in different ways? According to a Swiss study, the answer is yes. A negative parenting style where parents excessively restrict, criticise and are inconsistent in their expectations does affect adolescents when it comes to mental wellbeing and sleep.

In a University Hospital study conducted in Basel, Switzerland, a total of 246 adolescents (recruited

from high school, average age 17) completed several questionnaires in regard to parenting styles and to their symptoms of anxiety and depression. They also filled in a questionnaire assessing sleep-related personality traits and completed a sleep log for 7 consecutive days. The results of the study supported the notion that a negative parenting style can impact adolescents' psychological wellbeing (negative moods, anxiety and depression) and can also be related to adverse sleep patterns.

KEY FINDINGS

- Negative parenting styles were highly linked to low sleep quality, negative mood, increased daytime sleepiness and increased symptoms of anxiety and depression in adolescents.
- Parenting styles are related to young people's sleep patterns even at the beginning of late adolescence.
- Restoring and satisfying sleep is crucial for cognitive, emotional and behavioural functioning.

- A high degree of support was positively associated with adolescents' favourable sleep patterns and sleep-related personality traits.
- The commonly held belief that adolescents' daytime sleepiness is a matter of motivation or school refusal was not found. Instead, findings supported giving parents counselling to enhance positive parenting styles such as Support and Commendation, and to reduce negative parenting styles such as Restriction, Reproach and Inconsistency.
- An adolescent's emotional relationship to their parents may remain close even in late adolescence.



THINGS YOU CAN DO

- ✓ Review your own parenting style. Are there areas where change might be beneficial to the emotional climate of the family?
- ✓ Learn more about an Authoritative style of parenting – one that is nurturing and supportive, but also sets boundaries and reinforces consequences.
- ✓ Keep lines of communication open. Stay connected to kids, particularly in the adolescent years.
- ✓ Encourage healthy living habits: exercise, good nutrition, regular and sufficient sleep times.
- ✓ Help to build self-esteem and confidence in kids.
- ✓ Monitor any negative changes in your child's mood, or signs of ongoing tension and stress. Also monitor your own stress levels and coping skills. Don't hesitate to consult a GP or psychologist if you feel professional help is needed for your child or yourself.

*Source: Perceived parenting styles, personality traits and sleep patterns in adolescents, Brand, Hatzinger, Beck & Holsboer-Trachslar. Journal of Adolescence 32 (2009) 1189e1207
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TAKEAWAY

FOUNDER, YOU CAN DO IT! EDUCATION

Our style of parenting affects our kids' health and behaviour and vice versa. An adverse parenting style can result in a negative emotional climate, which can in turn affect our kids' personalities, anxiety levels and sleep patterns.

Adopting a positive parenting style of warmth, encouragement, consistency and support, contributes to our kids' physical and emotional wellbeing.