



## Is Authoritative Parenting Always the Optimum Style?

**Research has indicated that an authoritative (warm and responsive) parenting style is associated with healthy developmental outcomes for children.**

Two researchers set out to establish which parenting style is associated with optimum youth outcomes among adolescents of Spanish families. They surveyed a sample of 1,416 teenagers from 12–17 years of age and asked them to report on their parent's child-rearing practices. The teens' parents were classified into one of four groups - authoritative, authoritarian, indulgent or neglectful. The adolescents were then contrasted on four different outcomes – self-esteem (academic, social, emotional, family and physical), psychosocial maladjustment (hostility/aggression, negative self-esteem and self-adequacy,

emotional irresponsiveness and instability and negative worldview), personal competence (social competence, grade point average, and number of failing grades) and problem behaviours (school misconduct, delinquency and drug use).

Results showed that both the indulgent and authoritative parenting styles were associated with better outcomes than authoritarian and neglectful parenting.

Overall, results supported the idea that in Spain the optimum style of parenting is the indulgent one, as adolescents' scores in the four sets of youth outcomes were equal or better than the authoritative style of parenting.

### KEY FINDINGS

- Adolescents from indulgent families scored more positively on the four sets of outcomes than did those from authoritarian and neglectful families.
- Surprisingly, adolescents from authoritative families performed worse than those from

indulgent families on several outcomes associated with emotional adjustment and academic achievement. Adolescents from indulgent families compared with those from authoritative families were less emotionally responsive (i.e., more emotionally insulated from others), held a more negative worldview (i.e., an overall evaluation of life as more insecure, threatening, hostile or uncertain), scored lower on emotional self-esteem (i.e., positive feelings and self-appraisal about one's emotional state and control over Stressors), and scored worse on the number of failing grades.

## THINGS YOU CAN DO

- ✓ Communicate and be open to compromise. Open communication is a given, and there will be times when we need to meet our kids half way to achieve a positive outcome.
- ✓ Admit mistakes. If you've made a mistake, say so. Kids respect honesty, not double standards.
- ✓ Kids need to know where they stand. Clear rules and realistic expectations work every time.
- ✓ Consequences work. Effective consequences are task-specific, time-specific and related to the behaviour you want to see change. (DOES INDULGENT PARENTING INVOLVE CONSEQUENCES?)
- ✓ Don't argue or debate. If boundaries and consequences are set, there's little point in arguing the toss. Consequences can be changed, provided they're still task and time-specific and attainable.
- ✓ Be willing to listen. Kids often have a valid point to make or a reason for not sticking to boundaries. Listening helps to give us insight into what's going on in their heads.
- ✓ Create down time. Yes, parents need downtime, but so do kids. Family down time can be as simple as playing an app together.
- ✓ Keep praise in context. Cleaning teeth is not praiseworthy, it's expected. Only push the praise button when appropriate.

