

What Parenting Style is Best? The 4 Parenting Styles Explained

If you've ever wondered, "Am I doing this right?" you're not alone. Parenting can feel complex, and many families use a mix of approaches without even realizing it. To help make sense of this, experts often group parenting into four main styles: authoritarian, permissive, uninvolved, and authoritative. Understanding these styles can help you see what's working, what might need a tweak, and how your approach affects your child's growth and physical and emotional safety over time.



Let's get a better understanding of each style.

Authoritarian Parenting: Strict and Rule-Focused

This parenting style leans on rules and obedience, with little room for discussion.

You might hear phrases like "Because I said so" or see a strong focus on doing things "the right way" without much flexibility. Mistakes may be met with quick correction instead of conversation.

Children in this environment may follow directions well, but they can also feel pressure to be "perfect." Over time, this pressure can lead to anxiety, fear of making mistakes, or difficulty speaking up. Without opportunities to openly express and process emotions, children may also have difficulty developing strong emotional regulation skills.

In the classroom, they may hesitate to try new things or become upset when things don't go as planned.

While structure is important, young children need space to explore, ask questions, and learn through trial and error.

Permissive Parenting: Loving but Loose on Limits

Permissive parenting is full of warmth and affection, but with minimal rules or boundaries. This can look like letting things slide to avoid conflict, giving in after a child protests, or allowing children to take the lead most of the time.

These children often feel loved and heard, which is a great strength. But without clear limits, they may have a harder time with self-control and developing healthy habits. They often decide when to go to bed or what they want to eat.

In group settings like preschool, they may struggle with routines, sharing, or transitions simply because they're not used to consistent expectations.

Children do best when love and limits go hand in hand. Boundaries help them understand what's expected and give them a sense of security.

Uninvolved Parenting: Limited Engagement

In this parenting style, caregivers may be less involved, whether due to stress, time, or other challenges.

In everyday life, this might look like limited communication, inconsistent routines, and little emotional connection. This may be unintentional, but it is serious, as it can lead to neglect.

Children whose parents follow this style may seek extra attention or appear withdrawn. They often demonstrate high resilience or self-sufficiency, but these have developed through necessity. Over time, they may struggle with confidence, forming strong relationships, and academic challenges.

In a preschool setting, a child experiencing uninvolved parenting may seem withdrawn, overly quiet, or unsure of how to engage with peers and adults. They may also seek frequent attention and reassurance from teachers.

Authoritative Parenting: Warm, Clear, and Balanced

This style is often seen as the “sweet spot.” It blends clear rules with warmth and understanding.

Here, parents set boundaries while still acknowledging their child’s feelings: “I know you’re upset, but it’s time to clean up before dinner.” They explain the “why,” and listen while still maintaining their stance.

Children raised with this approach tend to feel safe and secure. They know what’s expected, and they trust that their feelings matter. Over time, this helps them build confidence, self-control, and strong social skills. In a preschool setting, they often adapt well to routines, try new things, and express their emotions in healthy ways.

Many educators recommend this balanced approach because it supports both independence and emotional growth, helping children build confidence while learning to follow rules and think for themselves.

A Balanced Approach

Successful parents adjust their approach based on different situations. For example, an authoritarian parent may become more permissive when their child isn’t feeling well. “Sure, you can watch more TV today since you need your rest.” A permissive parent may be firmer when safety is at stake, like requiring their child to hold their hand in a parking lot.

Children do best when they experience clear, consistent expectations alongside warm, responsive relationships. This helps them feel safe to explore, learn, and grow, while also supporting emotional regulation, social skills, and resilience over time. When caregivers prioritize a child’s physical and emotional safety, stay present and consistent, and grow alongside them, they help build a strong foundation for lifelong learning.

School Connections

At Chesterbrook Academy, we partner with families to support consistency between home and school and create nurturing classroom environments where children feel safe, confident, and ready to learn each day.

To learn more, find a school today!