

Counselling Teens: Navigating Parental Issues



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<https://www.pexels.com/photo/a-woman-having-a-therapy-session-with-a-psychologist-5234573/>

Key areas covered:

- 1. Role of Parents during adolescence*
- 2. Parenting styles*
- 3. Attachment and self-esteem*
- 4. The mother/Father wound*
- 5. Interventions*

Role of Parents in Adolescence.

- *The relation between parents and child becomes more important as and when the child grows up and enters the adolescence age.*
- *Adolescence is the age that falls between 10 and 19. At this stage, maximum brain development happens and a child gains knowledge of things around him/her and becomes more aware.*
- *Parents play an essential role in influencing how adolescents interact with the complex factors that shape their development.*
- *As children mature into adolescence, the parenting relationship evolves, and parents require new developmentally- appropriate skills and strategies to meet their children's needs. (UNICEF, 2021).*

Role of Parents in Adolescence Cont....d

Parents have a primary role in modeling effective attitudes and behaviors and in directing their children toward structured, healthy activities. Important ways a parent guides a child's path is by providing the child with attention and making the child feel important and valued.

Children do not have the experience, development, or resources to make important decisions at an early age. Parents therefore bear the responsibility of encouraging education and extracurricular activities, which contribute to mental, emotional, and psychological development.

Parents also guide children away from danger, too much television, sedentary living and foods that are too unhealthy.

As caregivers, parents may also play a role as the original source of the adolescent's problems stemming from substance abuse, violence, divorce, bad relationships, and communication in the family or other issues.

4 Key Roles of Parents in Adolescence

- *Friendship*

Parents are the first friends of a child. They help, guide, and teach him/her. All through their lives parents try to help their children by adopting the various roles sometimes that of a teacher while the other times of a guide or mentor.

However, when a child enters teenage or adolescence, then the parents' major role begins. At this age, the child is in a very fragile state of mind. He/she doesn't want anyone to be his/her guide or teacher. He/she just wants a person to be there for his moral support.

If the parents can become the friends of their child, then their relationship tends to strengthen and become stronger over time.

- *Respectful relations.*

Children tend to get inspired when they see their parents lead by example and try to emulate the same in their lives. Such children then tend to develop healthy relationships in their lives and have better scope of having sorted and peaceful adolescent age.

- *Role model for good habits*

Every child at all aspects of his/her age looks towards his/her parents for acceptance and guidance. Consciously or unconsciously, knowingly, or unknowingly, parents are the role model for each child. Children try to emulate and copy the habits that parents have them in their lives. By default, therefore, parents become role models for their children, and they must enact the role to perfection.

- *Healthy lifestyle*

Parents play a crucial role in ensuring that their child follows a healthy lifestyle. They must ensure that the child is eating the right kind of food, does the right amount of exercise, sleeps and wakes on time and gets the right amount of outside sunshine and air. If the child follows a healthy lifestyle, then it will be beneficial for him. He will grow up to be a healthy and mentally and physical strong individual.

Role of parents in Adolescence Cont..d

- *Positive attitude towards life and learning*

Parents tend to influence the attitude of their adolescence child towards various things such as life and learning that life teaches us. For example, if parents tell the children that learning is fun and enjoyable, then there is a higher rate of the child developing a positive attitude towards school and learning. This kind of positive behavior towards things makes a child develop positive outlook towards life.

- *Correct usage of technology*

Technology is both a boon and bane depending on its usage. So, parents play the major role of teaching the teenage children of how to use the technology in the correct manner and not fall prey to its flaws.

- *Emotional support*

The biggest support that parents can give to their adolescent children is the emotional support. If they help the child during the time when they are emotionally weak then the child sees it as a sign of support and backup.

Such a child who gets mental and emotional support from home itself through his parents tends to become quite emotionally strong. During the adolescent age, it becomes even more prominent as at such a fragile age, the child tends to become more emotionally weak. So, emotional support from parents makes the child stronger.



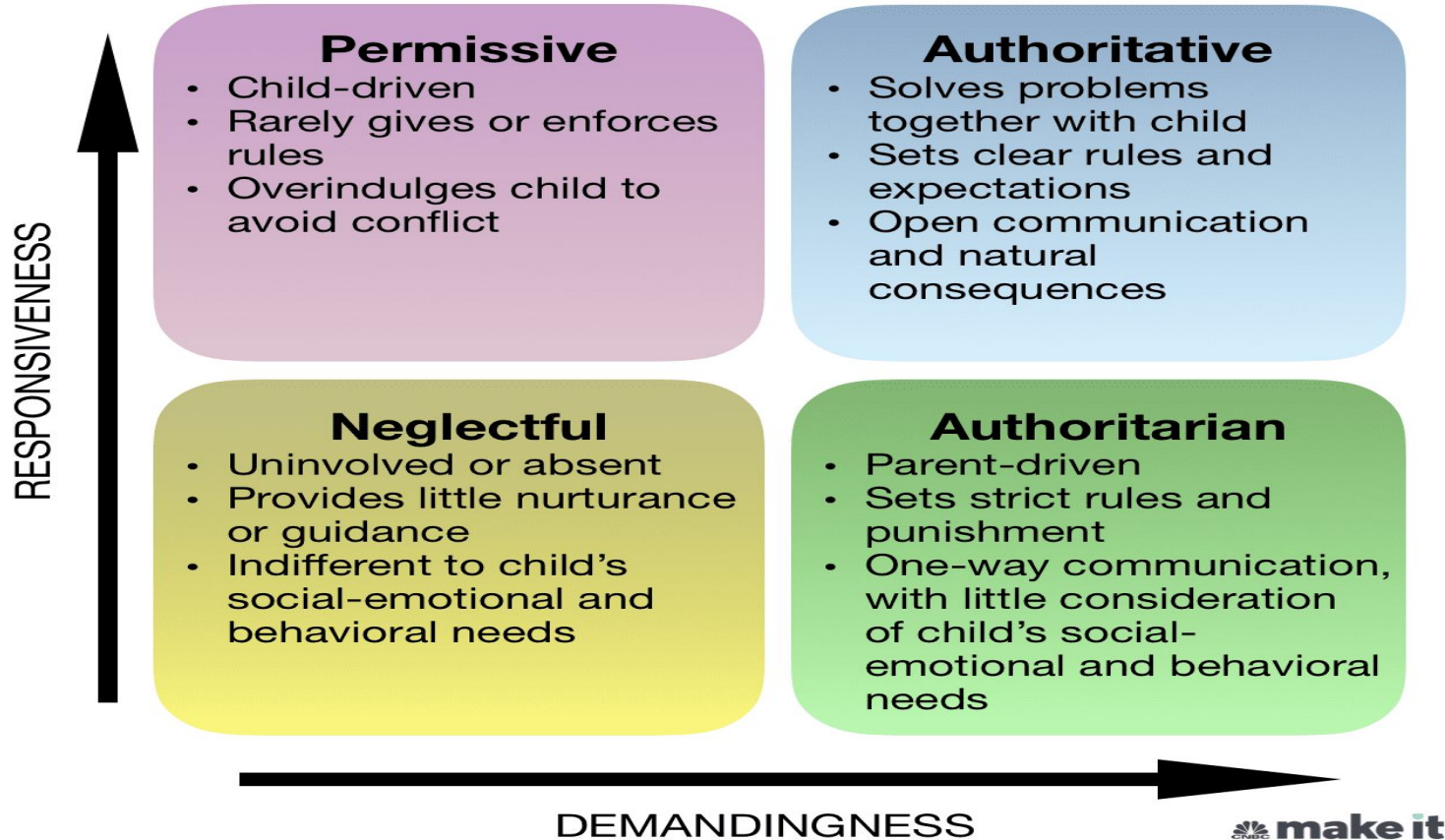
PARENTING STYLES

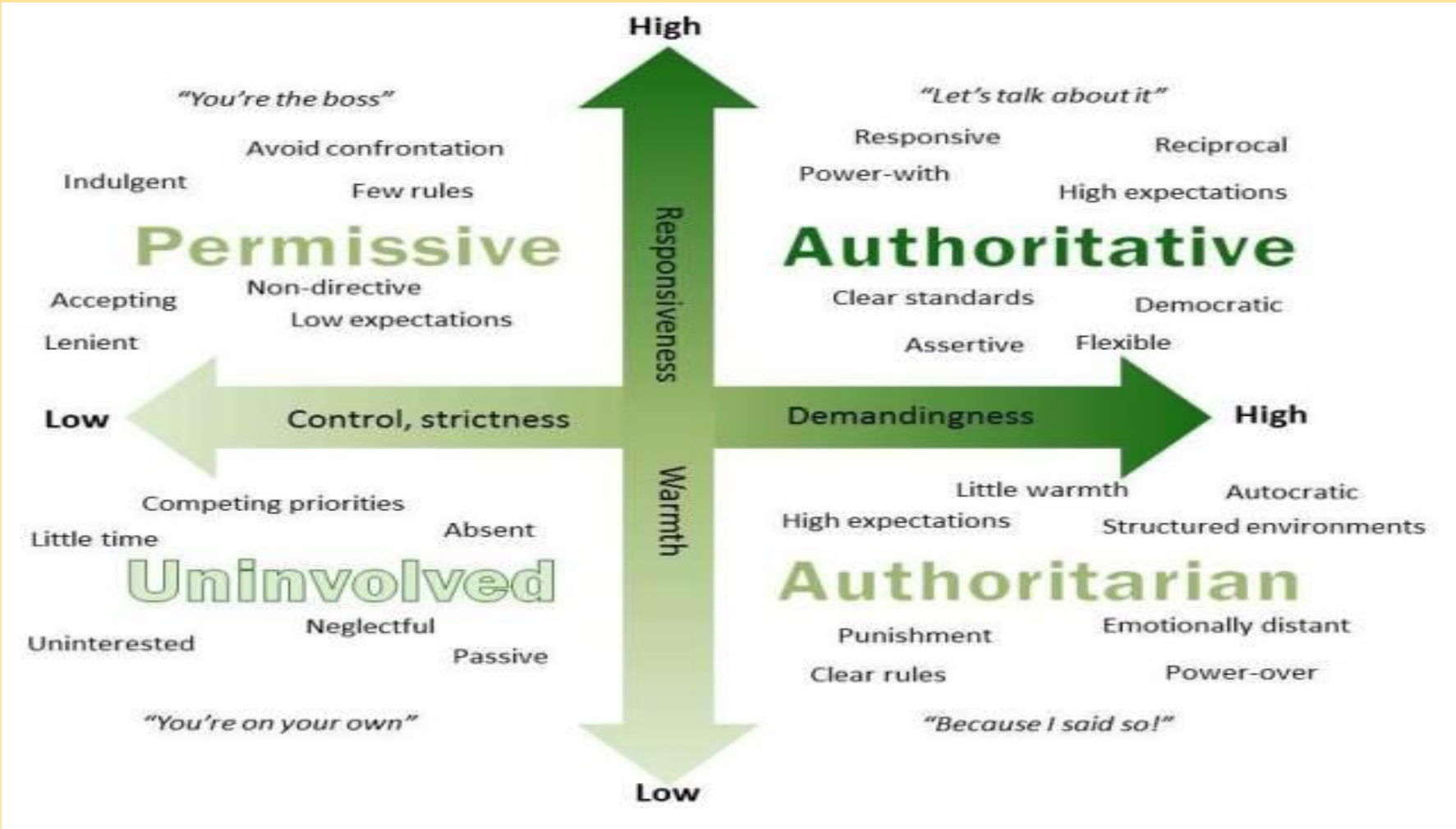
•Parenting styles have a major impact on our children. They can affect everything from a child's self-esteem and physical health to how they relate to others.

•Parenting styles should support healthy growth and development because how parents interact with their children and how they discipline them will influence them for the rest of their life.

•There are four parenting styles: Authoritarian, Permissive, Authoritative and Uninvolved.

The 4 Parenting Styles





AUTHORITARIAN/ DISCIPLINARIAN PARENTING

- *The authoritarian parenting style is characterized by high levels of parental control and low levels of parental responsiveness.*
- *The authoritarian style is directive, and obedience- and status-oriented. These strict parents demand blind obedience from their children without explanation. They use reasons such as "because I said so."*
- *Authoritarian parents view themselves as authority figures. They use stern discipline and harsh punishment, such as corporal punishment, to obtain behavioral and psychological control. Their disciplinary strategies are dictatorial and intimidating Baumrind D (2012).*

Effects of Authoritarian Parenting

- Unhappy disposition
- Less independent
- Insecure
- Low self-esteem
- More rebellious behavior.
- More behavioral or conduct issues.
- Less emotional regulation skills and more temper tantrums.
- Worse academic performance
- Poorer social competence
- Prone to internalizing behavior and mental issues
- Substance abuse
- Less coping skills
- Prone to depression
- Linked to avoidant attachment and disorganized attachment
 - They may also be more likely to lie to avoid punishment.
 - They are likely to lie during therapy.

AUTHORITATIVE PARENTING

- *Quite similar to authoritarian parenting style as parents establish rules and guidelines that their children are expected to follow.*
- *According to Baumrind, authoritative parents are good at setting standards and monitoring their children's behavior.*
- *Their disciplinary methods are assertive and supportive rather than intrusive, restrictive, or punitive.*
- *For authoritative parents, the goal is to raise children who are socially responsible, cooperative, and self-regulated.*
- *The combination of expectation and support helps children of authoritative parents develop skills such as independence, self-control, and self-regulation.*
- *This parenting style is also known as democratic.*

Effects of Authoritative Parenting

Authoritative parenting styles tend to result in children that:

- Appear happy and content
 - More independent
 - More active
 - Higher academic performance
 - High self-esteem
 - Competent social skills
 - Zeinali A, Sharifi, et al (2011). Better mental health – less depression, anxiety, suicide attempts, delinquency, alcohol, and drug use
 - Less violent tendencies
 - Develop secure attachment. Doinita & Maria (2015)
 - Good parent-child relationship
- As clients they may come for pathologies and therefore parenting is not the issue but comes as a protective factor.

PERMISSIVE PARENTING



- *Permissive parents are also referred to as indulgent parents, they make very few demands of their children.*
- *These parents rarely discipline their children because they have relatively low expectations of maturity and self-control.*

Permissive parents prioritize being their child's friend rather than being a parent.

They are warm and attentive but tend to set few rules, rarely enforce rules, and have few expectations.

They allow their children to make their own decisions.

Effects of Permissive Parenting

- *Permissive parenting often results in children who rank low in happiness and self-regulation. These children are more likely to experience problems with authority and tend to perform poorly in school.*
- *In counselling these are clients that have conduct problems in school as they find it hard to follow rules.*

Other Characteristics of these children:

- *Cannot follow clear rules*
- *Poorer emotional regulation*
- *Lack of self-control*
- *Problem behavior such as aggression*
- *Lower self-confidence*
- *Egocentric tendencies*
- *Encounter more problems in relationships and social interactions*
- *Associated with ambivalent attachment*

UNINVOLVED / NEGLECTFUL PARENTING

- In addition to the three major styles introduced by Baumrind, psychologists Eleanor Maccoby and John Martin proposed a fourth style: uninvolved or neglectful parenting.
- The uninvolved parenting style is characterized by few demands, low responsiveness, and very little communication.
- While these parents fulfill the child's basic needs, they are generally detached from their child's life. They might ensure that their kids are fed and have shelter but offer little to nothing in the way of guidance, structure, rules, or even support.
- These parents may seem indifferent, unresponsive, and dismissive. In some cases, these parents may reject or neglect the needs of their children. They may also be physically or emotionally abusive.

Effects of Uninvolved Parenting

- Uninvolved parenting styles rank lowest across all life domains.
- These children tend to:
 - Lack self-control.
 - Have low self-esteem.
 - Have difficulties with social interactions outside the home.
 - Don't develop emotional connection with uninvolved parents.
 - Are less competent than their peers.
- A family child 2019 study found that children raised by neglectful parents tend to struggle in school, experience more depression, have worse social relationships, have difficulty controlling their emotions, and experience more anxiety. Kuppens S, Ceulemans E. (2019)

Transference during counselling

- *Transference occurs when a person redirects some of their feelings or desires for another person to an entirely different person. One example of transference is when you observe characteristics of your father or mother in the therapist. They can be good or bad feelings.*
- *For example, transference in therapy happens when a client attaches anger, hostility, love, adoration, or a host of other possible feelings onto their therapist. Therapists know this can happen. They actively try to monitor for it. Transference involves a wide range of emotions. Negative emotions of transference include:*

- *Anger*
- *disappointment*
- *Frustration*
- *Hostility*
- *Fear*
- *Frustration*
-

Positive emotions of transference include:

- *Attentiveness*
- *Love*
- *attachment*
- *idealization*
- *affection*

*Counselling
Techniques that
work with
adolescents.*

- *Create a space that is safe, private, and gives them your full attention.*
- *Listen and reflect.*
- *Never Judge.*
- *Don't over-identify.*
- *Differentiate between danger and drama.*
- *Activate their family systems.*
- *Small talk matters.*



1. What parenting style did your parents use?

2. To what extent do you feel that it molded you into who you became?

*How does parenting
affect Self-Esteem ?*



Mothers and self-esteem

- *A study conducted on adolescent self-esteem and attachment showed that, for both sons and daughters, changes in the perceived quality of the mother-adolescent attachment relationship were positively linked with changes in self-esteem.*
- *Mothers remain a primary attachment figure during adolescence and young adulthood (Rosenthal and Kobak [2010](#)).*



Fathers and self-esteem

- *Changes in the perceived quality of the attachment relationship with father were only significantly linked to changes in daughters' self-esteem, not to that of sons.*
- *changes in the perceived quality of the relationship between adolescents' parents were positively linked with changes in self-esteem.*
- *Fathers' potential for influencing their son's self-esteem lies mainly within their role as part of the parental dyad, more specifically in the way that sons perceive the quality of the relationship of their parents.*

The Dilemma of attachment

- *Parents experience the increase in parent-child conflict that occurs during adolescence as a personal rejection of the relationship and their importance to their child.*
- *Presence of dilemma- Connecting with parents while exploring new social roles away from home vs developing attachment relationships with peers and romantic partners*
- *Successful and healthy transition to adolescence is made possible by secure attachment and emotional connectedness with parents and not detachment.*



Significance of Attachment in Adolescence



- *Secure attachment- Reduced likelihood of engaging in excessive drinking, drug use and risky sexual behavior. Securely attached adolescents suffer fewer mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, inattention, thought problems, conduct disorder, delinquency and aggression*
- *Insecure attachment is associated with suicidality, drug use, and aggressive and delinquent behavior.*
- *Among females, attachment security is related to lower rates of teenage pregnancy, fewer weight-related concerns, less frequent eating disorders.*
- *Attachment security in adolescence also predicts more constructive coping skills and significant gains in social skills from 16 to 18 years of age, successful transition to high school and healthier relationships*

The mother wound and Mother hunger

- *A loss or a lack of mothering.*
- *Deficit in the mother-daughter or mother-son relationships that is passed down through generations, and is a reflection on how we have experienced parenting.*
- *Mother Hunger- the aching sense of loneliness, worthlessness, and longing for something more, as a result of deprivation of either nurturing, guidance or protection by one's mother.*

Signs of a mother wound

- *Never feeling they had their mother's approval or acceptance*
- *Concerns about not being loved by their mother or not being loved as much as other siblings or family members*
- *Difficulties in relating to the mother on an emotional level*
- *Uncertainty about the relationship with the mother and if it could be lost with a mistake or an accident*
- *Always trying to do better or to be perfect, to attempt to gain your mother's attention and acceptance*
- *Feelings of having to protect, care for, or shelter your mother rather than her protecting, caring for and sheltering you*

Signs of a father-wound

- *Low self-esteem & low confidence:*
- *Anxiety: a sense of loss, anger, shame, sadness and anxiety is trying to keep those deeper emotions at bay.*
- *Low mood / depression:*
- *Anger & rage: .*
- *Too rigid boundaries: unreliable fathers*
- *Too loose boundaries and people pleasing*
- *Having relationships emotionally unavailable partners: Seeking the same dynamic in our romantic relationships as we experienced in our childhood.*
- *Parenting – repeating the pattern of (emotionally) absent parent:*

Interventions



- *Contrary to the myth of “adolescent detachment”, Adolescents want and need to connect with their parents.*
- *Helping parents reframe parent-teen conflict as an opportunity to build relationship.*
- *Equipping parents with in-depth support and skills to support their children through adolescence.*
- *Focusing on attachment, development of sensitivity, attunement and conflict negotiation in parental interventions*

Interventions

- Incorporate the parental relationship in creating interventions for teenagers e.g. in treatment plans
- Teaching parent-teen communication skills e.g. Tuning in program
- Family functioning was found to be an indicator of response to treatment in depressed and suicidal adolescents hence
- Adolescents experiencing negative family environments were more likely to benefit from relationship-focused treatments e.g. interpersonal psychotherapy for depressed adolescents (IPT-A) rather than CBT or medication

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