

What's Your Parenting Style?

NO ONE HAS ALL THE ANSWERS WHEN IT COMES TO RAISING SAFE AND HEALTHY TEENS WHO ARE PREPARED TO SUCCEED IN THE WORLD.

But research does show that certain approaches to parenting can sometimes make a difference. Even grandparents and other non-traditional caregivers can benefit from better understanding, communicating and connecting with the teen in their lives.

Take the following assessment to find your parenting style and learn more about what you're doing right, and what you could do better.

PARENTS.
THE ANTI-DRUG.

1

Parents have different ideas about how to keep an eye on their kids. Which of the following is most like your approach?

- a. I limit unsupervised time. I also routinely check up on my teen unannounced to make sure she is where she said she'd be.
- b. Teens can't ever be trusted so I really lay down the law when it comes to what my teen is permitted to do. It's not up for discussion.
- c. Teens need their privacy. I would never eavesdrop or check up on my daughter because I wouldn't want her to be upset with me.
- d. I don't have time to keep tabs on my teen. My feeling is that teens need to learn how to take care of themselves, so I leave it up to them to make the right decisions.

2 Which of these best describes you as a parent?

- a. I connect with my teen, but my first priority is being a parent, not a friend.
- b. Maybe I'm too hard on my teen, but she knows I love her.
- c. I like being the "cool" parent.
- d. I am busy and my teen is busy, so I don't see her as much as I would like.

3 Which of the following best describes your beliefs about rules and discipline?

- a. I try to praise my teen for good behavior more than I criticize or punish for bad behavior.
- b. Teenagers are rebellious by nature. If they break the rules, the consequences should be severe enough to teach them a lesson.
- c. I spend more time threatening my teen with punishment than actually giving it.
- d. I don't think discipline works very well. I expect my teen to monitor his own behavior and face the consequences if he makes a bad decision.

4 Which of the following reflects your beliefs about loving and nurturing your teen?

- a. I show my love by giving my teen time, being involved, showing affection, listening, giving him positive reinforcement, and providing firm structure.
- b. I think you best show your love by expecting your teen to behave properly. He may not always like it now, but eventually he will know we were demanding because we loved him.
- c. I believe loving parents try to provide for their teen opportunities and things that they didn't have when they were growing up. My teen makes more demands on me than I do on him.
- d. My teen knows I love him. We provide for his needs and comforts.

5 Which of the following describes your relationship with your teen?

- a. Our relationship is warm and mostly positive but I'm not afraid to lay down the law when I have to.
- b. Like most kids her age, my teen is rebellious and acts out. I feel like I spend a lot of time and energy lecturing and issuing threats to try to keep her in line.
- c. We're like best friends. My teen tells me everything.
- d. Kids will be kids. No matter what I do, she will have to learn her own lessons.

6 When my teen and I argue about something, I generally:

- a. Try to calm myself and show respect for his opinion by listening to him.
- b. Get upset and frustrated. Too many kids today talk back to their parents.
- c. Feel guilty. We are very close and I hate when there's conflict between us.
- d. Let it go. If you let your teen have freedom, eventually they'll figure it out.

7 You and your teen have a disagreement about his plans for summer break. You:

- a. Listen to your teen's opinion and try to work together to come up with a compromise.
- b. Stand firm and tell your teen that your word is final.
- c. Let your teen do what he wants – after all, you are only a kid once.
- d. Decide to back down. It's easier to give a little ground to keep the peace.

8 What would you do if you didn't approve of your teen's new friends?

- a. Make an effort to get to know his friends better, and their parents, and then decide what to do.
- b. Forbid him to spend any more time with them.
- c. Feel conflicted about interfering with his friendships and being too controlling.
- d. Assume he'll make the right choices and not get into too much trouble.

9 Which of these reflects your thinking about teens and drug use?

- a. Any drug use is forbidden and I've shared with my teen what the consequences will be if she breaks our rule.
- b. I would severely punish my teen if I caught her using any drugs, including pot and alcohol.
- c. Teens are going to try it at some point, so if I found out my teen tried pot or alcohol, I'd probably just tell her not to do it again.
- d. It doesn't matter what I say or do. If teenagers want to try it, they will.

10 Your 16-year old son wants to go to a party at a friend's house and the parents will not be home most of the evening. He keeps nagging you about it so you:

- a. Hear him out, and then explain the reasons why you won't let him go.
- b. Tell him no, and say "end of discussion."
- c. Allow him to go because you trust him and his friends are all going.
- d. Let him go because he will just continue to argue about it.

Scoring Instructions

Tally up the number of As, Bs, Cs and Ds you selected, and record your totals in the chart below.

A		If you circled predominantly As, then you mostly have a Balanced parenting style.
B		If you circled predominantly Bs, then you mostly have a Strict parenting style.
C		If you circled predominantly Cs, then you mostly have a Lenient parenting style.
D		If you circled predominantly Ds, then you mostly have a Hands-Off parenting style.

Results & Discussion

Here's what the quiz says about your parenting style, including areas where you are succeeding and where you can try learning new skills.

Balanced

Congratulations! You mostly use a **Balanced** parenting style, which is shown to be the most effective parenting style for raising healthy, well-adjusted, successful teens.

What you do well:

- Nurture, discipline and respect your teen.
- Show love, warmth and interest.
- Communicate openly and listen well.
- Set standards and clear, reasonable limits.
- Keep track of your teen's behavior and whereabouts.
- Enforce limits and consequences on behavior firmly and consistently.
- Allow freedom of thought and expression.

What you can work on:

Keep doing what you are doing! However, be mindful that one-size does not fit all, and as your teen gets older, continuously assess your teen's risk. You are the best gauge of your teen's needs and sometimes those needs include more rules rather than more freedom. Also, continue to build awareness of what is going on in your teen's life by talking to other parents, family and friends. Discuss your rules with these other influencers, why you've established them and how you want them enforced. The best parenting balances love with limits and awareness.

Strict

You mostly use a **Strict** parenting style. While you are very good at setting limits, your relationship with your teen may include conflict and power struggles. You might also get frustrated trying to control your teen's behavior.

What you do well:

- Know the importance of setting limits and expectations.
- Your willingness to discipline your child shows how much you love and care for him.
- Keep track of your teen's behavior and whereabouts.
- Work hard to protect your teen from problem behaviors and getting into trouble.

What you can work on:

- Create a more nurturing and warm atmosphere by verbally expressing your love for your teen through praise and affection.
- Listen and respect your teen's opinions, even though you may not agree. This will help keep the lines of communication open.
- Depending on what rule is broken, make sure the discipline is consistent with the consequences you've established with your teen.
- When appropriate, provide opportunities where your teen can negotiate certain rules. Take time to explain to your teen why non-negotiable rules are in place, and reinforce that it is because you love her and want her to be safe.
- Shift your focus from what your teen is doing wrong to what he's doing right. Spend more time reinforcing good behavior than punishing bad behavior.
- Be curious rather than judgmental. Help your teen develop his ability to think and express his ideas and opinions.

Lenient

You mostly use a **Lenient** parenting style. While you communicate well with your teen, you value your close relationship with your teen and may be reluctant to set limits or discipline. You might feel frustrated at times trying to get your teen to obey rules, and fearful that you will lose his love if you try to set limits.

What you do well:

- Give your teen a lot of love and warmth.
- Provide a nurturing environment, full of respect.
- Communicate openly.
- Allow freedom of thought and expression.

What you can work on:

- Actively provide more discipline and be firm.
- Be consistent and avoid making empty threats.
- Set and enforce clear limits and rules and consequences for breaking them in advance.
- Routinely keep track of your teen's whereabouts and activities, and check up on your teen unannounced.
- Clearly communicate your expectations.
- Network with other parents to make it easier to set and enforce rules.
- Think about the values and abilities you want for your child as s/he matures and set expectations that will encourage his/her development.

Hands-off

You mostly use a **Hands-off** parenting style. While you give your teen a lot of independence, you probably don't feel very connected to her. You may feel too busy or overwhelmed with other obligations to be very involved in your teen's life.

What you do well:

- You love your teen.
- Place a high value on independence and self-regulation.

What you can work on:

- Express interest and get involved in your teen's life.
- Actively set and enforce clear rules and consequences.
- Consistently keep track of your teen's activities and whereabouts, and check up on him unannounced.
- Find a way to work through conflict instead of ignoring it. Call a family meeting, or seek a trusted professional to learn how.
- Communicate more openly and listen more.
- Provide warmth and love.
- Talk with other parents so it's easier to keep track of your teen.
- Spend time together without interruptions.

Why Balanced Parenting Works

Twenty-five years of study have shown that parents who have a strong, positive connection with their kids and use a Balanced parenting style have teens that are better off overall.

Balanced parenting is where love, discipline and respect intersect. Balanced parents are warm and involved, but firm and consistent in setting and enforcing limits. Balanced parents have relationships with their teens that include trust, mutual respect, and strong and open communication. Balanced parents also encourage and give their teenagers the freedom to express their own ideas, beliefs and individuality.

Balanced parenting works because it does three things. First, your warmth, love and involvement make your teen more open to your influence. Second, by providing structure through limits and consequences, you help your teen develop the ability to regulate his behavior and make good decisions. And third, the open, two-way communication in your relationship helps your teen develop the thinking and social skills needed to succeed outside the family.

That said, keep in mind that one-size parenting doesn't fit all. Every teen is unique and some may need more rules and discipline than others. Circumstances change with teens all the time. There may be new risks, signs of trouble, or other reasons to have more rules, such as a less safe neighborhood. It's up to you to understand what is best for your teen.

Studies show that adolescents raised by Balanced parents do better in school, report less depression and anxiety, have higher self-esteem and self-reliance, and are less likely to engage in all types of risky problem behavior, including drug and alcohol use, sex or violence.

Balanced parents have high, but reasonable expectations for their teens. While teens take risks for many reasons, including a need for excitement, curiosity or because of social pressures, parents can play a role by putting too much pressure on teens to perform in school, sports or other activities. Research shows that overly demanding parents can put their teens at risk of using drugs or alcohol. Too much stress can lead kids to seek an unhealthy escape from their high-pressure lives.

Research has found that teens with parents who are overly harsh, permissive and inconsistent or lacking in warmth are MORE likely to engage in risky behaviors, including drug, alcohol or tobacco use.

TOP 10 WAYS TO RAISE A SAFE & HEALTHY TEEN

- 1 Show love, warmth and interest in your teen
- 2 Spend time together regularly
- 3 Share your expectations about risk-taking and other behavior
- 4 Set clear rules for safety and guidance
- 5 Consistently enforce rules with clear consequences
- 6 Keep track of your teen
- 7 Ask questions about your teen's activities and whereabouts
- 8 Praise your teen as often as possible
- 9 Show respect to earn respect
- 10 Set a good example, especially when it comes to substance use

Credits/Research

For Assessment:

- Shoulder to Shoulder: Raising Teens Together. www.shouldertoshoulderminnesota.org
- If Children Are the Future...Parents Hold the Key! Parenting Style Profile. RURAL

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