

HOW TO RAISE RESPONSIBLE CHILDREN

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I. Introduction: a presumptuous fool's errand. Why did I choose this title?

- A. Can anyone really tell anyone else how to raise children?
- B. My solution: a two-part talk. Descriptive research, followed by clinical observation and "wisdom," followed by important new research on successful parenting styles.

II. Differences in family style and identity.

(We're not all trying to produce the same result.)

- A. Kantor and Lehr's typology of normal family styles.
 - 1. The "closed" family system is fixed, regular and steady. It values discipline, preparation, certainty, unity and clarity.
 - 2. The "open" family system operates in a flexible, variable mode. It values responsiveness, tolerance, cooperation, authenticity and latitude.
 - 3. The "random" family system operates in a dispersed, irregular and fluctuating way. It values free choice, diversity, spontaneity, challenge and originality.
- B. Differences in view of what a responsible child is; no complete agreement on questions of style and values. All children want to be responsible according to the standard but have they had enough asked of them in order to consistently act in a responsible way?

III. Thompson's tenets of good parenting.

- A. Parents must be an anchor, a "secure base."
 - 1. The attachment literature, Bowlby, Ainsworth.
 - 2. Securely vs. insecurely attached children.
 - 3. Anxious, avoidant and disorganized attachments.
 - 4. Respecting a child's need to attach and separate.
 - 5. Honoring the attachment needs of older children; respecting the child's need to fluctuate.

- B. Parents as "four walls," a "framework."
1. D.W. Winnicott's definition of what the normal child is like and what he requires: "What is the normal child like? Does he just eat and grow and smile sweetly? No, that is not what he is like. A normal child pulls out all the stops. In the course of time he tries out his power to disrupt, to destroy, to frighten, to wear down, to waste, to wangle and to appropriate. If the home can stand up to all the child can do to disrupt it, he settles down to play; but business first, the tests must be made. At first the child needs to be conscious of a framework if he is to feel free..."
D.W. Winnicott, The Child, the Family and the Outside World.
 2. Family, friends, religion, school and the law as additional walls. "It takes a whole village to raise a child." (African proverb).
- C. Spending time with your child.
1. There is no substitute for it.
 2. The difference between loving your children and really knowing them, e.g. 16-page letter to a son.
- D. Clarity about values, expressed in discipline.
1. Discipline must be clear, quick, consistent, warm and personal.
 2. Clarity is the most difficult to achieve.
- E. Communication with children (which really means listening and being quiet when you have the impulse to talk). "It is not just Mowgli who was raised by a couple of wolves; any child is raised by a couple of grown-ups. Father and mother may be nearer and dearer than anyone will ever be again---still, they are members of a different species." Randall Jarrell.
- F. Respecting and accepting a child's individuality.
1. The dangers of generalizing from your experience.
 2. The sadness of a parent-child mismatch in temperament.
 3. Acknowledging and loving differences.
- "Once the realization is accepted that even between the closest human beings infinite distances continue to exist, a wonderful living side by side can grow up, if they succeed in loving the distance between them which makes it possible for each to see the other whole against the sky." Rainier Maria Rilke, Letters

**IV. What kind of parenting works best? Diana Baumrind's study:
"The influence of parenting style on adolescent competence and**

drug abuse."

- A. Two dimensions: demandingness and responsiveness.
- B. Four proto-typical families:
 - 1. Authoritative
 - 2. Authoritarian
 - 3. Permissive
 - 4. Rejecting-neglecting
- C. By adolescence, there were two types of demandingness and one type of responsiveness: assertive control (AC), directive control (DC), and supportive control (SC).
- D. Adolescent outcomes of the parenting styles (six sub-types) with respect to competence.
 - 1. Authoritative (high SC, high AC)
 - 2. Democratic (high SC, moderate AC)
 - 3. Directive (high DC, high AC, low SC)
 - 4. Good-enough (med-low AC, SC, DC)
 - 5. Nondirective (very low DC, medium SC)
 - 6. Unengaged (very low AC and SC)

The least drug use occurred in directive and authoritative families. Democratic families produced more drug-using adolescents, but also highly competent children, who were therefore somewhat protected from their drug use.

Good-enough, nondirective and unengaged families produced higher and higher levels of drug use and lower levels of competence. It is important to attend to children and to ask something of them. "Permissiveness is the principle of treating children as if they were adults, and the tactic of making sure they never reach that stage." Thomas Szasz, The Second Sin

Every method of child-rearing has its risks. "It is wise to remember that rebellion belongs to the freedom you have given your child by bringing him or her up in such a way that he or she exists in his or her own right. In some instances it could be said, 'You sowed a baby and you reaped a bomb.' In fact this is always true, but it does not always look like it." D.W. Winnicott, Playing and Reality.