"CHERISHED MOMENTS" COLUMN
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"CHERISHED MOMENTS"

The "Cherished Moments" column is written by Cathy L. Graham, County Extension Director with the Scotland County Center of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension. The following column will provide information to improve relationships between adults and children. "Cherished Moments" is dedicated to the many adults (parents, teachers, caregivers, volunteers, educators) who strive to grow and to the children who will surely benefit.

_The surest way to make it hard for your children is to make it soft for them._
-- Wesleyan Methodist Proverb

**Parenting Styles**

Although researchers have characterized the three basic parenting styles as: authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative, many parents do not fit neatly into any of these categories. Parenting knowledge comes from a variety of sources and parents combine many styles depending on any given situation. With this in mind, this column will examine these three parenting styles, referred to The Enforcer (authoritarian), The Negotiator (authoritative), and The Yielder (permissive). By examining the statements given for each parenting style, parents and caregivers can think about their basic style. Parenting styles influence the way in which children develop. Here’s a summary of each of the 3 parenting styles.

**THE YELDER**

- It is better to have no rules than to worry about breaking them.

- Children can get along pretty well if you just leave them alone.

- My work and home responsibilities are too stressful; I can’t worry about what the children are doing.

- The children won’t listen to me, so I have quit trying.

- Children should realize that my work is stressful and I am tired at the end of the day.

These statements were written to describe the permissive parent or the yielder. This parent makes few demands, administers little punishment, sets few guidelines, has little
structure, and avoids asserting authority. This type parent is often referred to as uninvolved and spends minimal time and effort with the child. The parent sometimes uses stress and work to excuse himself/herself from spending time with the children. Also, drugs and immaturity can be reasons for their lack of involvement.

The child of this parent lacks self-control, is immature, may be aggressive at home, and may behave irresponsibly. These children tend to have poor self-esteem, low emotional development, and a low threshold for frustration. They may be school-skippers and resort to drugs or become involved in legal problems in their search for attention.

THE ENFORCER

- Children should obey their parents and not talk back.

- Children should do as I say until they are old enough to make their own decisions.

- I was spanked when I was a child and I turned out okay.

- When children don’t mind, I yell at them and threaten them with a variety of punishments.

- I expect my children to conform to my decisions without discussion.

These statements reflect the general nature of the enforcer or authoritarian style. This parent is demanding and strict, uses punishment, and generally doesn’t allow choice or freedom of expression. They value obedience, tradition, and order, and discourage independence and individuality. These parents dislike having their authority questioned. They may use physical punishment, yelling, or threatening for disciplinary measures.

What kind of child comes from this discipline pattern? Research indicates an enforcer parent may produce a child who lacks spontaneity, curiosity, and creativity, and often has limited independence and assertiveness. These children don’t learn how to decide for themselves, depending instead on others for their sense of control. They may have low self-esteem and be aggressive and defiant.

THE NEGOTIATOR

- Children should be given choices.

- Sometimes children have a point. I try to listen to them.

- Although it takes hard work, parents and children should try to talk about family decisions and let each person share his or her feelings.

- Children should be allowed to be individuals.
- I take care not to criticize my children or call names even when I cannot understand why they act as they do.

The negotiator (authoritative) parent, although not the perfect parent, has a better balance in discipline style, setting high standards and expectations for mature behavior, firmly enforcing rules, and encouraging independence and individuality. Children’s individual rights are recognized and choices are given. There is better communication and listening and a more democratic give-and-take arrangement.

Children of these parents generally are competent, responsible, independent, have higher self-esteem and confidence, and are better able to control their aggression.

Source: Karen DeBord, Ph. D.; Child Development Specialist with North Carolina State University

**FUN THINGS TO DO WITH YOUR CHILDREN**

- Children can personalize a notebook by decorating it with a photograph of something they did this summer or a favorite pet. Attach a photo to the notebook by covering with a laminating sheet.

- Start a family stamp collection.

- Make pumpkin cupcakes.

- October is Youth Against Tobacco Month. Draw a NO SMOKING poster or cartoon.

For more information contact the Scotland County Center of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service at 277-2422. Employment and program opportunities are available to all people regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. In addition, North Carolina State University welcomes all persons without regard to sexual orientation.