

PARENTING STYLES

“Come, my children, and listen to me, and I will teach you to fear the LORD.” Psalm 34:11 (NLT)

Every child is unique and there are many ways of parenting. But is there one approach to raising children that produces healthy, mature adults?

The following Parenting Quiz will help you understand your own parenting style. Answer the questions based on the way you are parenting now. *If you have several children, answer the questions based on how you parent your oldest at-home child.*

Parenting Quiz

1. How does my child respond when I tell him or her to do something viewed as unpleasant?
 - a. My child obeys but expresses disapproval (rolling eyes, huffing, slamming doors...).
 - b. My child agrees to obey, but doesn't do it.
 - c. My child argues.
 - d. My child obeys willingly.
2. When my child is caught doing something wrong, he or she:
 - a. Feels guilty.
 - b. Seems not to care.
 - c. Feels like a failure.
 - d. Understands the behavior is wrong and desires to make things right.

3. When my child is asked to help with chores, it appears he or she:
 - a. Does them to avoid conflict with me.
 - b. Does them only when there is personal benefit involved (money or rewards).
 - c. Doesn't expect to have to do chores.
 - d. Enjoys being helpful and having responsibility.
4. When I have a disagreement with my child, he or she generally:
 - a. Withdraws and gets quiet.
 - b. Tries to take charge or manipulate the situation.
 - c. Throws a temper tantrum.
 - d. Shares his or her thoughts or desires with respect.
5. When my child knows I am upset with him or her:
 - a. My child is fearful of my response.
 - b. My child acts up further.
 - c. My child cries and appears devastated.
 - d. My child desires to make things right between us.
6. How do you respond when your child is disobedient?
 - a. Force my child to obey.
 - b. Ignore my child.
 - c. Give in to avoid conflict.
 - d. Explain my disappointment and remove a privilege.
7. How do you get your child to understand what you want him or her to do?
 - a. Get angry.
 - b. I don't bother.
 - c. Try to talk to my child.
 - d. Train by my example.
8. How do you discipline your child?
 - a. Overcorrect. (Consequences don't fit the offense.)
 - b. Neglect to correct.
 - c. Undercorrect. (Consequences don't fit the offense.)
 - d. Correct consistently and appropriately.

9. How do you respond when your child does not act responsibly?
- I yell.
 - I don't say anything.
 - I continually remind my child.
 - I make a plan for training my child to grow in that area.
10. When your child doesn't do a good job, what do you do?
- Use belittling remarks to make him or her feel guilty.
 - Ignore my child because I am busy.
 - Do it myself.
 - Take the time to train my child.

Values and Behaviors

- Q1.** What characteristics would you like your child to have as an adult? Briefly explain.
- Q2.** Do you believe the way you are parenting your child will affect how he or she will turn out as an adult?

Acceptance and Accountability

Consider the benefits of children developing the following internal values:

- Motivation and confidence
- Integrity

And the following external behaviors:

- Respect for authority
- Love for God and others

Research shows there is a link between the children who exhibit these values and behaviors and the style of parenting their mothers and fathers use. Specifically, how much acceptance and accountability their parents provide.

ACCEPTANCE will be defined as:

“Showing love and support to one's child.”

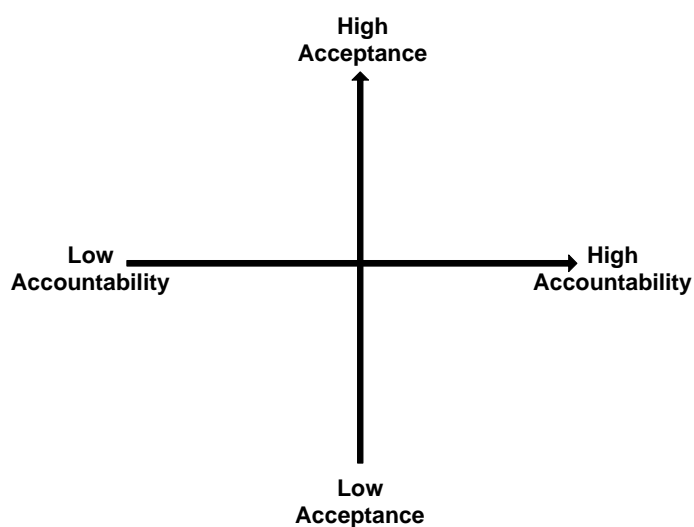
ACCOUNTABILITY will be defined as:

“Directing and correcting the actions of one's child.”

Acceptance and accountability can be graphed in terms of whether they are exhibited by a parent in high or low amounts.

This graph demonstrates that there are four distinct parenting types:

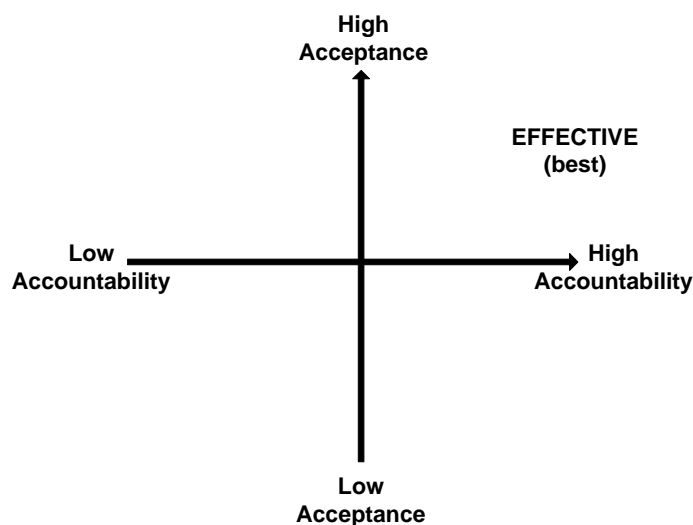
- parents who exhibit **high** acceptance and **high** accountability
- parents who exhibit **high** acceptance and **low** accountability
- parents who exhibit **low** acceptance and **low** accountability
- parents who exhibit **low** acceptance and **high** accountability



Effective Parenting

Children whose mother and father exercise the highest levels of acceptance and accountability demonstrate the highest levels of:

- Motivation and confidence
- Integrity
- Respect for authority
- Love for God and others.



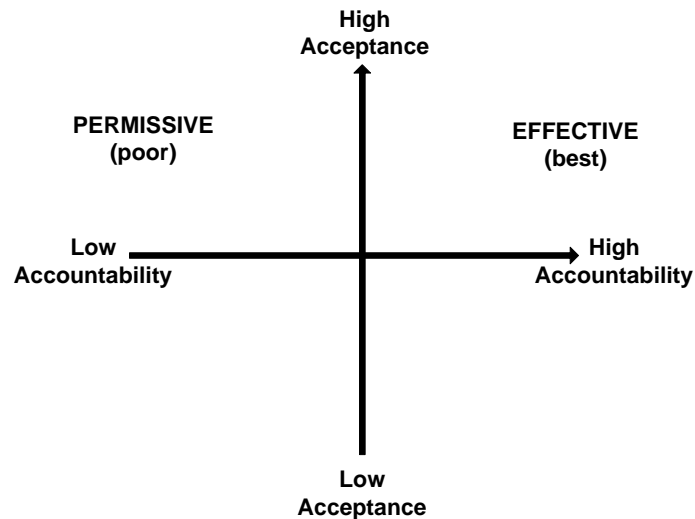
The style of parenting that utilizes both **high acceptance** and **high accountability** we will call “EFFECTIVE” parenting. Effective is the *best* style of parenting.

Permissive Parenting

Children whose parents exercise **high levels of acceptance** but **low levels of accountability** demonstrate significantly lower levels of:

- Motivation and confidence
- Integrity
- Respect for authority
- Love for God and others

We will call this type of parenting “PERMISSIVE.” Permissive parenting is a *poor* style to use with your children.

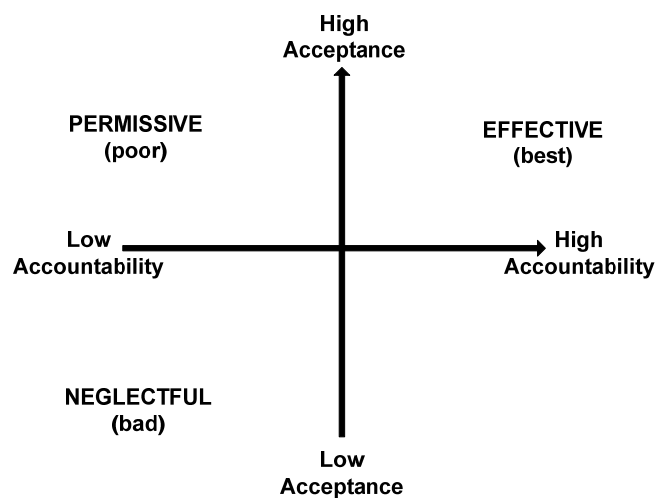


Neglectful Parenting

Children whose mother and father exercise **low levels of acceptance** AND **low levels of accountability** demonstrate very low levels of:

- Motivation and confidence
- Integrity
- Respect for authority
- Love for God and others

We will call this parenting type “NEGLECTFUL.” Neglectful parenting is a *bad* style to use with your children.

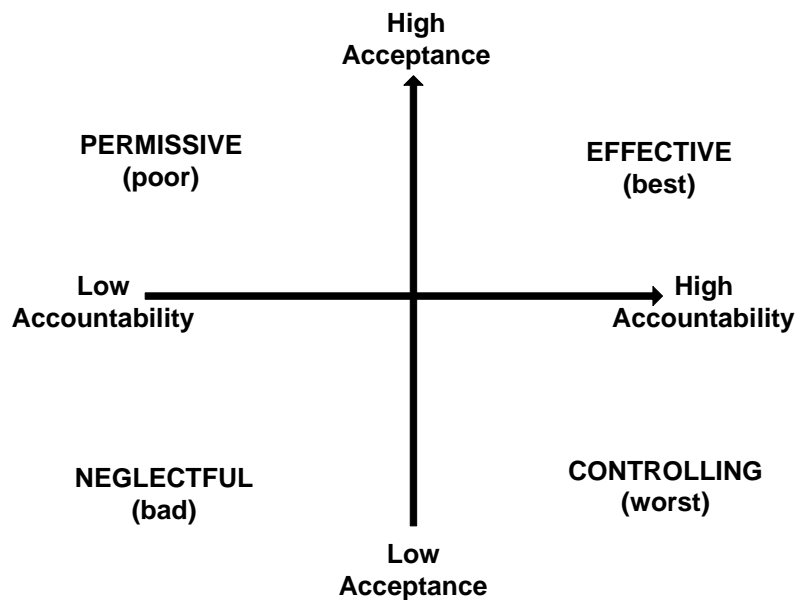


Controlling Parenting

As bad as neglectful parenting is, it does not produce the worst possible results. Parents who exercise **low levels of acceptance** with **high levels of accountability** tend to have children who demonstrate the lowest overall levels of:

- Motivation and confidence
- Integrity
- Respect for authority
- Love for God and others

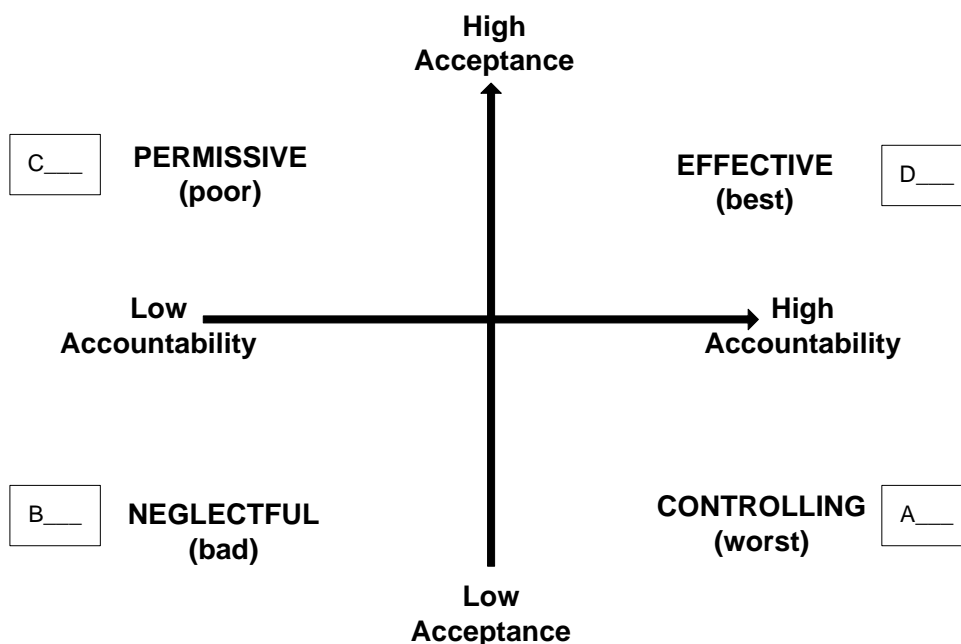
We will call this parenting type “CONTROLLING.” Controlling parenting is the *worst* style to use with your children.



Now it is time to score your Parenting Quiz from pages 1–3.

Find Your Parenting Style

Count the number of times you circled the letters A, B, C, and D. Put your totals in the corresponding boxes.



The box with the highest number indicates your current parenting style. If your numbers are generally higher on the right side of the diagram, you tend to emphasize accountability in your parenting. If your numbers are generally higher on the top half of the diagram, you tend to emphasize acceptance in your parenting.

- Q3.** How would you describe your level of acceptance in your parenting?
- Q4.** How would you describe your level of accountability in your parenting?

A summary of the parenting styles:

EFFECTIVE High Acceptance with High Accountability
 PERMISSIVE High Acceptance with Low Accountability
 NEGLECTFUL Low Acceptance with Low Accountability
 CONTROLLING Low Acceptance with High Accountability

Each parenting style has certain characteristics, biblical examples, warnings, and ramifications for children. We will examine each of these, starting with neglectful.

Neglectful

Neglectful parenting is characterized by ABSENCE, SPENDING LITTLE TIME and/or forms of ABANDONMENT. When a mother or father is not present with the child, that parent cannot give either acceptance or accountability. No matter what the parent's affections may be, the reality to the child is the parent is absent or hardly there. A parent may justify being gone as being necessary to provide for the family, but the reality to the child is the same.

The neglectful mother or father avoids responsibility and forsakes the care of his/her children and sometimes tries to teach through vaguely communicated commands.

The child of a neglectful parent may have the following kinds of thoughts:

- ___ I'm not important.
- ___ What I want isn't important.
- ___ Why should I care about others? Others don't really care about me.

Neglectful parents are like Lot who was willing to abandon his daughters.

*"Look—I have two virgin daughters. Do with them as you wish, but leave these men alone, for they are under my protection." **Genesis 19:8** (NLT)*

Permissive

Permissive parenting is characterized by UNDERCORRECTION, that is, there is little attempt by a parent to control the actions of one's child. The parent *may* attempt to correct the child but gives up if that attempt fails. They allow their child's disobedience to continue.

The permissive parent fears the child's rejection or is trying to compensate for the other parent being too strict.

The child of permissive parents may have thoughts like:

- ___ I can do what I want.
- ___ They don't really care enough to make me obey.
- ___ If it were really important how I behave, they wouldn't forget about what they tell me to do.

Permissive parents are like Eli who did not discipline his sons.

“I have warned him continually that judgment is coming for his family, because his sons are blaspheming God and he hasn't disciplined them.” 1 Samuel 3:13 (NLT)

God's instruction for correcting children is seen in the following verse.

“Discipline your children while there is hope. If you don't, you will ruin their lives.” Proverbs 19:18 (NLT)

Q5. If you tend to provide too little accountability, what is hindering you?

- Are you too busy?
- Do you fear your child's rejection?
- Do you attempt to avoid conflict?
- Do you think the situation or behavior will take care of itself?

Q6. What negative behavior has your child displayed due to the lack of accountability?

Controlling

Controlling parenting is characterized by OVERCORRECTING, BELITTling, CRITICIZING, or being OVER-PROTECTIVE. Remember that controlling parenting is low in acceptance, but high in accountability.

Controlling parenting includes correction that is inflexible and harsh. Controlling parents might interrupt, ridicule or ignore the child. They continually remind and condemn the child for past failures and character weaknesses.

Controlling parenting can be subtler in its approach by the use of silent anger, controlled rage, intimidation by guilt, mean or scolding looks. Overprotective parents control their child's choices by attempting to protect him or her. The motive is fear and the result is damaging to the child.

Controlling parents plant fear in children by attempting to teach by angry, forceful, and demanding statements. Such parents drive their children to do the very things they want them to avoid.

The child of a controlling parent may have thoughts like:

- ☐ I get yelled at for everything I say or do.
- ☐ If I think for myself or make a decision of my own, I get criticized.
- ☐ I'll keep my thoughts to myself.
- ☐ I'll get out of here the first chance I get.
- ☐ No mistake I've ever made has been forgiven or forgotten.
- ☐ There's no way I can ever please them, so what's the use of trying?
- ☐ Can't they ever accept me the way I am?
- ☐ I'm a failure.

Controlling parents are like Saul who bullied his son to get what he wanted.

"Then Saul's anger burned against Jonathan and he said to him, 'You son of a perverse, rebellious woman!' ... Then Saul hurled his spear at him to strike him down..."
1 Samuel 20:30, 33 (NASB)

God's challenge to controlling parents is found in the following verse.

"Fathers, don't aggravate your children. If you do, they will become discouraged and quit trying."
Colossians 3:21 (NLT)

Wounded Children

Whether a child is parented by a permissive, neglectful or controlling parent, the child feels emotionally wounded and rejected. Wounded children might act out in several ways:

- Rebellion and open defiance
- Lying and deception
- Deliberate disobedience
- Drug involvement
- Sexual involvement
- Leaving home
- Joining anti-social groups
- Crime

Even before acting out in such obvious ways, a child may show the following indicators. Check the one(s) you have observed in your child.

- ___ A sorrowful inner attitude
- ___ Perverse, abusive language
- ___ Depression and tiredness
- ___ Inability to cope with adversity
- ___ A hardened, insensitive conscience
- ___ An uncontrolled temper

Q7. Are any of your children demonstrating the warning signs in the above list?

Q8. Do you think your children have been emotionally wounded or rejected? Explain.

Ask God to show you in what ways you may be permissive, neglectful, or controlling.

Q9. What did He show you? Write it down.

Effective

The parenting style that gives the best result is EFFECTIVE parenting.

Effective parenting is characterized by the presence of *both* ACCEPTANCE and ACCOUNTABILITY. Effective parenting is characterized by treating your child as an important individual.

“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves.” **Philippians 2:3** (NASB)

Effective parents are like Solomon's parents who loved him and taught him God's ways.

“For I, too, was once my father's son, tenderly loved by my mother as an only child. My father told me, ‘Take my words to heart. Follow my instructions and you will live.’”
Proverbs 4:3–4 (NLT)

Personal Application

Ask God to show you how to be more of an effective parent.

Write what He shows you.

Thank God for His work in your life.

“For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.” **Philippians 2:13** (NKJ)

Share the diagram from this chapter with someone this week.

Effective acceptance and effective accountability will be discussed in the next two chapters.

Parenting Styles

Diagram

Notes