Parenting During Adolescence

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Two dimensions of parenting

- Control: Parents’ efforts to structure, manage, and monitor children’s behavior
  - Set rules and expectations, supervise or guide children
  - Appropriate structure, greater parental control is associated with better outcomes, prevention & reduction of problem behavior

(But what is “appropriate” structure?)
Two dimensions of parenting

- **Support**: Parents’ attempts to provide emotional support, be responsive to the child’s needs, and use encouragement, praise, physical affection
- High levels = accepting and nurturing parenting
- Low levels = cold and rejecting parenting
# Parenting Styles

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<th>Accepting, Responsive</th>
<th>Rejecting, Unresponsive</th>
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<td><strong>Demanding, (Assertive) Controlling</strong></td>
<td>Authoritative</td>
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<td><strong>Undemanding, Uncontrolling</strong></td>
<td>Indulgent, Permissive</td>
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What is “good” parenting?
Parenting Styles

- Authoritative parenting more common in European American than ethnic minority families.
- Authoritative parenting has been associated with many positive developmental and adjustment outcomes.
- There are debates about these findings for ethnic minority youth and youth in other cultures, where authoritarian parenting predominates.
Parenting Challenges

- Parental monitoring and control are important, but how much and what type?
- Further distinctions between:
  - *Psychological control* - parental intrusiveness, love withdrawal, guilt induction – attempts to control child in ways that undermine the self
    - Leads to increases in depression, anxiety, problem behavior
  - *Behavioral control* - providing structure, having clear (and demanding) expectations and rules
    - Leads to reductions in conduct problems, substance use
    - At high levels, behavioral control is perceived by teenagers as psychologically controlling
Autonomy is a fundamental developmental task, particularly in adolescence.

Includes: Capacity to be self-regulating, make independent decisions.

Involves: Co-regulation with parents (not total independence).

E.g., family decision-making where teen makes own decisions, but with some parental input.
Parenting Challenges

- Parenting must be:
  - Developmentally appropriate
    - Consider teens’ developing autonomy, whether the child is capable of making good choices, be responsible
  - Domain-appropriate
    - Must consider the type of activities parents are trying to manage, control
    - Parents are seen as having legitimate authority to regulate some issues but not others
Legitimate Parental Authority and the Personal Domain

Across the teen years, parental authority is seen as legitimate for:

- **Moral** issues: consequences for others’ rights, welfare, fairness
  - Hitting, teasing, bullying, stealing..
- **Conventional** issues: behavioral regularities that structure interactions (manners, etiquette)
  - How teens talk to grown-ups, whether they use good table manners
- **Prudential** issues: negative consequences for one’s health, comfort, or safety
  - Risky issues (drug and alcohol use, smoking), food choices and diet

Parental, adult authority *rejected* over:

- **Personal** issues: involve privacy, control over one’s body, personal preferences & choices
  - choice of friends, leisure activities, books and music, how one spends one’s earning or allowance, what one talks about on the phone…
The Personal Domain...

- Expands during adolescence
- Teens claim more personal jurisdiction than parents are willing to grant
- Parents lag behind teens in granting autonomy personal freedoms
- These parent-teen discrepancies lead to:
  - Conflict in parent-teen relationships
  - Teens’ nondisclosure and secrecy about activities, whereabouts, associates
Good parenting during adolescence = “Precision parenting”

- Parenting is a *moving target* during adolescence, requires flexibility to adapt to change
- Parents must balance:
  - Teens’ *needs for autonomy, control over the personal domain* (which is expanding)
  - Parents’ need to keep teens safe, develop responsibility, acquire rules and expectations necessary for successful adulthood (teens’ ability to meet parents’ expectations also is changing)
Good parenting during adolescence

- Parents and teens need to be able to negotiate disagreements
- “Monitoring” is not enough
- Warm, trusting relationships are necessary if teens are going to keep parents informed
Thank you!

- For more info:

Adolescents, Families, and Social Development
How Teens Construct Their Worlds
Judith G. Smetana

WILEY-BLACKWELL
Practical Implications: Approaches to Family Rules

- Only have rules needed to maintain the “culture” of the family, maintain reasonable efficiency, fairness and safety and well-being of all family members.
  - Be open to reasonable requests from the child to suspend, alter, or abolish particular rules
  - Remember that the child is growing faster than parents are ready for
Practical Implications: Approaches to Family Rules

- Be willing to negotiate, but be firm in areas that would compromise the child’s safety or well-being, the welfare of others, or that would constitute a major breach of generally shared social or family conventions.

- Be prepared to negotiate over issues where the child has a reasonable claim to claiming it as personal ("I am old enough to do this."); "But, it isn't hurting my grades and I know when to study")
Practical Implications: Approaches to Family Rules

- Be prepared to negotiate when the governing conventions outside the home ("But all my friends can do it") are at variance with those of the family. This is a tough call, but don’t alienate the child over a small issue that does not place the child in any jeopardy (e.g., sleep-overs; clothing)

- In cases where parents have to be firm, try not to become angry, but respond in a matter of fact and warm manner.
Practical Implications: When the Child Does Something Wrong

- Kids do misbehave
- There are better & worse ways to respond
- People are not perfect, but try to respond to misbehavior in a calm, matter of fact, and respectful manner
- Deal with today’s problem and try not to bring up every past failing
- When things are over, forgive and forget
Practical Implications: When the Child Does Something Wrong

- Try *not* to use punishments that are designed to inflict discomfort or cost to the child
  - E.g., spanking, grounding for an extended time
- These do not provide the child with any reason (beyond punishment avoidance or generating a teacher’s favor) for the action
- Teens associate such punishments with the person meting them out, rather than with their own misconduct; they invite revenge and provide kids with a sense that they have the right to retaliate
Practical Implications: When the Child Does Something Wrong

DO try to use logical consequences that are connected meaningfully with the transgression
- E.g., Restitution - Repaying for damages, cleaning up
- Loss of Privileges: overnights, staying up late, TV time, etc.

KEY: Must fit the “crime’ - cannot be indefinite or harsh
- e.g., grounding that goes on for too long becomes expiatiative and undercuts the consequence

Collaborate with the child in establishing logical consequences
Practical Implications: When the Child Behaves the Way You Want

- **DO** try to use validating rewards that are done as an act of appreciation for earned recognition rather than as a way to motivate the child
  - E.g., Taking the child out to dinner after a school concert to recognize achievement as a musician
  - MISTAKE: Paying a child for grades

- **DO** try to use validating praise

- Validating praise uses moderate language & focuses on the specifics of the action - which lets the child know that her actions are appreciated & that the act, not the child, is being evaluated
Practical Implications: When the Child Behaves the Way You Want

Examples

- "Tanya, that was a kind thing that you just did. I am sure that Marcy appreciated the time you spent with her when she wasn't feeling well"
- "Mike, thanks for helping clean up the basement. It makes everything better for everyone. I really appreciate it"

- Encouraging praise is especially effective as a response to what we might refer to as "everyday acts of character"
Practical Implications: Common Parenting ‘Do’s’ and ‘Don’ts’

- DON’T Make the parent’s esteem appear to be contingent on the child’s behavior
- GRADES: Don’t make grades the parent’s issue & not the child’s issue
- DO Balance help with over-involvement
- DO Allow the child to earn his/her own “D”
- ATHLETICS OR PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES
  - DO: Be an audience member and fan, not a team-mate or “stage mom”
Finally…..

- Remember that the primary developmental task of this period is to establish independence, personal responsibility, and identity