

2. Your Parenting Style

At a Glance...



When a parent identifies his or her parenting style, its advantages and disadvantages, and potential consequences for their children, they can begin to work on ways to improve their parenting.

Time Required

30 minutes

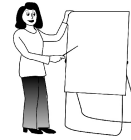


Core Concept



Parents will choose a parenting style that provides guidance with opportunities for children to assume responsibility and independence as they grow.

Objective



Parents will evaluate their current parenting style and will make a plan to improve areas that they identify as needing improvement.

Materials



- ☐ Rock
- ☐ Marshmallow
- ☐ Tennis ball
- ☐ Flip chart or chalk board
- ☐ Markers or chalk
- ☐ Handout D-2-a *Password Game*
- ☐ Index cards



Icebreaker

Using the words on handout D-2-a Password Game cards. Cut the words apart and tape one to each index card. Divide class members into pairs and allow each pair a turn to each give and guess a clue. Follow the directions in the script below.



Facilitator Script

Today we are going to play password. Divide up into pairs. I will call one pair to the front of the room. One person in each pair will draw a word and give one- or two-word clues to try to get the other person to say the word on the card he or she drew. You have only four clues to get the other person to guess the word. Once the word is guessed or you have given four clues, you will swap roles. The other person in the pair will now draw a card and give clues to the other team member. Again, only four clues are allowed. After the word is guessed or four clues have been given, it will be the next team's turn. On the flip chart, I will keep track of the score. Each team starts with 10 points. You will lose a point for each clue given and another point if you do not guess the word in four tries. After all teams have competed, the one with the most points, is the winner.

Scoring Example: Team one uses three clues for the first word, and two clues for the second word. They have 5 points remaining at the end of their round. The next team uses four clues for the first word, and is unable to guess the second word in four clues. They finish with only 1 point. The third team guesses each word in two clues and ends up with 6 points.

You may have noticed that each of the words we used in our game referred to a type of person. When you hear those words, you may get a picture in your mind about how that person might dress or act. This might be called that person's style. Today, we are going to talk about parenting styles.

Gather your materials, rock, marshmallow, and tennis ball. Begin by passing the rock to class participants and ask each to give you one word to describe the rock. If your class is small, you may have each participant make a list of words that could be used to describe the rock. Take turns sharing words until no one has more words to offer. Make three columns on the flip chart or chalk board. At the top of the first column write the word rock and list underneath the words used to describe the rock. Do the same thing with marshmallow, making the list on the right column of the chart and for the tennis ball, making the column in the middle of the chart. Your chart may look something like the one below

Rock	Tennis Ball	Marshmallow
hard	firm	squishy
rough	flexible	soft
cool	fuzzy	sugary/sweet
heavy	bouncy	airy
dull	light/bright	spongy

Parents can be like the rock, the marshmallow, and the tennis ball.

As you discuss each style, write the name for that parenting style at the bottom of the appropriate list.

Some parents are like the **rock** — rigid with very strict rules. They try to control their children by using threats and punishment. They may not show much love. They treat children like they are possessions. Let's call this parenting style **too hard**.

Some parents are like the **marshmallow** — they are very soft on their children and have very few rules or limits. They let the children have whatever they want. They may be very loving and warm. They are too busy or too insecure to enforce limits or rules with their children. We'll call this parenting style **too soft**.

Some parents are like the **tennis ball** — firm but flexible. They have clear limits but are flexible based on the needs of the children. They are loving but do not give in to every wish of their children. They respect themselves and the child. They set consequences for misbehavior and follow through. They let their children make appropriate decisions. Let's call this parenting style **just right**.

Now, **close your eyes and think back to your childhood.** What kind of style did your parents use the most? How did you feel about your parents' style? What were the advantages of that style? What were the disadvantages of that style? Ask volunteers to share their thoughts on those questions. List advantages and disadvantages of each style in the appropriate column on the board or flip chart.

Note: This exercise may not be appropriate for court-ordered or limited-resource parents because they may have experienced harsh or abusive parenting. If you are using this lesson with a court-ordered or at-risk group of parents, ask them to think about parents they have watched on TV. How would they describe their parenting style? Was it hard, like the rock, soft like the marshmallow, or firm but flexible, like the tennis ball? See if you can identify examples of each (Archie Bunker might be a hard parent, Edith Bunker could be a soft parent, and Bill or Claire Huxtable would be examples of flexible but firm parents.)

Now, think about your own parenting style. Are you like a rock, a marshmallow, or a tennis ball? Are there any changes you would like to make in your parenting style?

Now let's think about how children might respond to these different parenting styles? How might a child turn out who is raised by a *too hard* parent?

List those possible outcomes under that heading on the chart or board. Do the same for the other parenting styles. Compare the lists generated by the class to the lists below that have been found through research. Add any outcomes that are missing from the list made by the class.

Outcomes for Children

Too Hard

- rebellious or submissive
- distrustful
- sneaky
- bossy
- insecure

Just Right

- respectful
- able to make own decisions
- responsible
- secure
- confident

Too Soft

- insecure
- selfish
- irresponsible
- disrespectful of authority
- does not understand actions have consequences

Final Thoughts



Homework: Ask participants to watch one or more television shows that have parents or guardians and their children as the main characters. See if you can identify the main parenting styles of the parents or guardians. Be ready to report to the class on the show or shows you watched and the parenting styles you think were shown. Tell what the characters did that helped you identify that style. Tell about positive things that happened between parents and children and negative things that happened between parents and children on the shows that you watched.