

Parenting Styles in Action

Applying Authoritative, Authoritarian, and Permissive Approaches

Subjects: Psychology, Child Development, Sociology

Grade Levels: 10–12 (can be adapted for college intro)

Time: 45–60 minutes

Group Size: Individual or small groups (3–4)

Materials: Student case worksheet (included), writing materials

Lesson Overview

In this lesson, students apply three major parenting styles—**authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive**—to realistic parenting situations involving children at different developmental stages. Students analyze how each parenting style would respond, using specific strategies and consequences, and evaluate the likely outcomes of each approach.

The lesson emphasizes that **parenting style influences behavior, emotional development, and long-term outcomes**, not just short-term compliance.

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify key characteristics of authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting
 - Apply each parenting style to real-life behavioral situations
 - Predict short-term and long-term outcomes of different discipline strategies
 - Compare effectiveness of parenting approaches across developmental stages
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Background (Student-Friendly Review)

The Three Parenting Styles

Authoritarian

- High control, low warmth
- Strict rules, obedience expected
- Punishment-focused, little explanation

Permissive

- High warmth, low control
- Few rules or consequences
- Child largely self-directs behavior

Authoritative

- High warmth, high control
- Clear expectations and consequences
- Open communication and reasoning

Student Instructions

For **each case**, explain how **each parenting style** would likely handle the situation.

You must:

- Describe specific actions the parent would take
- Explain how the child would likely respond
- Consider both immediate and long-term effects

Answer in **complete sentences**.

Case Studies

Case 1: Age 7

A 7-year-old child refuses to go to bed at night, frequently throws temper tantrums, misbehaves at school, and is generally disruptive at home.

Prompt:

How would each parenting style handle this situation? What discipline strategies would be used?

Case 2: Age 14

A 14-year-old's grades have fallen significantly. Teachers report that the student is putting in little effort. At home, the child has become confrontational and uncooperative.

Prompt:

How would each parenting style respond? How would school performance and behavior be addressed?

Case 3: Age 17

A 17-year-old has become heavily involved in a romantic relationship, is ignoring curfew rules, and grades are dropping. The student risks losing scholarship opportunities.

Prompt:

How would each parenting style handle this situation? How would independence, responsibility, and consequences be balanced?

Student Response Sheet (Optional Handout)

For each case, complete the chart:

Parenting Style:

- Actions taken by parent:
- Rules or consequences:
- Likely child reaction:
- Possible long-term outcome:

Teacher Answer Key & Rationales

Note: Responses may vary. Look for accurate alignment with parenting style traits and logical reasoning.

Case 1 (Age 7)

Authoritarian

- Enforces strict bedtime with punishments (yelling, loss of privileges)
- Little discussion of feelings
- Child may comply short-term but increase anxiety or resentment
- Tantrums may decrease temporarily but emotional regulation does not improve

Permissive

- Allows child to stay up late or negotiates inconsistently
- Avoids conflict to keep peace
- Child learns limits are flexible or meaningless
- Likely continued misbehavior and poor self-control

Authoritative

- Establishes clear bedtime routine with consistent consequences
 - Explains expectations and addresses school behavior
 - Uses calm but firm discipline
 - Child learns structure, self-regulation, and responsibility
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Case 2 (Age 14)

Authoritarian

- Imposes strict punishments (grounding, loss of phone)
- Focuses on obedience rather than motivation
- Teen may become more defiant or withdrawn
- Grades may improve briefly but resentment increases

Permissive

- Minimizes concern, allows teen to manage school independently
- Offers emotional support but few boundaries
- Teen may continue disengaging from school
- Academic decline likely continues

Authoritative

- Discusses reasons for falling grades
 - Sets clear expectations and study requirements
 - Provides support and accountability
 - Encourages responsibility and problem-solving skills
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Case 3 (Age 17)

Authoritarian

- Forbids relationship or enforces rigid curfews
- Threatens severe consequences
- Teen may hide behavior or rebel
- Damages trust and independence development

Permissive

- Allows relationship and ignores curfew violations
- Avoids confrontation
- Teen may prioritize relationship over long-term goals
- Scholarship loss becomes more likely

Authoritative

- Acknowledges teen's growing independence
 - Sets clear expectations tied to responsibilities (curfew, grades)
 - Discusses consequences related to scholarships and future goals
 - Supports autonomy while reinforcing accountability
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Discussion Questions (Optional)

1. Which parenting style appears most effective across all ages?
 2. Does the "best" parenting style change as children get older?
 3. Why might authoritarian or permissive styles seem effective in the short term but fail long term?
 4. How do communication and consistency influence behavior?
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Optional Reflection Assignment

Prompt:

Which parenting style do you believe is most effective overall, and why? Use at least one case example from the lesson to support your answer.