

CROSS CULTURAL PARENTING

Presenters: Tony & Jessie Yap

A. PARENTING STYLES

Table 1: Parenting Styles

		Level of control	
		HIGH	LOW
Level of responsiveness	HIGH	Authoritative parent	Permissive parent
	LOW	Authoritarian parent	Uninvolved parent

Parenting styles	Elaboration
Authoritarian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents demand obedience from children; set rules, give few explanations, are not interested in alternative viewpoints that children might have Often use power or withdrawal of love to enforce rules
Authoritative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set limits for children; make reasonable demands that children understand; are responsive to children's viewpoints; involve older children in decision making They are warm and responsive in their interactions with children, yet expect them to follow rules set
Permissive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have few rules or guidelines; they do not closely monitor their children's activities; rarely control their behaviour Children express themselves as they pleased; allow children to make their own decisions whenever possible
Uninvolved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They either reject their children or are too stressed in life; they have no time nor energy left for their children Don't set limits, enforce behaviour, nor show interest in their children.

1. Which parenting styles had the better outcomes for children? Diana Baumrind (1967, 1991) studied children who experienced different parenting styles over a number of years:
 - a. Findings – **children of authoritative parents** were more **achievement orientated, they had better social skills** than children of either authoritarian or permissive parents
 - b. **Children of authoritative parents** – later on in life as adolescents were relatively confident, tended to stay off drug abuse and other problems.

2. Other research showed – children of **uninvolved parents** have most negative outcomes. By 3 years of age, such children have **tantrums and high levels of aggression**. As teens, they are more likely to be involved in delinquent behaviour and criminal acts (Shaffer 1999).
3. Similar findings were recorded in studies from families from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds.

B. DIFFERENCES IN CULTURES

Value contrasts between Individualism and Collectivism

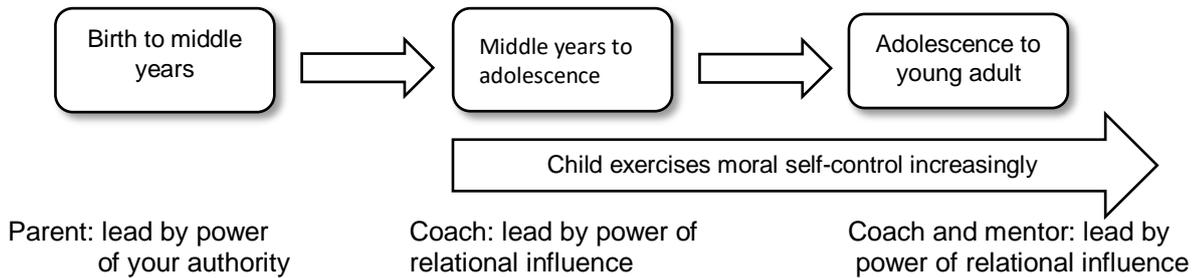
Individualistic proverb: “The squeaky wheel gets the grease.”
 Collectivist proverb: “The quaking duck gets shot.”

Table 2: Individualistic and Collectivist Cultures

Concept	Individualistic cultures	Collectivist cultures
Self	Independent (identity is derived from individual personality traits; e.g. being outgoing, anxious, adventurous)	Interdependent (identity is derived from belonging to a group, family or community)
	Example: “I am sincere and confident.”	Example: “I am the second son in my family.”
Life task	Discover and express one’s uniqueness	Maintain connections, fit into expectations of one’s community
What matters	“Me” – personal achievement and fulfilment; rights and liberties; self-esteem	“Us” – group goals and solidarity; social responsibilities and relationships
Coping method	When faced with a challenging situation at work, school, family: Change reality (e.g. get a new job; seek a divorce)	Accommodate to reality (e.g. adapt and adopt different approaches to the situation)
Morality	Defined by individuals (self-based)	Defined by social networks (duty-based)
Relationships	Many, often temporary or casual; confrontation is acceptable	Few, close and enduring; harmony is valued
Attributing behaviour	Behaviour reflects one’s personality and attitudes	Behaviour reflects social norms and roles within the community

Source: Adapted from Thomas Schoeneman (1994) and Harry Triandis (1994)

C. PRACTICAL TIPS ON RAISING CHILDREN CROSS-CULTURALLY



Areas	Elaboration
Social and cultural	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Decide on your parenting style as this affects your approach to discipline 2. Establish your respective roles as dad and mum (e.g. child addressing you as parents by your first name) 3. Focus on building positive Godly character qualities – see resource sheet provided 4. Set boundaries/guidelines from a young age for clothing/modesty 5. Communication – allow two way dialogue between parent and child; listen with the “third” ear to discern your child’s inner concerns, doubts, fears, insecurities during “critical moments” 6. Express your love through frequent hugs and saying “I love you”; apply the love language of individual child 7. Use of “honorifics” – uncle and aunty (Asian versus Western) depends on your preference; may use different terms such as Mr Smith for non-Asian adults and ‘uncle/aunty’ to parents’ adult friends 8. Showing respect to elderly relatives (e.g. New Year visits, special occasions)
Intellectual and academic	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understand the depth and breadth of academic disciplines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asian parents are more intentional and purposeful in encouraging academic excellence in children; there’s some value in ‘drills’ (for language, maths for example) to acquire mastery of skills, increase understanding and apply knowledge • Australian schools encourage creative, critical thinking and analysis; more lateral thinking compared to schools in Asia 2. Establish work routines and good habits from a young age; seek to build focus, perseverance, discipline, problem solving and play 3. Enrich your child’s understanding of his world through a variety of activities (e.g. sport, music, crafts, girl guides/boys brigade, films) 4. Monitor child’s school progress/work; understand child’s learning styles 5. Build child’s sense of identity and security; e.g. playing a musical instrument, reading widely, healthy relationship with God

D. UNDERSTANDING LOVE LANGUAGES

Applying the ‘Love Languages’ to the Parent-Child Relationship

February 15, 2013 • By Melissa Wright



When counselling parents and their children, I often refer to the “love languages”—an idea coined by Dr. Gary Chapman, a relationship counsellor most well known for the *Love Languages* series of books.

People express their love in a variety of ways, and what is important to one person may not be as much to another. If someone’s top languages are not being met, it can lead to negative feelings and behaviours.

The five love languages are as follows:

- Physical touch
- Words of affirmation
- Quality time
- Gift giving
- Acts of service

While you may have heard of the love languages, you may not have applied them to the parent-child relationship. It’s telling kids “I love you” in a language they respond to. Saying the words often isn’t enough. Parents often assume their kids know they are loved, but that’s not always the case.

Love should be unconditional, but is often displayed conditionally (such as when kids are good). Unconditional love can prevent problems such as resentment, feelings of guilt, fear, anger, low self-esteem, and insecurity. Children need to feel loved; if they don’t, they may seek approval elsewhere.

Now let’s talk about how to incorporate these into your daily lives:

1. Some ways to incorporate **physical touch** include hugging, kissing, child sitting on lap, cuddling during stories, television, or movies, tossing in the air, gentle touches on legs, arms, head, shoulders, etc., back scratches, high-fives and contact sports. As kids get older, parents may touch only when necessary, like when helping with clothes or hair. Kids will crave more contact when sick, hurt, tired, or sad. Teenagers, especially boys, will pull back from physical touch. Make sure the touch is positive and at the right time and place. Don’t embarrass! Conversely, a negative touch coming from a place of anger can be detrimental.

2. **Words of affirmation** are ways to give praise and encouragement for what the child does. Since a child's behaviour is something he or she controls, there is a direct effect. Be genuine when giving praise. Praising too frequently may have little positive effect, as it can come across as insincere. This can set up an expectation for praise, and create anxiety when it is absent. The way you word praise and your voice tone and volume make a big difference. Words of guidance will be sought elsewhere—from school, TV, peers, or other adults—if not received from parents.

Although it may seem obvious, words of negativity really hurt, and the greatest enemy of encouragement is anger.

Make sure to say "I love you" on its own, not with qualifiers such as "but ..." or "will you ..." attached.

3. Spend **quality time** with your child. Kids really seem to crave this, especially any one-on-one time. This love language is fairly self-explanatory. It can be going somewhere or just hanging out. Think of those moments when you're sharing thoughts and feelings, having good, quality conversations. Mealtime, going for walks, story time, or bedtime can be good opportunities.

4. **Giving gifts** can be one that parents roll their eyes at. Of course kids like gifts! However, it is more about the thought behind it. In a child's mind: "You were thinking of me and got it, since I'm important." Other languages need to be combined with gift giving. It is not a pay cheque or bribe, nor should it be a substitute for time spent. As with praise, excess gifts lose their meaning. You can tell gift giving is important if kids express excitement when receiving a gift or based on how it is presented, or display it proudly.

5. **Acts of service** is a big part of being a parent, as the list of tasks, errands, and to-do list items never seems to end. Acts of service refers to going above and beyond making sure kids' needs are met. This could include offering to help with something before they ask, or at least not saying "in a minute" when they do. Encouraging a hobby, checking homework, hosting events for the kids at home, or doing things to make an illness more bearable are other examples.

To discover someone's primary language, note the following:

- Observe how they express love to you.
- Observe how they express love to others.
- Listen to what they request most often.
- Notice what they complain about the most.
- Give them choices between two options.

You need to show love in all five ways, but try to discover the person's primary language (or top two or three). When the person is under 5 years old, try to hit all five languages.

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E. **THE FATHER'S MANDATE**

Some key ideas:

1. The dad's role is being a provider and protector (1 Tim 5:8 – if a man does not take care of his family, he is worse than an unbeliever).
2. His duty is to establish a relationship based on trust such that the child knows that he is accepted and is actually loved.

Table 3: Summary of Father's Mandate

Duty – mandate	Elaboration
1. Cultivate a sense of family identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultivate strong sense of team, interdependence (versus independence) • Build Christ-centred identity
2. Demonstrate an on-going love for his wife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children see the way their dad nurture and love their mum, it yields a level of trust in their dad.
3. Understand and respect his children's world	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dad's trusting relationship with his children "opens windows" (vulnerable moments) of children's heart and invite you in. • Dad – to listen with your heart and head, your children's yearnings, secret thoughts etc.
4. Keep your promise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be faithful to your word
5. Give his children the freedom to fail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failures are stepping stones to child's future success • Let child know that you too have failed and share hurts and disappointments • Affirm that neither success nor failure is the basis of your dad-child relationship
6. Be the encourager of the family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dad's encouragement builds and strengthens trust • Dad – need to write and sign child's birthday card; write encouraging words to child.
7. Routinely embrace his children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A gentle hand, tender hug, pat on the back, good night kiss communicate intimacy in family • Neither time, age, or gender should limit a father's touch • This meets your children's special emotional needs that someday will be met when God brings that special person / spouse into their life • Secures your children from having a yearning heart which could be taken captive by anyone who is willing to give attention to them
8. Build a trusting relationship based on God's Word and not human wisdom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Starts with understanding God's divine plan for salvation • Discipleship which passes from one generation to the next • Matthew 7:24-27 – a wise man builds his house upon a rock

(Source: Ezzo, Gary & Anne: "Growing Kids God's Way", Growing Families International)

