

The Impact of Parenting Styles on Adolescents' Mental Health

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Abstract. The family is the primary environment where adolescents transition from being individuals to becoming members of society. During adolescence, the family atmosphere and parenting styles directly affect adolescents' physical and mental development. The family, akin to a small social unit, is the first environment for communication and the initial classroom for socialization. Within the family, various factors, such as parents' occupations, educational backgrounds, economic status, and family structure, play a significant role in shaping parenting styles. Therefore, parents should choose parenting methods based on adolescents' age and characteristics to foster a harmonious atmosphere that promotes adolescents' mental health development.

Keywords: Parenting style, Mental health, Adolescents.

1. The Significance of Strengthening Adolescents' Mental Health Education

1.1. Promoting Comprehensive Development of Adolescents

In today's society, adolescents face numerous challenges in both their academic and personal lives, making their holistic development a focal point of social concern. Mental health, as a critical foundation of adolescents' overall growth, is essential. Adolescents with a healthy psychological state are more capable of handling academic pressure positively and maintaining high levels of motivation. In their personal lives, they can manage interpersonal relationships better, enjoy a harmonious family atmosphere, and build lasting friendships. In social interactions, they display confidence and optimism, gaining the respect and trust of others. Promoting adolescents' mental health is a primary task of family education and a shared responsibility of society, helping adolescents achieve balanced growth across various domains of life^[1-2].

1.2. Preventing the Occurrence of Psychological Problems

Given the complex and ever-changing social environment, adolescents face multiple pressures, such as academic competition, interpersonal relationships, and self-identity during their growth. If these pressures are not appropriately managed, they can lead to various psychological issues. Therefore, families and schools should prioritize mental health education. Through systematic mental health education, adolescents can learn emotional management techniques, recognize, and effectively cope with their negative emotions, such as anxiety and depression (see Table 1). Gradually improving adolescents' self-regulation abilities helps them remain calm and rational under pressure, significantly reducing the risk of mental health disorders and establishing a solid foundation for their healthy development.

Table 1: Measures for Preventing Psychological Problems

Types	Description
Mental health education mode	Through courses, lectures and other forms, popularize mental health knowledge, and enhance the awareness and prevention of mental problems among adolescents.
Emotional management skills training	Teaching young people to recognize, express and regulate emotions, such as deep breathing, meditation, positive thinking, etc., to improve self-regulation
Provide psychological counseling services	Set up a psychological counseling room, equipped with professional psychological counselors, to provide one-to-one psychological counseling and counseling for teenagers, timely intervention of psychological problems
Provide psychological counseling services	Families, schools and society should work together to create a caring, understanding and supportive atmosphere to reduce the causes of psychological problems in adolescents

1.3. Enhancing the Quality of Life for Adolescents

As the future of the nation, the quality of life of adolescents is directly linked to the overall well-being of society. Mental health, as a crucial component of life quality, profoundly impacts adolescents' growth and development. A mentally healthy adolescent can face life's challenges and difficulties with a more positive and optimistic attitude, enjoying the joys and achievements of growing up. They excel in building and maintaining healthy relationships with family, friends, and classmates, securing support and care from their social networks^[3]. This positive outlook on life, coupled with a robust social support network, forms the solid foundation for a high-quality life for adolescents.

2. The Current State of Adolescents' Mental Health

2.1. Excessive Academic Pressure

In today's society, with increasingly intense competition in education, adolescents face significant challenges due to academic pressure. This pressure comes not only from schools but also from families and society. Many parents today hold a "tiger parent" mentality, ignoring their children's individual differences and blindly pushing for comparison and outperformance against others. Such external pressure becomes a heavy burden that exacerbates the psychological load on adolescents. Over time, adolescents may gradually lose intrinsic motivation and self-confidence in their studies, which can lead to learning anxiety, test anxiety, self-doubt, and even severe feelings of inferiority and depression.

2.2. Strong Rebellious Psychology

Adolescence is marked by the second surge of self-awareness development, characterized by the intertwining of self-awareness awakening and psychological resistance. During this period, adolescents crave independence and are curious and eager to explore the world, yet their mental maturity is still developing, leading to impulsive and sometimes extreme behaviors. When faced with parental guidance, they often scrutinize it from their unique perspectives, or even respond with opposition^[4]. This is an inevitable path of growth and a critical test of parental wisdom. If parents adopt a democratic parenting style, allowing children to express their emotions and intentions freely, and sharing equal discourse rights, adolescents will feel respected and loved, promoting their mental health. Conversely, they may develop adversarial and resistant attitudes, or show rebellious behaviors characterized by confrontation, avoidance, and obstinacy.

2.3. Sensitivity in Interpersonal Relationships

In the rapidly changing modern society, family structures and functions are increasingly diversified, making family interaction patterns more complex. Family interaction patterns refer to the ways in which family members consistently interact with each other. These interactions are crucial as they shape children's emotional development and social skills. Positive family interactions, characterized by open communication, mutual respect, and emotional support, help children feel loved and valued. This, in turn, fosters a sense of security and belonging, which is conducive to building strong and healthy social relationships. Such a supportive environment allows children to develop confidence and effective social skills, contributing to their overall well-being.

In contrast, children raised in families filled with conflicts or emotional neglect may experience heightened sensitivity and insecurity, which can lead to various psychological issues. The constant exposure to family discord may result in cognitive biases and emotional instability, making it challenging for these children to trust others and engage in healthy relationships. They might exhibit signs of emotional withdrawal, erratic behavior, or even antisocial tendencies. Such children may struggle to find joy in life, become disengaged from social activities, and have difficulty forming and maintaining meaningful interpersonal relationships. Addressing and mitigating these issues early on is crucial for supporting the emotional and social development of children in complex family environments.

3. Classification of Parenting Styles

Parenting styles profoundly influence a child's growth trajectory and psychological development. The main types of parenting styles are depicted in Figure 1.

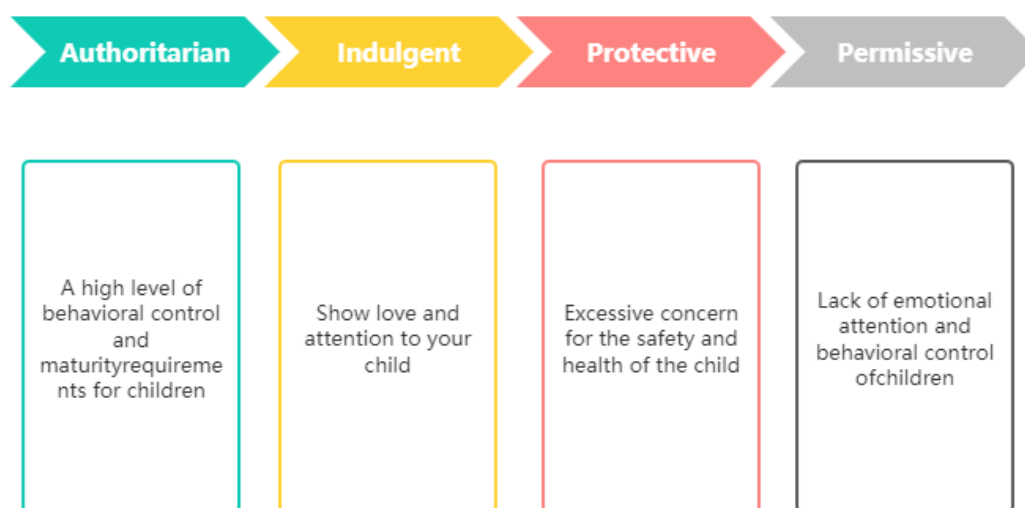


Figure 1: Classification of Parenting Styles

3.1. Authoritarian Parenting Style

An authoritarian parenting style is characterized by parents being in a dominant position where children must obey without the right to make their own choices. Such parents do not consider the child's inner world, nor do they engage in psychological communication. They may even resort to physical punishment if the child does not meet their expectations, disregarding the adolescent's self-esteem and psychological needs. This rigid approach can lead to a stifling environment where children are discouraged from expressing their thoughts and feelings. In such a family environment, children often become introverted and are reluctant to share their emotions. Some may become socially withdrawn, leading to depression over time as they struggle to cope with the emotional toll. Adolescents with stronger psychological resilience might resist parental punishment, but they can

become more susceptible to external negative influences. This vulnerability can drive them to seek validation through rebellious behaviors or involvement in risky activities, such as substance abuse or criminal behavior^[5]. Additionally, the lack of emotional support and open dialogue may further exacerbate their difficulties, impairing their ability to form healthy relationships and achieve emotional stability. Over time, these adolescents may struggle with low self-esteem, difficulty trusting others, and challenges in maintaining stable and fulfilling interpersonal connections.

3.2. Indulgent Parenting Style

The indulgent parenting style has a profound impact on adolescents' mental health, often leading to significant psychological consequences. Parents who adopt this style typically place their children at the center of their lives, fulfilling even unreasonable demands and believing that their children deserve the best of everything. While this approach may appear loving, it undermines the child's development of independence and resilience. Indulgent parents often shield their children from any form of hardship, neglecting to teach them practical and competitive skills. As children grow older and encounter increasing social and academic pressures, they may struggle to cope with challenges due to their lack of experience in handling difficulties. This can result in a sense of entitlement, where they expect care and support from others without offering reciprocity or developing the ability to address their own problems. Consequently, they may exhibit a lack of responsibility and respect toward their parents and others, as well as struggle with issues related to self-discipline and work ethic. Their reliance on parental support may hinder their ability to navigate adult responsibilities effectively, impacting their overall success and satisfaction in life. Additionally, these children might face difficulties in forming meaningful relationships and achieving personal goals, as they may not have developed the necessary skills for self-reliance and problem-solving.

3.3. Protective Parenting Style

The protective parenting style has a dual nature. On the positive side, it can guide children to learn empathy and consider others' perspectives. Through this nurturing environment, children experience the joys of loving and being loved, which can prevent the development of aggressive behavior during adolescence and foster their emotional well-being. This positive reinforcement can provide a beneficial direction for their mental growth. However, children raised in this manner often lack a competitive spirit and a proactive attitude toward life. They exhibit limited curiosity about the world and poor discernment of social issues, which may impair their problem-solving skills in emergencies. Furthermore, such children often become overly dependent on their parents, lacking the resilience and courage to face challenges independently^[6-7]. This dependency can hinder their ability to develop self-sufficiency and adapt to life's demands. They may struggle with decision-making and exhibit a passive approach to problem-solving, relying heavily on parental guidance even in adulthood. As a result, their ability to navigate complex social and professional environments may be compromised, affecting their overall success and fulfillment in life.

3.4. Permissive Parenting Style

Among the various parenting styles, the permissive approach is quite common, especially in rural areas, where "left-behind children" are a typical example. Elders, who often care for these children, may lack the authority and knowledge to discipline them effectively. Coupled with negative external influences, these children are at risk of going astray. Parents who adopt a permissive style believe that a child's education is solely the responsibility of teachers, and their own duty is limited to providing material needs. They neglect the psychological development and needs of the child. Adolescents raised in a permissive environment often suffer from a lack of security, display indifference to strangers, and exhibit extreme behaviors. They are prone to psychological issues and can easily be swayed by external influences, potentially leading them down the wrong path.

4. Strategies for Improving Parenting Styles for Adolescents

4.1. Emphasizing Emotional Communication

In the fast-paced context of modern life, limited communication time between family members due to busy work schedules and academic pressure is a common problem in many families today. Adolescence is a crucial stage in an individual's physical and mental development, characterized by the transition from dependence to independence, filled with a rich inner world of conflicts and struggles. At this time, if parents actively enhance emotional communication with their children, it demonstrates deep concern for their growth and serves as a foundation for building healthy parent-child relationships, as shown in Figure 2. Through communication, parents can gain a better understanding of their children's inner needs and confusions, whether it be academic pressure, interpersonal worries, or uncertainties about future paths^[8]. During this process, parents should express unconditional love and support, helping the child feel the warmth and strength of the family, thereby enhancing their sense of security and belonging.

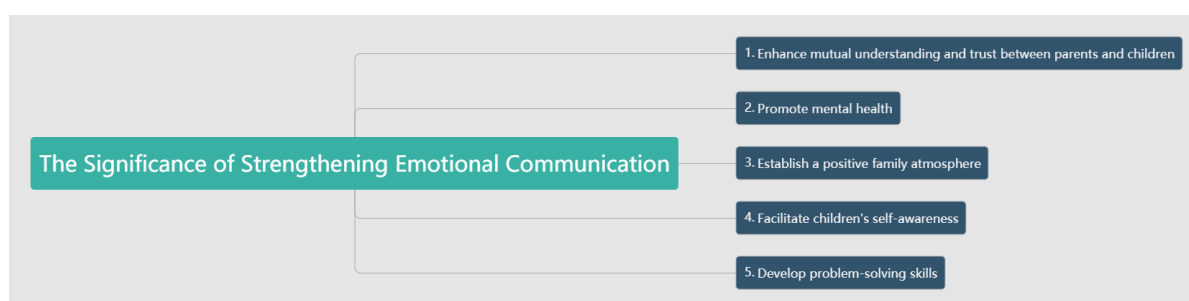


Figure 2: The Significance of Strengthening Emotional Communication

4.2. Optimizing Parenting Styles

To meet the comprehensive development needs of adolescents, parenting styles must keep pace with the times. Parents, as the primary educators in the family, have their cultural upbringing directly influencing parenting concepts and behaviors. While improving the overall cultural quality of society, parents should continuously enhance their own theoretical knowledge and personal competencies; learn from the experiences of exemplary parents to improve their parenting skills, and become role models for their children. This helps adolescents form a correct self-identity through daily observation and interaction. Additionally, maintaining a harmonious and stable marital relationship, with mutual respect and sincerity, is crucial. Parents should aim to establish an equal and loving parent-child relationship, respecting the child's independent personality and avoiding a critical and suppressive stance from an adult's perspective.

4.3. Adhering to the Physical and Psychological Characteristics of Adolescents

Every child is a unique individual, and parents should fully understand the rules of development and the tasks of different stages when conducting family education. Attention should be paid to the context, attitude, content, and methods used. Respect individual differences, and tailor parenting plans according to the psychological characteristics and behavioral patterns of children of different ages, genders, and developmental stages. Parents need to create a safe and loving family environment, take the time to observe carefully, and help their children with academic goal setting and time management based on their developmental characteristics. Actively communicate with the child, continually experiment, and explore effective ways and methods of interaction, striving to grasp the patterns of family education to improve its effectiveness^[9].

4.4. Strengthening Guidance for Family Education

Looking at the current situation, most parents have a limited understanding of family education. Many have not received professional training, and their approach is often random and uncertain,

resulting in varying quality of adolescent family education and different levels of parenting anxiety. To address this, cooperation among families, schools, and communities should be strengthened, with greater emphasis on promoting the importance of family education to society at large^[10]. Additionally, practical training and guidance for parents should be enhanced through initiatives like the "Family Health Promotion Campaign" to disseminate family education knowledge widely. This aims to deepen understanding of family education principles, scientifically implement family education, improve parenting styles, and foster the development of healthy psychology and sound personalities in adolescents.

5. Conclusion

In today's societal context, adolescent mental health issues have received widespread attention. Among the many factors influencing mental health, parenting styles play a critical role. Different styles, such as indulgent, authoritarian, permissive, or democratic, can profoundly affect adolescents' psychological development. In-depth research into the impact of parenting styles on adolescent mental health helps to reveal the specific mechanisms by which family factors influence psychological development. A healthy, harmonious, and functionally strong family contributes to nurturing a positive character in adolescents, allowing them to develop balanced cognitive, social, and emotional skills, adapt better to a changing and uncertain world, and respond rationally and calmly to challenges and difficulties from various sources.

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