Parenting Styles
Raising Children with High Self-Esteem: The Risks of Pampering and Overbearing Parenting

An Experiential and Literature Review Paper

Presented to

The Faculty of the Adler Graduate School

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

The Degree of Master of Arts in

Marriage and Family Therapy

By:

Stefanie M. Okeson

September, 2013
Abstract

According to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America in 2013, anxiety disorders affect one in eight children. Children with untreated anxiety disorders are at a higher risk to perform poorly in school, miss out on important social experiences and engage in substance abuse. Parenting style does play a tremendous role in the development of healthy identity and self-esteem in the life of the child. This presentation and paper will look at the four parenting styles defined by Dr. Diane Baumrind in the 1970s and its effect on a child’s self-esteem as well as the potential risk for anxiety disorders.
## Table of Contents

What is self-esteem?........................................................................................................ 4
Healthy self-esteem........................................................................................................ 4
Who are parents?........................................................................................................... 6
Parenting Styles........................................................................................................... 6
Authoritarian parenting.............................................................................................. 7
Authoritative parenting.............................................................................................. 8
Uninvolved parenting................................................................................................. 9
Permissive parenting................................................................................................. 9
Helicopter parents.................................................................................................. 10
Normal anxiety......................................................................................................... 11
Anxiety disorders..................................................................................................... 12
Risks.......................................................................................................................... 13
Unique situations..................................................................................................... 14
An Adlerian perspective.......................................................................................... 15
Presentation Summary............................................................................................. 18
Conclusion................................................................................................................ 19
References................................................................................................................. 20
Parenting Styles
Raising children with high self-esteem: The risks of pampering and overbearing parenting

What is Self-Esteem?

An individual’s self-esteem is the degree to which a person values and believes that they have worth, not only to themselves but also to the world around them (The Center for Parenting Education, 2006). One’s own confidence and the ability to cope successfully with life’s challenges is part of a person’s self-esteem. Self-esteem determines how willing one is to try these new challenges as well as how one may react to perceived failures (Greenberg et al, 1992).

Abraham Maslow, as noted in his “hierarchy of needs” categorizes self-esteem as one of the basic human motivations, Maslow 1943 (as cited in McLeod, 2007). Self-esteem exists in all people to some degree. Although one’s self-esteem is not set in stone, it does have a core in which it can fluctuate around. For those who have developed a healthy core of self-esteem, the fluctuations will be temporary as life situations occur. The self-esteem will eventually stabilize again (Center for Parenting Education, 2006; Greenberg et al, 1992). It is should be noted that low self-esteem has historically been associated with depression, diminished life satisfaction, even suicidal ideation (Jordan et al, 2013; Wilburn & Smith, 2005).

Healthy Self-Esteem

“Healthy self-esteem is based on the ability to access ourselves accurately and still being able to be accepting of who we are “ (The University of Texas, 2013; Wilburn & Smith, 2005). In order to maintain healthy self-esteem we should be able to acknowledge our own strengths and weaknesses, yet know that we are still worthy and worthwhile (Wilburn & Smith, 2005). Those with low self-esteem are only able to focus on what is currently happening in their lives to determine their self-worth, rather than knowing that usually these circumstances that shift our view on our self-esteem are usually temporary (The University of Texas, 2013).
Children who grow with healthy self-esteem have the ability to stand up for their values; they feel they are important and are willing to try new things. These children are persistent in reaching their goals and admit when they make a mistake. A child with a healthy self-esteem expresses happiness and will act responsibly. A healthy self-esteem is not boastful, yet is a feeling of inner self-worth (The Center for Parenting Education, 2006).

Self-esteem is developed over time throughout childhood experiences. These experiences and the parents, play a tremendous role in developing a healthy identity and increased self-esteem in their children (The University of Texas, 2013, Wilbur & Smith, 2005). A child’s development of healthy self-esteem should not have to be earned; yet it is something that everyone deserves in order to feel good about who they are (The Center for Parenting Education, 2006).

A child’s development of their self-esteem changes over time as they complete each physiological stage. A child’s life is marked by certain self-esteem characteristics through these developmental stages. Children in early years, from toddler until about the age of six, with healthy self-esteem exhibit the following behaviors: begin to differentiate self from others, begin to form relationships with oneself, and recognizes they are special to their parents. These children also begin to develop their imagination, take pride in creating things, learn skills for social interaction with their peers and show tenderness towards relationships with friends and family (Smith, 1996; Dougherty & Ray, 2007).

Children in middle childhood experience the following self-esteem tasks: compare self with others; evaluate self in terms of other’s impressions; and begin to have a clearer picture of life’s goals, such as what they want to be when they grow up. This stage for children is almost
always defined as taking pride in accomplishments and being accepted by their peers. These children form closer relationships and often have a best friend (Smith, 1996).

The last stage of the child’s years is defined as adolescence; these teens are adjusting to dramatic physical changes and are beginning to establish independence from family and peers. They realize that life goals are more important than daily worries and they are beginning to relate to the opposite sex (Smith, 1996).

**Who are Parents?**

In this project, the term “parents” is defined as a group of people actively involved in the caring and development of a child. It does not matter if it is a biological mother or father, grandparents, aunts and uncles, or even childcare providers, teachers or foster parents. Most of the time there are more than just a few people involved in the raising of a child.

**Parenting Styles**

Dr. Baumrind defined parenting styles in the 1970s. The term *parenting style* relates to the behaviors used by parents to socialize and control the actions of the children (Lightfoot, Cole & Cole, 2009). In 1971, Baumrind conducted a study and identified the parenting styles that are commonly known today. These styles are based on several factors including: control; supervision; demands; warmth; acceptance and involvement. The styles that were developed and established based on the study are authoritarian, authoritative, uninvolved and permissive (Baumrind, 1971, as cited by Driscoll, 2013).

Each style captures two important elements of parenting: responsiveness and demandingness (Darling, 1999). Parental responsiveness is defined as the parent being reasonable and nurturing and providing supportive feedback to the child, parental demandingness
is the desire of the parent for the child to comply with established rules and expectations (Driscoll, 2013).

**Authoritarian Parenting**

This style of parenting encompasses parents having high demandingness and low responsiveness to their children. Parents, who use an authoritarian style with their children display little warmth, expect obedience and are very status oriented (Kopko, 2007). They expect their orders to be obeyed without any explanation and can be seen as overly strict. This type of parent provides an environment in the home and around the child that is very structured, and the rules of the home and behavior are clearly stated (Darling, 1999). The phrase “you will do this because I said” and “because I am the parent and you are not” are common phrases that are invoked by this style of parent (Kopko, 2007, p. 2). The author notes that this style has often been labeled as “black and white” parenting (2007, p. 2). There is no room for flexibility; children are expected to follow what the parent demands, without any sort of discussion (Driscoll, 2013).

The authoritarian parenting style tends to be more common among ethnic minority families than White families. The belief is that many ethnic families live in more urban settings, which can be linked to dangerous living situations. Therefore this style is used as a protective measure for the safety of the children (Kopko, 2007).

The response to this parenting style will differ with every child, and could possibly cause a child to feel and experience several reactions. Some children will feel they are always striving to be perfect and never meeting the goal. This type of reaction will bring up feelings of unworthiness, if they feel that they cannot live up to the standards that have been set by their
parents. These children may also act out in rebellious behavior, or in passive behavior such as daydreaming and forgetting (Stein, 1997).

The effect on the self-esteem of a child who is raised in an authoritative home will also be different for each child. However, it can be expected there will be an impact on how the children view their self-worth. Although these children did not grow up in an overly warm and responsive home, they were found to be content, self-reliant, explorative, as well as self-controlled (Ballash, Leyfer, Buckley & Woodriff-Borden, 2006, p. 114).

**Authoritative Parenting**

Authoritative parents are warm but firm (Kopko, 2007). They have high demands of their children, as well as high response. This style of parenting monitors and imparts clear standards and sets rules that are expected to be followed, yet considers the opinions of their children (Driscoll, 2013). Children raised by these parents can talk about issues regarding social and physical changes in their lives, with them and feel they are supported. These parents are assertive, but are not intrusive or restrictive (Driscoll, 2013).

When raising children using this style, parents can anticipate their children to grow up feeling secure in love and acceptance, a sense of encouragement, independence and responsibility (Stein, 1997). These children will hopefully see the world as a safe and friendly place and will be more willing to try and potentially fail.

“Authoritative parents raise children with healthy self-esteem; these children are very competent in social, emotional, and academic abilities” (Driscoll, 2013, p. 5). These abilities encourage the child to have a high sense of value for who they are. This warm style of parenting is associated with positive adjustment in late adolescents (McKinney, Donnelly & Renk, 2008).
Uninvolved Parenting

Uninvolved parents are low in demandingness as well as low in responsiveness with their children. They are frequently absent or preoccupied; therefore no limits are set for the children to understand boundaries (Driscoll, 2013, p.5). These parents typically are not warm, and are indifferent to the needs of their child. These parents are often overwhelmed with their own circumstances such as being tired or frustrated and have simply have given up (Kopko, 2007).

As a result, the children of uninvolved parents tend to lack the ability to form close relationships, may have bitter and hostile feelings towards their parents and others, experience feelings of loneliness and begin to isolate as they continue to devalue their own self worth (Stein, 1997).

It is the writer’s belief that children of uninvolved parents do not learn how to develop a sense of identity, and may feel lost as to who they are as individuals. Without models to teach and guide what it is to value one’s self, these children may be vulnerable to outside and potentially dangerous situations. These children may find themselves in situations such as gangs, drugs or bullying, because they are looking to belong and feel that they matter to someone. Sense of belonging is a very crucial concept in the development of a child.

Permissive Parenting

Permissive parents have low demands of their children, yet initiate high responses. These parents are often over-indulgent and shower their children with presents, privileges and services. They are lenient, overbearing and submit to the demands of their child (Driscoll, 2013). It is difficult for these types of parents to say “no” to their children and avoid confrontation at all cost. They often jump into save or fix the situation in order to prevent strain or struggle for the child (Darling, 1999).
Children who are raised in a permissive home lose initiative for life. Why would a child try for something that is going to be done for them anyway? These children often feel and expect they are entitled by insisting their every demand is met. Because of the parents constant catering, these children see adults as a sense of comfort and pleasure. This causes them to ignore the rights of others. These children lack a sense of limits and boundaries (Stein, 1997).

Children from permissive parents were found to be the least self-reliant, explorative and self-controlled (Ballash, Leyfer, Buckley & Woodriff-Borden, 2006, p. 114). It is the writer’s belief that a child who grows up in a home with this style does not need to learn control or self-reliance, since the parents cater to their every need.

**Helicopter Parents**

The term “helicopter parents” first appeared in the 1980s. It is used to define a style of parenting that is overbearing. This type of parent hovers close to their child, ready to swoop in to rescue at the first sign of difficulty or disappointment. Most of the time, these parents consider themselves friends with their children (Nicholson, 2012).

This style of over parenting can lead to detrimental character traits. These children experience erosion in their sense of autonomy, have high dependency on external achievement and status when they are developing their sense of confidence and secure self (2012). According to Nicholson, these parents hoped by looking out for their children’s every move and by making sure that all of their classes, sports, and activities were helpful in providing the best advantage for their children’s successful futures. Yet, Meno, an Indiana University psychologist found “that when children aren’t given the space to struggle through things on their own, they don’t learn to be confident in their own abilities and it can affect their self-esteem.” (2007). The researcher states again that “the problem with never having to struggle is that you never experience failure.
and can develop an overwhelming fear of failure and disappointing others, both the low self-esteem as well as the fear of failure can lead to depression or anxiety” (Meno, 2007, p. 1).

“The millennials, which are those children who were born between the years 1982-1995, are theorized to be the most protected generation of children in our nation’s history” (LeMoyne & Buchanan, 2011, p. 399) Although there is not enough research yet on these children, there is a strong concern that helicopter parenting is unhealthy and will raise children with negative consequences as they enter adulthood (LeMoyne & Buchanan, 2011) Many people may begin to ask and wonder what type of parents this group of people will be. Will they continue the pattern and also hover over their children, or will they become lax and not use the same effort that was given to them?

The Role of Anxiety

Normal Anxiety

Normal anxiety is a reaction to stressful situations displayed nervousness or feelings of uneasiness, although it does go away shortly after the trigger of a stressful situation has ended. This type of anxiety is short-lived and does not dramatically impact one’s daily life (Beesdo, Knappe & Pine, 2009).

It is developmentally appropriate for children to have fears and worries. Each stage of a child’s development notes that there are certain fears and worries that follow throughout their life (Smith, 1996). Infants are easily startled and have a fear of strangers, whereas toddlers are normally afraid of the dark and have separation issues when being away from their parents. As children move into the school years they often have fears of injury, of death, or of storms. As these children grow into adolescence, their worries turn into fears of anxiety around school, health and social status (Beesdo et al., 2009)
Anxiety Disorders

Anxiety disorders are among the most common psychiatric problems experienced by children (Lindhout et al, 2009). The disorder appears to remain stable and cause problems for these youth throughout their adolescent years (McLeod, Wood & Weisz, 2006). According to statistics by the Anxiety and Depression Association of America, one in eight children is affected with an anxiety disorder (2013). Children with anxiety disorders are at higher risk to perform poorly in school, miss out on important social experiences, and engage in substance abuse (Anxiety and Depression Association of America, 2013). It is the belief of this writer that children may suffer from problems because anxiety can paralyze a person from action, to lose focus and feel ashamed of experiencing these feelings that impact their lives. Children who are feeling this way may often isolate themselves as well as retreat from social interactions due to embarrassment or fear of judgment.

In adults who suffer with symptoms of anxiety, there are several symptoms that must be present in order to receive a diagnosis. However, for children who are experiencing symptoms such as: overwhelming feelings of panic or fear; uncontrollable obsessive thoughts; painful or intrusive memories; recurring nightmares; heart palpitations and muscle tension, only one of these must be present and occurring for more days than not, to qualify for a anxiety disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 2000).

The cause of anxiety disorders range from biological to environmental factors. Although there is not one single cause of anxiety, it occurs as a result of an interaction between certain factors, occurring in genetics, the temperament of the child, as well as unique family situations (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 2013; Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2011). Some of the unique situations that have not yet been addressed in this paper may include:
divorce; adoption; abuse; or other family dynamics that could cause strain in the communication of the family or trauma for the child.

**Risks**

Research has recently begun to focus on family characteristics that may promote the development of anxiety (Ballash, Leyfer, Buckley & Woodriff-Borden, 2006). Family systems are very complex, and there is a connection that indicates that family relationships differ between anxious and non-anxious families (Ballash et al., 2006). The authors observed that “Children of parents with an anxiety disorder are 5-7 times more likely to be diagnosed with an anxiety disorder than children of parents without one” (p. 113). There has been a connection that has been made between parenting styles and anxiety disorders in children. The parenting styles that are consistent with anxiety are marked with over-control and judgment (Markus, Hoogendijk & Boer, 2009).

There is one parenting style that has received the most attention, according to empirical evidence is associated with higher levels of anxiety in children. Over control and over-parenting is associated with both helicopter parenting and permissive parenting. These parents exhibit excessive involvement in a child’s activities, daily routines, and emotional experiences and encourage a dependence on the adult (Affrunti & Ginsburg, 2012). The children begin to perceive themselves as incompetent, as well as incapable of being successful with life’s challenges. This prevents the child from autonomy and gaining a sense of mastery in their own environment (Affrunti & Ginsburg, 2012, p. 103). Despite claims of which parenting strategies are most effective in producing self-confident children, today’s parents agree that children’s self-esteem is a vital measure of good parenting (Rutherford, 2011).
Unique Situations

Contemporary research supports the notion that regardless of a child’s mental, physical, or emotional state, children are best raised when parents use a positive style of parenting (Affrunti & Ginsburg, 2012). Although techniques of parenting will differ from child to child, the fundamental philosophy of a warm, responsive, and flexible style is the best for all children. “Although a child with a disability or mental disorder can have their development different from some children, this does not make them less in need of warmth and love” (McGill-Smith, 2003, p.3).

A parent of a child with special needs will be able to give support and encouragement, as well as structure to their child, using appropriate expectations based on their level of independence (McGill-Smith, 2003). This writer believes there is not yet enough research regarding specifics of parenting styles with mental and physical disorders. It is also crucial for a parent of a child with special needs to understand their limitations and help them to be successful when giving them tasks, so they feel that are part of the family and not treated differently.

Mothers and fathers may have very different parenting styles (Turner, 2011). How does this impact the children and parenting? It is important that parents are authentic in their style. The writer believes that parents should strive to find balance and support one another in their styles as well as discuss which values are priorities. For example, if one parent has strong view on dietary needs and nutrition, the other parent can lean towards the view of the other, by compromising. However, it is crucial for parents to have strong communication regarding how they parent, because mixed messages can have negative effects as well (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2011). A study was conducted in 2010, to look at the relationship of parental control and youth adjustment. As a result of this study, it was noted that both parent’s availability as well
as the quality of the relationship between the mother and father to be positively linked the self-esteem of the children (Kakihara, Tilton-Weaver, Kerr & Stattin, 2010).

**An Adlerian Approach**

Alfred Adler was born in Vienna, Austria in 1870. Adler was a physician, a psychoanalyst and an educator (Mosak & Maniacci, 1999). According to Alfred Adler’s theory on children, Adler believed that children have a strong need to feel safe (Mosak & Maniacci, 1999). The concept of being safe also touches in with Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, a child who does not feel safe. This is one of the most basic needs along with shelter and food, and without these children will not have the ability to form a healthy self-esteem, Maslow 1943 (as cited in McLeod, 2007).

One of the theories to keep children safe was Adler’s use of “natural and logical consequences” (Nystul, 1984). A logical consequence would involve the parent working with the child to establish limits and rules and consequences that the child will experience if the rule is broken. The parents can then instill in their child a sense of safety and security by establishing the limits of their children’s behavior, as well as be consistent in their parenting practices (Nystul, 1984). An example of a natural and logical consequence for a child would be, a child is not home in time for lunch, therefore they miss lunch and the natural consequence is hunger. It is important that the consequences must be related to the misbehavior, respectful of the child, and reasonable based on the individual experience (Nelsen, 1985). According to an article by Jane Nelsen regarding the three logical R’s of consequences, if a consequence is not respectful if can add to humiliation in the child which can lead to resentment. The writer believes that resentment may impact a child’s self-esteem by making them feel a sense of anger as well as a feeling of being incompetent in the eyes of their parents.
Another concept that Adler viewed as important is that children need to feel that they belong, as well as feel they are loved and respected (Nystul, 1984). Rudolf Dreikurs, noted the “desire to belong is their strongest motivation in their behavior (Dreikurs & Soltz, 1964, p. 14). The concept of belonging begins in the home and should be transferred into school and friendships as well.

Another central idea in raising children according to Adler is instilling the value of social interest. This becomes an essential component of a healthy person (Ostrovsky, Parr & Gradel, 1992). The idea of valuing others and the world around influences a person’s attitude, perceptions, thinking, and the way they behave with others. The ability to care for someone other than oneself can only be developed when a person values and loves who they are first.

Encouragement, a very strong Adlerian concept, is essential in the development of a child’s self-esteem (Dinkmeyer & Losoncy, 1980). According to Alfred Adler, “the encouraged person demonstrates faith in self and life” (Mosak & Maniaci, 1999, p. 148). Adler once stated, “when we feel encouraged, we feel capable and appreciated and will generally act in a connected and cooperative way” (Mosak & Maniaci, 1999, p.149). Encouragement goes beyond praise. According to Michael Nystul, “praise is an evaluative statement that a parent makes about the child’s finished product, such as good job” (1984, p.181). This type of statement of praise makes the child dependent on someone else for feedback. Instead, encouragement is non-evaluative and focuses on the process instead of the final outcome (Nystul, 1984). Using comments about how the child is experiencing the process is much more effective in helping the child to gain confidence in themselves.

It is the view of most Adlerians, those who are educated by and believe in this approach, that a child, who is not encouraged, will become discouraged. A discouraged child will act out
by seeking attention, power and control, revenge or showing inadequacy (Mosak & Maniacci, 1999, p. 149). When children begin using one of these misbehaviors, it is important for the parents to understand what it is their children is trying to achieve. Most of the time, the child is begging the parents for attention or to learn what is expected of them. Children are very successful when they understand the boundaries and limitations set by their parents and the consequences for not following the rules (Mosak & Maniacci, 1999).

The ultimate goal of parenting is to raise a child who will eventually become a competent and confident adult, this goal is referred to as differentiation. Murray Bowen, a family system’s theorist, identified the term differentiation. Differentiation of self is one's ability to separate one's own intellectual and emotional functioning from that of the family; it is a direction in life and not necessarily a goal to be achieved (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2011). According to Bowenian theory, each generation moves towards a lower level of differentiation, which means that issues will continue to repeat themselves from generation to generation until emotional issues are confronted and resolved successfully (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2011). One tool that parents can implement as their children reach the teens years is to assert less parental supervision, so the child can begin to possess more responsibility and self-regulation (Bulanda & Majumdar, 2008). The write believes the ability to self-regulate and feel responsible makes a person feel that they are capable, which increases their self-esteem.

A well-differentiated person will move away to go to college and not find the need to be in constant communication with parents, expect parents to fix issues or rely on them for financial or emotional support. Although, in some cultures, moving away is not related to differentiation. When a person is struggling with differentiation and they are “fused” with the family, they can easily become caught up in the emotions of the family and it becomes more difficult to separate
Although helping a child through difficult situations sounds like a great idea, the helicopter parents have raised children who have not yet successfully differentiated. What will the next generation of children do when it is time to leave the nest? Will they feel competent? Will they feel confident? Will they be ready to meet life’s challenges and deal with the consequences? Adler once said, “the child is both the receiver and creator of his or her own world” (Mosak & Maniaci, 1999), p. 31.)

Presentation Summary

For this project, a PowerPoint presentation was given to colleagues in the field. The presentation consisted of defining self-esteem, children, parenting and also anxiety. The goal of the presentation was to educate people on the connection between parenting styles and self-esteem.

This type of presentation would be valuable for several categories of people. Parents and grandparents raising children would find the information about styles, techniques and risk to be beneficial in their childrearing. Teachers and therapists may also find that knowing the connection between self-esteem and anxiety would be helpful when they are working with children in the classroom or the counseling office.

Unfortunately there are limits to this particular presentation. The writer focused mainly on children with “average/normal” behavioral, cognitive and emotional functions and also focused mainly on children who are being raised in stable homes. The writer does recognize that this is not always the situation that families are faced with. It is the belief of the writer that there are unique situations that each family faces and the presentation was not able to address each type. It is the hope of the writer that more presentations can be developed in order to educate
parents and others on ways in which they can effectively raise children with special circumstances to be happy and confident adults.

The writer will follow-up with each of the participants through an email to gain any feedback as well as answer more questions. In the email to the participants, the writer hopes to obtain information regarding the helpfulness of the information that was presented, as well as find out how to better effectively communicate with the audience.

Some parenting classes have been developed already to help parents raise healthy and confident children. It is the understanding of the writer that many of these parenting classes and programs utilize concepts that are Adlerian based. Programs such as ‘Love and Logic’, Positive Parenting, and Active parenting all teach parents how to use natural and logical consequences with their children. It helps to give parents techniques in which to implement positive parenting in their homes (Resource Training & Solutions, 2008).

It is the hope that this type of program could be developed into a longer and more intense workshop in which parents will learn further about their parenting styles as well as how to implement effective parenting techniques based on these styles.

**Conclusion**

Overall, although the writer discovered throughout research of this project that there is a wide variety of information on parenting and anxiety in children, the research lacks what is currently happening in today’s generation regarding the impact of technology and social media on parenting. It is the hope of the writer that research will continue to present itself to parents and mental health professionals in order to help our next generation of children to be confident and successful throughout their lives.
References


http://www.resourcetraining.com/Page/Services


The University of Texas. (2013). *Self esteem.* Informally published manuscript, Counseling and mental health center, University of Texas Austin, Austin, Texas, Retrieved from http://cmhc.utexas.edu/selfesteem.html
