Inside this edition

Understanding Different Parenting Styles

KIT

Keeping In Touch

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Resource Article

In this final edition of the KIT newsletter series on understanding different parenting styles, we will explore the effect of parenting styles on home literacy practices and children's language skills. Bingham, Jeon, Kwon, and Lim (2017) examined the impact parenting styles have on home literacy experiences and children's language development. Bingham et al. (2017) state "[t]he home literacy environments that parents establish and the ways in which parents and children interact around reading and writing materials are key to assisting young children to develop strong language and literacy skills".

Early literacy and language skills are broken down into two categories, informal and formal. Bingham et al. (2017) explain that informal literacy learning opportunities include parent-child book reading and help build a child's vocabulary and comprehension skills. Formal literacy activities focus on a parent's goal to directly teach their child. Bingham et al. (2017) cite Bus and

van Ijzendoorn (1998) and Hindman and Morrison (2012) when explaining that "[p]arents vary in the quality of the home literacy experiences they provide children and the impact that such experiences have on children's learning relates to how parents approach parenting tasks". Bingham et al. (2017) define parenting style as "…a parent's general approach to interacting with a child by focusing on issues of control (demandingness) and affective warmth (responsiveness)". When thinking about the three parenting typologies, which type do you believe positively impacts a child's language skills and fosters a safe home learning environment?

As we have learned in previous KIT newsletters in this series, parenting styles can directly impact a number of child outcomes. Bingham et al. (2017) created the following conceptual model to demonstrate "…the direct and mediational paths of parents' parenting styles through children's home literacy experiences to their early oral language skills".

Resource Article (continued)
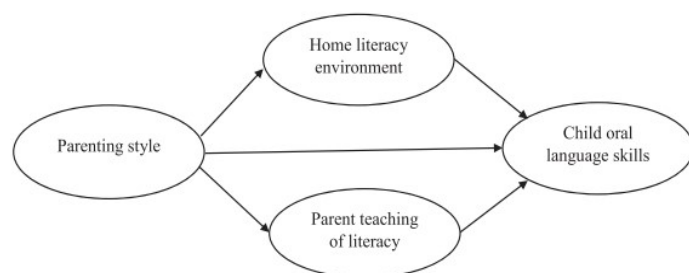
To explore the impact of parenting styles on home literacy techniques and oral language skills Bingham et al. (2017) collected data from parents and their children. The majority of previous research on this topic has been conducted with middle class White families and in order to provide a more diverse look on the topic 76% of participants in this study were from African-American families. The parents completed self-reported questionnaires about their parenting styles, and the formal and informal home literacy experiences they provided their children. Parents also completed the Language Reading and Family Survey which measures informal home literacy experiences "… with regard to shared book reading frequency, maternal book reading strategies, going to the library, and the number of books in the home…" (Bingham et al., 2017). Another test of informal home literacy experiences was completion of the title recognition checklist which assesses parent's knowledge of children's literature and examined how often they teach their child to print or read at home. The children were assessed by trained graduate level assistants on their language and literacy skills. Bingham et al. (2017) used The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) and The Test of Preschool Early Literacy (TOPEL) to assess the children's language development.

The study concluded that authoritative parenting "…was positively correlated with the home literacy environment and parent direct teaching of literacy, while authoritarian parenting style was negatively correlated with the home literacy environment" (Bingham, 2017). Bingham et al. (2017) discovered that "[p]arents who scored higher on the authoritative parenting style were more likely to provide children with higher quality literacy environments (e.g., opportunities to experience books in the home) and teach children literacy at home…" while authoritarian parents were less likely to provide these experiences. The study did not produce any correlations between parenting styles and oral language skills. However, home literacy environments were directly correlated with children's receptive vocabulary and oral language skills. Bingham et al. (2017) further noted that parent education was positively associated with all child language skills.

The earlier article reviews in this KIT series have consistently linked the authoritative parenting style with better child outcomes and improved child adjustment. The parents in this study who reported an authoritative parenting style were more likely to provide their children with richer home literacy environments by engaging in informal and formal literacy experiences, which in turn improved their oral language skills. In the July 2019 KIT Newsletter we learned that the authoritarian style of parenting is often characterized by parental control and low levels of nurturing, whereas the authoritative style is typically warm, responsive, and provides respectful control. Based on the resource articles examined in this series it seems clear that an authoritative parenting typology improves child outcomes in a variety of ways. By understanding the nuances of different styles you can further support and educate caregivers with whom you work and ultimately improve child and family outcomes..

Bingham, G. E., Jeon, H., Kwon, K., & Lim, C. (2017). Parenting styles and home literacy opportunities: Associations with children's oral language skills. *Infant & Child Development, 26*(5), n/a-N.PAG. https://doi-org.proxy-su.researchport.umd.edu/10.1002/icd.2020

What do the data say?

What parenting challenges accompany families during deployment reunification?

Parenting young children comes with stressors and difficulties. Many parents struggle to maintain their temper, practice patience, and remain emotionally connected with their young children. Now, imagine the difficulties accompanying families of young children serving during a military deployment. Walsh, Dayton, Erwin, Muzik, Busuito, and Rosenblum (2014) state that since 2001 "…more than two million American troops have been deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan… and 37% have a child under the age of six". Deployment stressors effect the entire family through pre-deployment to reunification. The reintegration time is exciting and hopeful but is also accompanied by unique challenges. Walsh et al. (2014) explain that reunification poses many challenges including re-establishing relationships, roles, and routines, and attending to both physical and mental service-related injuries. Walsh et al. (2014) cite Flake, Davis, Johnson, and Middleton (2009) who state that within military families, "…42% of parents reported clinically significant levels of parenting stress largely accounting for elevations in child behavior problem".

Young children experience rapid developmental changes. Many times, when a soldier leaves the child may not be walking or talking and upon reunification the young child is now doing both. In a study with fourteen male service members, deployed within the past two years and having a child under the age of seven, the fathers reported they "…were keenly aware that they had missed important parenting moments while deployed, that their relationship with their child had shifted, and that reconnection requires effort…" (Walsh et al., 2014). Upon returning from deployment 29% of service member spouses reported the soldier had difficulty reconnecting with their children. The fathers in this study reported feelings of loss and difficulty regaining closeness with their child.

Fathers in this study also explained that discipline becomes a dilemma upon returning from deployment. They described difficulty adapting from military order and structure to family life and the unpredictability of a young child's behavior (Walsh et al., 2014). One soldier stated that he is a military guy who emphasizes discipline and his "…hard point is not realizing the age factor and they're not soldiers" (Walsh et al., 2014).

The fathers reported difficulties managing their temper and staying calm when the child acts up. Walsh et al. (2014) reported that "[h]alf of the fathers met criteria for a diagnosis of PTSD…" and of those not meeting the clinical diagnosis for PTSD still suffered from high levels of trauma symptoms. Fathers of young children are exposed to crying and temper tantrums, and many of the fathers reported that crying triggered painful memories making it difficult to respond to their child.

Aside from the challenges that emerged from the study, a theme of motivations also emerged. Fathers described a strong drive to be an excellent father and presented with robust motivation to learn and develop new parenting skills (Walsh et al., 2014). Walsh et al. (2014) stated that "[f]athers perceived a need to build their own capacity to express emotions and provide nurture to their children". Fathers also expressed the need for guidance and understanding about their behavior and their child's behavior. The fathers were eager to develop appropriate responses to their child's behavior and adapt to the developmental transitions their child had developed during their absence.

As early childhood practitioners it is important to recognize that while reunification after a deployment is a time of happiness and excitement it is also accompanied by various challenges. When returning from deployment which parenting typology do you feel many fathers are "stuck" in? If you answered authoritarian you would be correct! While deployed the service member is accustomed to military control and structure and shifting from this set of thinking to a warmer, more responsive, and respectful control mindset can be difficult. Support is needed for families during this time which should be "…aimed at enhancing positive parenting of young children…" to improve family resiliency. The fathers in the study outlined many difficulties in the process of reunification but also presented a high desire to learn and implement new skills. When working with these families it is important to recognize these challenges and engage the families with positive parenting tools.

Walsh, T. B., Dayton, C. J., Erwin, M. S., Muzik, M., Busuito, A., & Rosenblum, K. L. (2014). Fathering after Military Deployment: Parenting Challenges and Goals of Fathers of Young Children. *Health & Social Work, 39*(1), 35–44. doi: 10.1093/hsw/hlu005

Consultation Corner

Sharon W. Cooper, MD, FAAP

Parenting Style …...When is Action Necessary?

We've talked about parenting styles, misconceptions and role modeling parental behaviors. We understand that as early intervention specialists, it is not in our job description to change parenting styles but how can we help parents when we recognize that their methods will likely be counterproductive? In particular, we want to be alert to things that should make us take actions, such as reaching out for more professional help or even acting on our legal mandate to report a suspicion of child abuse or neglect. Let's consider a case example.

One of the most frequent parenting styles that does not help children and in fact, often harms children is the parent who leniently gives in to demands for digital access by very young toddlers. There is ample evidence now that digital addiction is a real and present danger for the well being of our children. Keeping this in mind, how can we help parents who feel obligated to make their child happy by surrounding them with Internet access digital devices almost 24/7? This is a common conundrum!

One of my parents talked about her worries regarding insomnia problems with her 2 children who were less than 5 years of age. When I queried about bedtime routines, she stated that the only way she could get them at least to stay in their beds was to purchase a projector that she pointed towards the ceiling in their bedroom so that they could watch cartoons and animated movies every night while lying supine …eventually falling asleep while the media was still playing by about midnight. Let's dissect a strategy in approaching this example.

Aside from looking aghast, what else could we do? This parent seems unable to set limits and is just trying to have a bedtime that is devoid of conflict. One is tempted to immediately "just say no!" but a kinder and gentler approach might be to speak of **weaning** the child out of media and in to sleep. Having the children at least in their bed is a good start and deserves accolades to the parent. Making the room very dark (including black out curtains if outside light is a problem) is recommended by sleep hygiene specialists. Next, this media watching needs to be the last part of the children's day (after baths, books and hugs) so that the positive bedtime behaviors will not be omitted. Use of a timer on the devices as well as the parent coming in every 10-15 minutes decreasing the volume of the media are all steps that can eventually get the children to fall asleep more efficiently and earlier. The goal is to quickly help the children understand the 10-minute rule and that after 10, a parent may come in, turn off the media and perhaps stay in the room for a few minutes reassuring the children that night-time darkness is their friend.

Criticizing the parent is generally not helpful and if there is parental disagreement between mom and dad, one may have to explore issues individually. Parenting is often a reflection of

Consultation Corner (continued)

personal family history, adversities and a desire on the part of parents to do a better job. With each visit, plan to go back to the bedtime challenge and encourage the small successes, give only one recommendation at a time, and remind parents that changes don't occur overnight.

The very research on extinction behavioral modification (a.k.a. time out) revealed that once a parent starts to use this intervention for a single behavior, not only will the behavior increase in frequency over the next 5-10 days, but that on average, it takes about 21 days of consistent time out behavioral modification for just one behavior, before it is extinguished below the baseline frequency. Helping the parent know that it will likely take a month before there is an improvement on a target behavior helps them not to believe that your recommendations just "won't work on my child"!

The time to bring in social services or other assistance for a child and family is when there is a suspicion of child abuse or neglect, a parent who is impaired either by drugs, alcohol or because of an intellectual disability or serious mental health disorder e.g. schizophrenia or when you become aware that children are being exposed to domestic violence (which is also a mandatory reportable incident). Though it is infrequent in my experience, I have certainly seen cases of very severe child maltreatment where an infant and toddler specialist was working with an injured child and had enough suspicion based on the family history of the injury and/or a seeming reckless disregard for the well-being of the child to make a report. Remember, that all of us are mandated reporters of child maltreatment and neglect, and we are required to report suspicion of abuse or neglect……not confirmation. Confirmation is the role of the CPS worker.

It's been a pleasure "chatting" over these past few months. Back to the digital addiction though, before I become too distracted to remember (a common side effect of too much digital access). Use online websites and YouTube videos to help explain to parents the need to limit digital access to children.

A good resource is a research brief published by Common Sense Media found at https://www.commonsensemedia.org/sites/default/files/uploads/research/csm_2016_technology_addiction_research_brief_1.pdf. For your parents who don't read for information, consider a good TED talk about the dysfunctional family and videogame addiction at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6qsQXRqREwM. Discuss the document among your peers and colleagues, mount a game plan (not videogame though) and have intermittent "case quandary" discussions. Thank you for the chance to share and GOOD LUCK!!

On the WWW

ZERO To THREE has a treasure trove of research, resources, professional development, and lots more supporting practitioners and families. This month the web resource is a page from ZERO To THREE titled *Parent Favorites: A collection of our highest trending resources for parents.* This compilation includes information about ages and stages, social-emotional development, early learning, play, challenging behavior, sleep, positive parenting approaches, brain development, temperament, fatherhood, and discipline. Each of these topics includes a set of resources including infographics, articles, videos, and more. The site is easy to navigate and can be helpful for parents and practitioners supporting families of young children. The direct link to the collection of Parent Favorites is: https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/series/parent-favorites#fatherhood

Continuing Education for KIT Readers

The Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) is offering a continuing education opportunity for KIT readers.

In line with the focus on **Understanding Different Parenting Styles** readers are invited to receive continuing education contact hours for reading the monthly KIT publications (July through October 2019 and completing a multiple-choice exam about the content covered in these KITs.

KIT readers will receive the exam for this series in November 2019. There is no need to register for the CEUs. Rather, if you are interested, complete the exam online at www.edis.army.mil

Upon successful completion of the exam, you will receive a certificate of non-discipline specific continuing education contact hours.

KIT Newsletters are online at www.edis.army.mil

Thank you for your continued interest in the KIT.