

**Educational &
Developmental
Intervention
Services (EDIS)
Personnel
Development**



KIT

Keeping In Touch

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Resource Article

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Understanding
Different Parenting
Styles**

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The previous KIT newsletters, in this series on understanding different parenting styles, have discussed parenting styles (i.e., authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive) and presented research on how the different styles impact children. This resource article examines similarities among parenting styles and goals mothers and fathers have for their children. How important do you believe it is for parents to respond to their children's behavior in an identical manner?

Horvath, Lee, and Bax (2015) explain that parenting comprises everything a parent does, thinks, and feels as a parent. Horvath et al. (2015) highlight that while child adjustment is linked to the parenting of mothers and fathers, mothers and fathers parenting styles can differ in a variety of ways. One noted difference, is that fathers are typically more physical and playful, whereas mothers engage in

more calming actions. Horvath et al. (2015) found that mothers and fathers even perceive their child's behavior differently, with mothers reporting higher levels of behavior problems than fathers. Even with documented differences in parenting styles, Horvath et al. (2015) cite research from Harvey (2000) which suggests that when parents are parallel in their parenting styles the child is more likely to be better adjusted. Is it important then for parents to respond similarly when a child misbehaves? Or are the differences a strength? Think about the families you work with, do both parents typically parent congruently?

To explore this subject further Horvath et al. (2015) conducted a study to examine if mothers and fathers practice the same parenting styles and have similar parenting goals. Parents were given hypothetical situations involving child misbehavior and child

Resource Article (continued)

withdrawnness, their responses were categorized as one of the three types of parenting. Following answering the hypothetical situation question, parents were asked to rate the importance of goals listed below for each situation. Horvath et al. (2015) hypothesize that the parenting style chosen for a situation is rooted in the goal for the situation, and refer to parentings goals as the desired outcome in a given interaction with their child. Horvath et al. (2015) outlined six parenting goals:

- Parent-centered short-term (get my child to behave properly)
- Parent-centered long-term (reduce my own discomfort)
- Child-centered short-term (make my child happier)
- Child-centered long-term (help my child get along better in life)
- Relationship-centered short-term (teach my child that it is possible for the two of us to work together on a problem)
- Relationship-centered long-term (maintain a trusting relationship with my child)

The study revealed that most parenting responses to misbehavior fell into the authoritative category for both mothers and fathers. When confronted with a child exhibiting withdrawn behavior the parenting style most reported was permissive for both parents, however, the next most common was permissive mother with authoritative father. In regard to goal importance, Horvath et al. (2015) concluded that parents gave the highest

importance to relationship-centered goals and child-centered long-term goals for both misbehavior and withdrawn behavior. Horvath et al. (2015) were unable to directly link child adjustment and parenting similarities, however, they did infer from their data and similar studies conducted by Chen and Johnston (2012), Lindsey and Caldera (2005), and Lindsey and Mize (2001) that families who report an authoritative parenting style are high in parenting effectiveness.

While more research is needed on the correlation between a child's behavior and congruent parenting styles, it is clear that children adjust better when parenting styles are consistent. By recognizing the importance of similar parenting styles but understanding that mothers and fathers may have different interactions and play modalities with the child you can support families on parenting styles and goals. Helping parents understand how their parenting goal influences their style choice in specific situations can help the parents understand their behavior as well as their child's reactions. In the 2019 August KIT newsletter, Sharon Cooper gave excellent tips in the Consultation Corner for providers in situations when parents are not agreeing with each other's parenting style. It can be difficult to get parents to agree on a correct way to parent a child, but if you are armed with a toolkit of knowledge you can assist them in finding common ground and assure that their child grows up to reach their full potential.

Horvath, C., Lee, C., & Bax, K. (2015). How similar are mothers and fathers of young children in their parenting responses and goals? *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 24(12), 3542-3551. doi:10.1007/s10826-015-0155-1

What do the data say?



What is the impact of combined mother and father parenting patterns on children's development?

Warm and supportive maternal parenting has a positive influence on children's developmental outcomes, but what influence does the combined parenting of both parents have on a child's development? Ryan, Martin, and Brookes-Gunn (2006) hypothesized that the support of the second parent might boost the benefits of a supportive primary parent. Published in their article titled "Is one good parent good enough?" Ryan et al. (2006) examined the interactions of 27 mother and father partners and their 2 year old children. Data were collected using video tape interactions of mothers-child and father-child engaging in playful activities. The tapes were then analyzed to understand the degree of sensitivity, cognitive stimulation, positive regard, negative regard, intrusiveness, and

detachment the parent demonstrated during their interactions with their child. Child cognitive outcomes were measured using the Bayley Scale of Infant Development II. The overall results of the study indicated that children who had both a supportive mother and a supportive father achieved higher Bayley scores than all other participating children. Children with at least one supportive parent achieved Bayley scores that were higher than those children with neither a supportive mother nor a supportive father. These results indicate that the benefits of two supportive parents is better than one. The application of these data to early intervention reinforces the importance of supporting and engaging both parents in intervention to the greatest extent possible.

Ryan, R. M., Martin, A., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2006). Is one good parent enough? Patterns of mother and father parenting and child cognitive outcomes at 24 and 6 months. *Parenting: Science and Practice*, 6(2), 211-228.



Consultation Corner

When Parenting Style Is Out Of Sync With The Child's Needs

Sharon W. Cooper, MD, FAAP

Carol Kranowitz wrote a book more than 22 years ago titled “The Out of Sync Child.” It remains in circulation and is universally known by early intervention program staff. So many of the children described in this book are the very children who will become the “target” child for parents whose efforts are specifically focused on trying to normalize their behavior through discipline and/or punishment. This difficult situation presents itself as a significant challenge for anyone who is trying to help parents recognize the needs of children with behavioral and developmental differences.

Children who have sensory behaviors often are difficult to calm, may be very picky in their eating habits, and frequently have problems sleeping. Sleep problems alone can really cause significant difficulties for parents and this is worsened if they must adhere to the strenuous demands of military duty. At times, parents and caregivers begin to believe that a child's difficult behaviors are intentional and meant to make the parent's stress levels rise. This is often referred to as parent-child role reversal. The parent believes that the child should be there to provide unconditional love and nurturance for the parent and to meet the parent's needs, when of course, just the opposite is the reality.

If this lack of understanding of a toddler's behavior persists or worsens, parents and caregivers may lose patience quickly and there will be an increased risk of child maltreatment. Observation of these dynamics will require action, not just head shaking upon exiting from the home visit. Here are some strategies:

1. Consider a plan of action using a team case conference for recommendations
2. Consult a home visiting agency, such as New Parent Support Program to assist in behavioral modifications for parents and cognitive behavioral training regarding the differences in child behaviors
3. Look for a possible parent “buddy” who may have a child with similar behaviors or developmental problems to serve as a role model for the parent of concern
4. Discuss with the parents the normalcy of many of the out of sync behaviors and even share a copy of Kranowitz's book to let the parent know that the behaviors are not their fault (as they are often told by family members)

Consultation Corner (continued)

5. Every visit, role model positive reinforcement of nurturance
6. Be proactive by explaining a behavior; its frequency with certain types of developmental diagnoses and then providing some recommendations on *how to cope* – not how to effectively suppress the behavior, because this may not be a realistic goal
7. Try to meet with all family members who have a care-giving role to assure that everyone understands the treatment plan
8. Choose just one *behavior* (as compared to developmental milestone) to work on with a family and encourage them to keep a log on the frequency of the behavior and what might be done to decrease this reaction if that is a realistic goal. Inform that most behaviors are not extinguished in less than 3-4 weeks and sometimes it takes a longer time. Celebrate successes with the parent!
9. Engage the extended family members if they play an important support role for the parent(s) even if that support is online
10. Recognize and report actions that constitute physical abuse or neglect e.g. locking a child in a room (endangerment) or physically abusing the child – regardless of the justification. This is the law of mandated reporting and failure to comply could result in criminal and civil liability.

Working with parents who are out of sync with their child's behaviors requires work on the child's behavior but more work on the parent. Reminding the parent that they are the child's most important asset and commending them for each small act of kindness, comfort, concern and care provides the most important action that we can execute that of positive reinforcement. Remind parents that we are here to help them and assist in the improved development of their wonderful child.

Learn more about Carol Stock Kranowitz's work and The Out of Sync Child at her website, <https://www.out-of-sync-child.com>

Included at the website are additional articles and resources, including talks, interviews and webinars as well as handy resources.



On the WWW

Parenting can be stressful, as can the work of supporting parents. Recognizing this reality, the Center for Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation at Georgetown University for Child and Human Development has developed a set of stress reducing and relaxation resources for parents and for providers. The resources are in the form of workbooks that can be completed to help parents and providers identify stressful

circumstances and learn strategies for relaxing and dealing with stress. The booklets, titled "Taking Care of Ourselves" are available online in both English and Spanish. The parent resource is at: https://www.ecmhc.org/documents/TakingCare_ParentBk_final.pdf And the provider resource is at: <https://www.ecmhc.org/documents/>



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.

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Thank you for your continued interest in the KIT.

