

What's Your Parenting Style?

Myrna Lapres
September 20, 2018



What kind of a parent are you? Love and Logic Parenting identifies three main types: a helicopter, drill sergeant or consultant. Each parenting style sends a powerful message to your child about what he or she is, or is not, capable of.

The Helicopter Parents revolve their entire lives around their kids. Like a helicopter, they hover and then rescue their kids anytime trouble is near. They protect them from everything, including experiences their kids need to develop resilience, competence and being responsible. These parents give the message to their child, "You cannot make it on your own, you are fragile and you need me to protect you." There is a good chance that the child will become a young adult who isn't empowered to tackle problems and is afraid to try or make mistakes.

The Drill Sergeant Parent acts like a power-hungry sergeant. They feel the more they bark and control things, the better off their kids will be. They want disciplined kids. The way they try to achieve this is constantly telling them what to do or what not to do. This style of parenting communicates to the child, "You cannot think for yourself. I have to do it for you, boss you around and tell you what to do." When they become teens, they may be susceptible to peer pressure because they are used to someone else making decisions for them. Drill sergeant kids can become followers and have difficulties making wise choices.

The Consultant Parent asks guiding questions, offers suggestions and gives choices. They place the burden of decision making on their child. While doing so, they establish options within limits, and support them to learn from mistakes. Consultant parents give the message, "You'd better think about your choices--the quality of your life has a lot to do with your decisions." This style of parenting empowers children to feel competent and develop self-efficacy.

This is where the name Love and Logic comes from. The Consultant Parent gives a balance of love/empathy and logic/consequences. As children grow, they move from concrete thinkers to abstract thinkers. Children need thoughtful guidelines and firm enforceable limits. We set the limits for the children based on what they need for their own safety and their behavior. Encouraging children to think about their behavior and choices as they grow can help them to connect them to the results of their decisions. Giving them choices within appropriate boundaries supports their ability to make good decisions and reflect on poor ones.

This is increasingly important as children move into adolescent and beyond. Teens often resist rules and test authority. As consultant parents, we need to step back and let reasonable, real-world consequences do the teaching while the results are affordable, not life-threatening. Consultant parents of teenagers and even young adults, become the advisors and counselors allowing them to make more decisions for themselves, asking questions to help them think through the process and guiding them to successfully navigate the consequences of those decisions.

God gave all of us free will and that includes the opportunity to mess up. Failure and Success are two sides of the same coin. Drill sergeant and helicopter parents take away the opportunity for children to make choices and to learn from their mistakes. We increase the odds of raising resilient individuals by guiding our children with lots of empathy and natural consequences.