

Analysis of “What’s Wrong with Strict Parenting?”

by Dr. Laura Markham

Most parents hope that their children will be obedient and well behaved, but there are many different ways parents try to achieve this goal. One style of parenting that seems popular is called Authoritarian (or strict) parenting. These parents set strict rules and harsh punishments for disobedience. In essence the children begin to fear their parents. For young children this style of strict parenting often works pretty well. The children obey because they fear the consequences. In her article “What’s wrong with strict parenting” Dr. Laura Markham explains that strict parenting can have severe consequences that may hinder the child’s development and have lasting side effects.

One main problem she wrote about was how strict parenting deprives the children of necessary opportunities to learn self discipline and responsibility. The children will only behave when there is that authority present. This might be seen when children act like angels when their parents are around but change into monsters as soon as they leave. Children begin to recognize the controlling influence rather than wanting to behave.

As we discussed in class, children with very strict parents are also likely to bully other children. As the parents exercise their power over the children they learn that “power is always right” (Markham, 5). They are likely to begin to impose their will on other children and force them to do things. Children raised in a strict home also have higher tendencies to become depressed and have anger issues. Children who are constantly being corrected and punished

severely even for minor mistakes begin to feel like nothing they do will ever be good enough. Higher rates of depression may also translate into higher suicide rates.

Dr. Laura Markham also wrote that children with strict parents tend to be more rebellious as teenagers and young adults. No one likes to be told what to do, when to do it and exactly how it needs to be done. Almost all people resist controlling influences in their lives, whether it is a speed limit or a controlling boss, or friend. Often, people will behave until the authority figure is gone then go right back to our defiant behavior. In essence it becomes a tug of war between parent and child. As the parents begin to enforce more strictly the child begins to rebel more and more. The parents have hope that harsher punishments will get the child to comply with the rules and orders but it actually has an opposite effect.

Strict parents want what is best for their children like most parents do, but they feel the need to force them to get there rather than to help them learn and grow. These parents have the right idea but children need loving correction to thrive. As Dr. Markham said, “Strictness does not work in creating better-behaved kids; in fact, it sabotages everything positive we do as parents and handicaps our kids in their efforts to develop emotional self-discipline.”