



Talk of the Town

Insights for Childrearing Practice Through Learning About Your Parenting Style

As we step into the testing season for the new academic year, many working parents may find themselves busy preparing their children for exams.

In July 2023, Dr Wong Chung-Kwong, former Chariman and Professor at CUHK's Department of Psychiatry, initiated a survey titled "Are You a Relaxed, Happy, and Successful Parent?" Rated on a scale of 1 to 10, the study revealed that respondents rated themselves below 5 on average. Professor Wong pointed out that "if parents are not relaxed and happy, their emotional state can affect their children."

Furthermore, the survey found that 99% of respondents believed that the most crucial thing parents can provide their children is "love." But what is "love"? Is the concept of "love" understood by parents the same as what their children expect? When there is a difference in the perceived meaning of "love" between both parties, it can bring the relationship to a stalemate. Dr Wong reminds us that in addition to "love," a sense of "security" is equally important in parent-child relationships. Parents must create an environment in which their children feel secure before they can open their hearts and accept their parents' love. This sense of security refers to psychological safety, fostering a strong emotional connection between parents and children, is the foundation and secure base for each and every harmonious and happy parent-child bond.

How can parents strike a balance between reward and discipline?

Common parenting styles include four main categories: authoritative, permissive, authoritarian, and neglectful. The first style, in particular, strikes a balance between conveying affection and care to children while setting appropriate rules and boundaries.

The table below illustrates the key differences between these four parenting styles:

	I. Authoritative	II. Permissive	III. Authoritarian	VI. Neglectful
Description	Provides love and support while implementing appropriate and fair rules	Gratifies children's wishes whatever they may be and aiming to please.	Expecting children to act according to their demands, or children may face punishment.	Ignorant and cold towards children's needs for support or discipline
Emotive interaction	Children can receive both love and guidance, even amidst their confusion and mistakes.	The relationship may seem close, but children do not receive the genuine care and discipline they need during their growth, leading to inadequate security.	Parents frequently express dissatisfaction and discontent, leaving their children in a constant state of fear for criticism, resulting in a lack of security.	A sense of detachment prevails, with children feeling neglected and unimportant
Parents' dominant emotional state	Mostly peaceful, stable, and blissful	Unable to achieve genuine happiness through pleasing children	Irritable and angry	Indifferent and dismissive

In real-life parent-child interactions, a blend of multiple parenting styles often coexists. Parents can enhance their awareness in everyday child-rearing practice by identifying situations where they are already employing the ideal authoritative approach and where adjustments may be needed.

Children's hearts are mostly open and kind. As parents gradually fine-tune their use of appropriate parenting styles, their children's sense of security and feeling of being loved can be rebuilt and strengthened. This, in turn, leads to happier and more fulfilled parents.



Love and Beginnings

Communication is key in any relationship, and it's no different in the way we interact with our children. Following the principles of Child-Centred Play Therapy, parents can adopt the following five reminders about communication style to enhance their relationships and create an environment where children can grow with love and support.



Focus on the person, not the problem.



Concentrate on the present, not the past.



Value feelings and thoughts, not just actions.



Prioritise understanding over lengthy explanations.



Acknowledge and accept, not just correct.

Children's thoughts and feelings often extend beyond what adults can imagine. By taking your child's perspective, you're likely to make new discoveries in your interactions.



Liven Up Your Soul

One day, a family of rock-climbing enthusiasts decided to take on an unfamiliar summit but encountered an unexpected challenge. The children's safety ropes were suddenly cut loose by sharp rocks, leaving them hanging precariously in mid-air. The parents watched in shock and helplessness as their children's lives hung in the balance without even a thread. Despite being unable to provide practical assistance, they offered their children the utmost encouragement.

However, during this critical moment, the children displayed remarkable courage and composure. They searched for support, leveraged on their own strength, and fought to maintain their balance. Eventually, they managed to hold onto a crack on the rocks, saving themselves. Exhausted but triumphant, they climbed back up the cliff and reunited with their parents.

Following this incident, the parents not only refrained from discouraging their children's climbing activities but also realised the importance of empowering and nurturing their children's independence and developing problem-solving abilities. This experience reinforced their appreciation for each other's presence and strengthened their family bonds, inspiring them to face future challenges head-on.



LEAP File



Consider the Chinese proverb: "Raising a child is a hundred-year endeavour, with ninety-nine years of worry." Every parent knows that raising a child is no easy task. From caregiving during infancy to later stages of education and development, each phase presents its own set of challenges. Particularly, parents of children with special educational needs (SEN) face even greater hurdles as they navigate their children's atypical personal growth and socioemotional development.

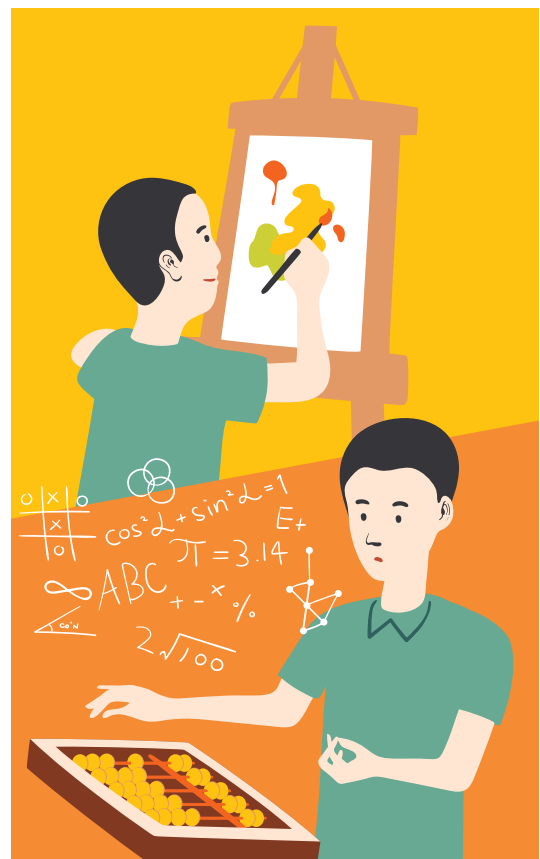
Most parents of children with SEN feel helpless and confused. On one hand, they may not understand their children's needs, and on the other, they worry about potential discrimination or bullying. However, SEN children are, in essence, no different from their peers. Just as some individuals excel in logical thinking, others have strengths in creative arts. They may simply face unique difficulties in social and emotional management. By understanding their minds, needs, and the type of help they want, caregivers can address their shortcomings, nurture their strengths, and thereby facilitate their healthy and happy growth.

Mr. Lee has two sons diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), and he often struggled with managing his sons' emotional outbursts. Whenever his sons experienced emotional fluctuations, they would react strongly, often involving shouting or even physical aggression towards others. Frustrated and unsure how to handle these situations, Mr. Lee sought support from our EAP services.

Through counselling, Mr. Lee learned about the common characteristics of children with ASD, such as difficulty perceiving social cues and emotional responses, limited facial expressions, and eye contact, and penchant for repetitive behaviours, which soothe themselves and help with their emotional regulation. Armed with this understanding, Mr. Lee adjusted his parenting style to align with his sons' needs. He and his wife began role-playing situations that might trigger their sons' emotional reactions, helping their children develop alternative and manageable ways to express their feelings and thoughts. After some practice, they noticed a significant improvement in their sons' conduct, and their efforts were acknowledged by the school's teachers.

Additionally, during the counselling process, Mr. Lee realised that effective communication between him and his wife played a crucial role in parenting their children. If they disagreed on an approach, it often left their sons confused about whose instructions to follow. Over the course of several sessions, Mr. Lee gradually communicated more with his wife to keep their parenting approach on the same page.

Children with special educational needs may be labelled as "abnormal" by society only because they are compared against the "neurotypical" population. With understanding of their distinctive characteristics and needs, they can live healthy and happy lives through dedicated nurturing and individualised support.





LEAP Reader Feedback Survey

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Survey link

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