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Talking regularly with youth about the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs reduces their risk of using in the first place.

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Drug Free Action Alliance
6155 Huntley Road, Suite H
Columbus, Ohio 43229
PH: (614) 540-9985
FX: (614) 540-9990



Know! Your Parenting Style Matters

Research has identified four basic parenting styles. Some of these styles are associated with more positive outcomes, including decreased risk for alcohol and other drug use.

Which parenting style do you use most often?

Authoritarian (dictatorship): High on discipline and setting limits, low on love and affection. If challenged by their child on a rule, these parents are likely to say, "Because I said so, end of discussion."

Authoritative (democracy): High on setting appropriate limits and positive discipline and high on love and displays of affection. While these parents still make the final call, they welcome discussion with their children on decision-making and they respect their child's opinion.

Permissive (indulgent): High on love and affection, low on discipline and limits. While these households are filled with love, they lack hard-and-fast-rules; and when one of the few set rules are broken, the children are able to negotiate their way out of any consequence.

Neglectful (uninvolved): Low on discipline and limits and low on love and affection. These parents provide food and shelter for their child, but little else. They are either incapable of appropriately caring for and supporting their child or they are simply too caught up in their own lives to concern themselves with their child's wants and needs.

As you consider your own parenting style, you may solidly fall into one of these four categories, or you may find that your parenting is a combination of styles. Can you guess which parenting style is best at directing children away from alcohol and other drugs?

If you said **Authoritative**, you're correct. Here's why: Authoritative parenting is centered on effective communication. Parents set rules and guidelines and are clear on their expectations. When the rules are questioned, authoritative parents are willing to listen and provide an

explanation in a calm and loving manner. If a rule is broken, they will follow through on the consequences, and do so in a nurturing and forgiving way. These parents have open and honest conversations about alcohol and other drugs, provide the facts and answer any questions their children have on the subject. These children understand why to say “no” and, through their parents’ parenting style, have learned decisionmaking skills which can be used even in their parents’ absence.

On the other hand, authoritarian and neglectful parenting, are said to be ineffective in relation to drug prevention. Children of authoritarian parents constantly look for positive validation for meeting their parents’ demands, yet are always left feeling unfulfilled. These youth are more likely to give in to negative peer pressure in order to gain the validation they seek, and are less likely to know how to make a good choice when their parents are not present to make it for them. Children of neglectful parents cannot count on mom or dad to sit down and talk with them about the dangers of substance use. They are left to their own devices when it comes to learning about alcohol and other drugs and the consequences that follow.

The jury is still out on permissive parenting. While some experts say that indulgent parenting places children at the highest risk for substance use, others say that the strong parent/child relationship developed through this style of parenting may be equally as effective as authoritative parenting.

Parenting is not easy and there is no perfect formula that guarantees a child’s success. However, most experts agree that a parent’s best bet is authoritative parenting, as it is consistently linked with increased positive outcomes, including lower risk for substance use.

To learn more about authoritative parenting and the advantages it provides, please visit [*About Health: What is Authoritative Parenting?*](#).

Sources: [About Health: What Is Authoritative Parenting? Dec. 2015.](#) [About Parenting: 4 Types of Parenting Styles - Learn How Each Parenting Style Impacts Children. Jan. 2016.](#) [Choose Help: Parenting Styles that Prevent Drug and Alcohol Experimentation. The Right Step: Four Families, Four Parenting Styles - Which Lead to Adolescent Drug Abuse? Aug. 2014.](#)

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