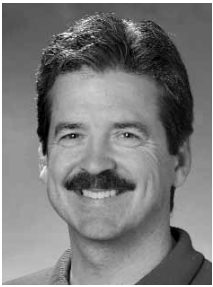


# EmployeeCare News

Keeping you informed from EmployeeCare, your employee assistance program, a benefit extended by your organization to all employees and their household members.

## Parent Traps

By David Rex, Counselor



David Rex

Every parent wants to raise great kids. Too often, we base our own skills on how well or badly our children behave. It is easy to feel like a super parent when our children are cooperative. But, that great feeling disappears when our children become defiant, whiny or hysterical – especially in public. Many parents suffer from terrible guilt when they find themselves acting like their own far-from-perfect parents – snapping, scolding, lecturing and yelling at their far-from-perfect kids.

### The Most Common Parent Traps:

- Seeing our children as reflections of ourselves
- Having unrealistic expectations

### Over Identification with our Kids

It's normal for parents to see themselves in their children. We laugh when our kids express themselves like us, and we think it's cute when they dress like us. This is part of the growing and adapting process, for both parent and child. The problem is when we become too identified with our child's concerns. Ex: Mom gets nervous when Carly has to write a book report or take a test.

To avoid this trap, consider whose problem or accomplishment is at stake (yours or your child's?) and direct credit or suggestions accordingly. Avoid statements like, "You got an A", "You're so smart" or "You only got a C, what's the matter with you?" Try: "You must feel very good about that A" or "That C tells me you must be having a problem with that course . . . can I help?"

### Rescuing our Kids

We all want our kids to excel. We want to catch them every time they stumble. That can create more problems than it solves. Example: Dad is late to work so he can deliver Justin's forgotten book report to school. This is sometimes referred to as "hovering parents" because they are always stepping in to rescue their children from consequences or pain. As a result, kids don't learn from their mistakes. It's natural to "remind" children to take



their lunch, but it's not always helpful. In fact, constant reminding or nagging is quickly tuned out. Allow kids to take age-appropriate responsibility. If they over sleep, get them an alarm clock. If they forget their gym clothes, so be it. Ask yourself, "What's the worst thing that can happen if I don't step in?"

### Projecting Disappointment

We dream of our kids becoming great athletes, famous artists or brilliant scientists. However, parents must learn to cope with their own disappointment when their kids turn out to be less exceptional without making them feel like there is something wrong with them. Example: Dad keeps inviting Adam, a quiet reflective child, to play baseball. Adam gets the message, "I am not what Dad wanted". Instead, release your expectations, focus on each child's special talents and love them for who they are. Appreciating a child's real strengths and needs is the greatest gift a parent can give.



### Don't Foster Resentments

Children don't enjoy letting their parents down. Keep this in mind when you voice your disappointment with something they've done. If you're too upset, your child may withhold information, which will keep you from having the complete picture. Example: Sara signed up for an expensive art class. She seemed to love it, but after a few sessions, she refused to go back. Sara's mother said, "We paid a lot of money for that class. You're going and that's final." Since she has no choice, Sara went but got

little out of the class. Her mother might have said, "You don't have to tell me why you're dropping out, but you owe your teacher an explanation." Sara might feel more comfortable passing along information to her teacher that she might not give her parent. The real problem may have been a classmate picking on her.

### Perpetuating Family Myths

It's wonderful to be able to expose kids to activities and learning opportunities. However, it's important to let your children choose what appeals to them. Example: Dad insists Jacob continue the hated tennis lessons. "We're an athletic family. The Jones aren't quitters!" Uncle Bill may be a great tennis player, but Jacob would rather learn to cook.

### Focus on the Problem

In an effort to make children perfect, parents often focus on a child's failures. Example: If Jordan is doing poorly in algebra, her parents schedule extra study sessions, cancel outside activities and focus on little else. Try this: Encourage a class or activity at which Jordan excels to balance the extra work needed in algebra. It may be helpful during tough periods for parents to list what annoys them and what they appreciate about their kids. This list will help gain perspective on a child's nature and prevent us from saying what remains on paper. Often what annoys us is relatively minor compared with what we admire. Tell your kids what you appreciate about them.

### Furturizing

We all worry about what will become of our kids, whether it's which college they'll get into or who they end up marrying. Example: Taylor, 6, takes candy from the supermarket. Mom says "If you continue stealing, you'll end up in prison". You're better off reacting to incidents as they happen and not treating them as signs of things to come. Use mistakes as a teaching tool. The better approach would be, "It's not okay to take things without paying. We'll have to go back to the store and return that candy."

Most importantly, learn about appropriate behavior for children and teens by reading articles and books on development. Parents who know that two-year-olds are often defiant and few five-year-olds can read can better accept their children the way they are rather than the way they would like them to be. If you are struggling with the parent traps, remember to call us at EmployeeCare for assistance (937) 208-6626.

# The Impact of Parent-Child Interaction on a Child's Social Development

By Lucy Bategeeza, Doctoral Intern



Lucy Bategeeza

A child's social skills begin to develop at an early age. As parents we need to remember we reap what we sow. Parents can help in a child's social development by being good role models and coaches to the child.

Parent's characteristics such as warmth and optimism or pessimism can greatly affect a child's confidence. It is important for parents to provide quality care giving. This does not mean buying expensive toys for the child but responding promptly, consistently and appropriately to children. Encourage bonding by holding infants tenderly and carefully.

As a mother, I have seen first-hand the importance of social skills to children. Research shows that by elementary school, children have different styles of developing social skills. These skills can serve them for a lifetime. While some social tendencies exist from birth, parents can contribute directly and indirectly to that development.

The way parents interact with their children is one pathway that helps children develop social skills. Relationship is the other social skill that children learn from their parents. Children observe how their parents interact and listen to what parents tell them. Children are good at mimicking their parents' social behavior. If a parent is warm and outgoing to others, the child will be more likely to respond in kind.

Children do better socially when parents are more involved in the child's free-play. One of the indicators for social skill development in a child comes when a parent offers a play suggestion and the child picks up on it, and vice versa.

## Forms of Parent-Child Interaction

As parents interact with their children, many lasting relationships develop. They can be warm and loving or permissive, overprotecting, rejecting, indifferent, authoritarian, abusive or rigid interactions. These are grouped into Support Parent-Child interactions and Control Parent-Child interactions. These relationship styles greatly

determine the child's attitude towards various aspects of his/her life. Some parents try to change styles depending on the child's experience, age, maturity level or the given situation.

## Control Parent-Child Interactions

Control is the act of restricting, limiting or managing someone. Under the control parent-child interactions are Authoritarian and Overprotective interactions.

A parent who is authoritarian values obedience, tradition and order, may use physical punishment and usually does not allow choices or freedom of expression. The children of authoritarian parents might become followers and depend on others for making decisions. They may develop low self-esteem, become aggressive or defiant. The parent's word is final. The parent determines the child's needs and meets them at his/her will. This type of relationship or interaction has some abusive elements in it. The child grows up very fearful, and rarely expresses his/her needs; can be very submissive and even timid. When there is a chance to be free, the child can develop disastrous behavior as a way of compensating for what was lost.

In overprotective interactions the parent more or less controls the entire life of the child. We all worry about what will become of our kids, whether it's which college they'll get into or whom they'll end up marrying who to play with and where, what to eat and what to wear. The child is rarely allowed to make his own decision. He/she may end up insecure, with low self-esteem and lack of confidence, and find it hard to form relationships with others.

## Support Parent-Child Interactions

Under the support parent-child interactions, we have firm and permissive interactions.

Parents who are firm set appropriate rules and guidelines. Firm parents have reasonable expectations, encourage independence and individuality, use clear communication and reasoning, and allow choices. Children of firm but calm parents

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are likely to be responsible, independent, confident and able to control their aggression.

Parents who are permissive set few rules and guidelines, do not provide structure, do not enforce limits when they are established. Children of permissive parents may have low self-control and little ability to handle frustration. They may

remain immature and have difficulty accepting responsibility hence their attitudes are determined by the rules and guidelines set by the parents.

Parent-child interaction has a significant effect on a child's social development. Investing some time in a child's development is crucial and pays off in the end.

## Stewart Street Bridge Detour

The Stewart Street bridge over the Great Miami River is closed while a replacement bridge is built. The new bridge is scheduled to open in December 2009.

The principal detour for the bridge construction is Edwin C. Moses Blvd. to Washington Street to Ludlow Street to

Patterson Blvd. Drivers on I-75 will be directed to the Main-Jefferson Street exit off eastbound route 35 to reach the hospital. Signs pointing the way to MVH and the University of Dayton are posted along the detour route.

## EmployeeCare

**Located:** 409 E. Monument St.  
Suite 201  
Dayton, Ohio 45402

We have satellite offices in Eaton, Springboro, Troy, Greenville and on the Good Samaritan Hospital campus

**Hours:** 8 a.m. – 8 p.m.  
Monday – Thursday  
8 a.m. – 6 p.m. Friday

All counselors provide evening appointment times

**Phone:** (937) 208-6626 or (800) 628-9343  
(24-hour, toll free)

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