

Assessing Your Parenting Style

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Who doesn't want to help his or her children become as highly healthy as possible? With that thought in mind, this tool will help you evaluate your parenting style.

There are four major groups of parents I discuss in my book, *God's Design for the Highly Healthy Teen*:

- Eagle parents
- Labrador Retriever Parents
- Grizzly Bear Parents
- Sloth Parents

This is a simple questionnaire and it will help you quickly develop a picture of your parenting style. I'd suggest that you and your spouse (or anyone else who cares for your child) take the evaluation *separately* and then compare your parenting styles. Also, use one evaluation for each child you parent.

By the way, the more accurately and honestly you answer each question, the more helpful this tool will be. Don't answer the questions with what you think is the right answer, or with what you'd like to be and do, but rather, answer them with how you *actually* are now.

Warning! *Don't* show these evaluations to your child. This tool is designed for your and your spouse's eyes only—to show where *you* need to improve as parents in order to raise a highly healthy child or teen.

Parenting styles are made up of two major components that must be carefully balanced (that make up with what I call the ABCD's of good parenting):

- Parental warmth or receptiveness
 - **A**dmirer and appreciation
 - **B**lameless (unconditional) love
 - **C**onnecting with our kids, connecting our kids with good friends, and connecting our kids with their Creator
- Parental demandingness
 - **D**iscipline and Discipleship

So, are you ready? Then, let's get started!

Assessing Your Parenting Style – 2008 Update

© Walt Larimore, MD and based upon the book *God's Design for the Highly Healthy Child* and *God's Design for the Highly Healthy Teen*.

You can order these books or find more information at www.DrWalt.com or www.HighlyHealthy.org

You can order the book(s), autographed, by dropping an email to order@DrWalt.com

1 PARENTAL WARMTH OR RECEPTIVENESS

A) Love/Respect

Check those that apply:

- I frequently communicate to my child that I love him or her.
- I enjoy reading and talking to my child in a warm and friendly voice.
- I show interest and enthusiasm when my child is speaking. I pay attention when he or she talks to me—even if it means stopping what I'm doing.
- I feel emotionally warm and affectionate toward my child and hug or hold him or her frequently.
- I consciously look for things to admire, respect, and appreciate about my child.
- I look for opportunities to find my child doing things correctly and well.

SCORING LOVE/RESPECT:

- 4 points: I believe all six of the factors above are true.
- 3 points: I believe five of the factors above are true.
- 2 points: I believe four of the factors above are true.
- 1 point: I believe two or three of the factors above are true.
- 0 points: I believe zero or one of the factors above are true.

AN ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATION:

- A. I feel my love for my child is most frequently **unconditional**—that my love is not withheld based on behavior, performance, or looks. (Of course, this doesn't mean you always like the behavior. But it does mean you always love your child "in spite of ...," even when you detest the behavior.)
- B. I feel my love for my child is most frequently **conditional**—that my love is predicated on how my child behaves, performs, or looks (love "if ..." or "because of ...").

Add up to 1 point to your LOVE/RESEPECT SCORE if A is true.

Subtract up to 2 points from your LOVE/RESEPECT SCORE if B is true.

Why do I give so much priority to the *type* of love we choose to give our child? A key foundation for a highly healthy child is *unconditional love*—which balances love with discipline, freedom with limits, and nurture with training.

My Love/Respect Score _____ **(maximum = 4 points)**

B) Affirmation/Appreciation

Consider the following factors for this area. Check all those that apply:

- I am my child's best cheerleader. I frequently praise my child and tell my child I appreciate what he or she has done and that I believe in him or her.
- I hug my child frequently and often tell my child how much I appreciate him or her.
- I thank my child for doing things without my asking, and I demonstrate my gratitude for the little things he or she does.
- I desire to spend time with my child and enjoy being with him or her.

- ___ My child is comfortable coming to me when he or she is experiencing joy, satisfaction, guilt, shame, sadness, or a host of other emotions.
- ___ My child frequently talks with me and enjoys being with me. I try to listen to my child without preaching, judging, or criticizing. I listen to my child with the intent to just listen.
- ___ I understand my child's temperament, talents, and love language. I let my child know about the unique qualities, gifts, and talents I admire in him or her.
- ___ I know what my child is capable of achieving, and I help my child set goals based on what is appropriate for him or her as a unique individual.

SCORING THE AFFIRMATION/APPRECIATION AREA:

- 4 points: I believe eight of the factors are true.
- 3 points: I believe six or seven of the factors are true.
- 2 points: I believe four or five of the factors are true.
- 1 point: I believe two or three of the factors are true.
- 0 points: I believe zero or one of the factors are true.

My Affirmation/Appreciation Score _____ (maximum = 4 points)

TOTAL YOUR LOVE-RESPECT AND AFFIRMATION-APPRECIATION SCORES TO GET YOUR PARENTAL WARMTH SCORE _____ (maximum = 8 points)

Researchers call these two factors “**parental warmth**” or “**parental receptiveness.**” They deal with your expression of verbal and physical affection toward your child, as well as your praise and acceptance of them. Now we’ll turn to another area of parenting style.

2 PARENTAL DEMANDINGNESS

A) Media

To come up with the measurement for this area, *add* the following three factors together: Consider which of the following most closely represents your family on an *average* day. Add up the number of points for each of the four areas:

First consider TV and Internet usage by your child:

- ___ 2 points: Our home is TV free or my child watches TV one hour or less a day, and the computer/Internet is only used in a public area of our home and for educational purposes. If my child watches TV, I routinely monitor what he or she watches. I monitor what my child does on the Internet.
- ___ 1 point: My child is routinely exposed to two hours or less a day of media (television, videos, video games, and computer activities). Also, I sometimes monitor what my child watches on TV and does on the Internet.
- ___ 0 points: My child is routinely exposed to two to four or more hours a day of media, or I never monitor what my child watches on TV and does on the Internet.
- ___ -1 point: Subtract 1 point if your child has a TV in his or her bedroom or unfettered Internet access in the bedroom – even if this gives you a negative score.

My Child's TV/Internet Score _____ **(maximum = 2 points)**

Second, consider video gaming:

- ___ 1 point: Our home is video game free or my child uses video games one hour or less a day. If my child uses video games, I routinely monitor what he or she plays.
- ___ 0 points: My child uses video games one hour or more a day.
- ___ -1 point: Subtract 1 point if your child has a video game in his or her bedroom – even if this gives you a negative score.

My Child's Video Gaming Score _____ **(maximum = 1 point)**

Third, consider cell phone use:

- ___ 1 point: Either my child does not have or use a cell phone, or if my child has a cell phone, I've set rules for how much it can be used and I monitor my child's cell phone bills and usage.
- ___ 0 points: I've set rules for how much it can be used but **DO NOT** monitor my child's cell phone bills and usage, or I **HAVE NOT** set rules for how much the cell phone can be used, but I do monitor my child's cell phone bills and usage.
- ___ -1 point: Subtract one point if your child has his or her cell phone in their bedroom after bedtime.

My Child's Cell Phone Score _____ **(maximum = 1 point)**

My Child's Total Media Score _____ **(maximum = 4 points)**

B) Boundaries and Expectations

Check as many of these boundaries as *you* (not your spouse) consistently impose:

- ___ I routinely know where my child is after school and on weekends.
- ___ I expect to be and am told the truth by my child about where he or she is really going.
- ___ I am aware of my child's academic performance and visit with his or her teachers from time to time.
- ___ I eat dinner with my child at least five times a week.
- ___ I eat breakfast with my child at least five times a week.
- ___ I assign my child regular chores.
- ___ I turn off the TV during dinner and rarely eat in front of the TV.
- ___ There is an adult present when my child returns home from school
(It's OK to check the first, third, and eighth items automatically if you homes school).

SCORING THIS AREA:

- 4 points: Seven or eight of the above factors are true for our family.
- 3 points: Five or six of the above factors are true for our family.
- 2 points: Three or four these factors are true for our family.
- 1 point: One or two of these factors are true for our family.
- 0 points: None of these factors are true for our family.

My Boundaries And Expectations Score _____ **(maximum = 4 points)**

TOTAL THE MEDIA AND BOUNDARIES-EXPECTATIONS SCORES TO GET YOUR PARENTAL DEMANDINGNESS SCORE

_____ **(maximum = 8 points)**

Teaching a child to reduce the media to which he or she is exposed and *setting appropriate expectations and limits* compose what researchers call “**parental demandingness**.” When balanced with parental warmth (the love spokes), a child is more likely to be highly healthy. *Too* much of one or *too* little of the other leads to reduced levels of health.

“**Parental demandingness**” (discipline, expectations, and coaching) is the extent to which a child's parents expect responsible behavior from their child and maintain what the researchers call a “hands-on attitude.” This includes consistently setting and enforcing rules or limits on your child. Rules for children, however, must be clear, reasonable, developmentally appropriate, fair and just, mutually agreed upon, and flexible—*emphasizing what to do rather* than just *what not to do*.

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USE THESE MEASURES TO DETERMINE YOUR PARENTING STYLE

Enter the points from your Parental Warmth Score _____

Enter the points from your Parental Demandingness Score _____

A parent’s ability to balance what the researchers call ‘*warmth*’ and ‘*demandingness*’ will be directly associated with their child’s overall health. To assess your parenting style (which may be different than the style of your spouse), use the table below. Check the box(es) in the *warmth* column that apply to you, then the box(es) in the *demandingness* column that apply to you.

Now find the row where you have a box checked in each column. That row will indicate your likely parenting style.

Warmth		Demandingness	
<input type="checkbox"/> 7-8 points	and	<input type="checkbox"/> 7-8 points	Strong Eagle Parents High warmth and demandingness are balanced
<input type="checkbox"/> 5-6 points	and	<input type="checkbox"/> 5-6 points	Average Eagle Parents Moderate warmth and demandingness are balanced
<input type="checkbox"/> 3-4 points	and	<input type="checkbox"/> 3-4 points	Weak Eagle Parents Low levels of warmth and demandingness are balanced
<input type="checkbox"/> 0-6 points	and	<input type="checkbox"/> 3-8 (and at least 2 points higher than warmth)	Grizzly bear Parents More demandingness than warmth
<input type="checkbox"/> 3-8 (and at least 2 points higher than demandingness)	and	<input type="checkbox"/> 0-6 points	Labrador retriever Parents More warmth than demandingness
<input type="checkbox"/> 0-2 points	and	<input type="checkbox"/> 0-2 points	Sloth Parents Low warmth and demandingness

If you are not a “Strong Eagle Parent,” then it’s likely that developing your parenting skills will result in a far more highly healthy child.

If you need tips and ideas on how to improve your parenting style, let me encourage you to order a copy of one of my two books (*God’s Design for the Highly Healthy Child* or *God’s Design for the Highly Healthy Teen*) to find tips on how to improve your parenting skills, but also tips on how to equip your child or teen to live a highly healthy life. You can order either (or both) of these books at www.DrWalt.com. Just click the “Books” tab in the left-hand column.