

The Impact of Family Atmospheres on Children - I

ATMOSPHERE	PARENT BEHAVIOR	PROBABLE CHILD RESPONSE
Democratic	Knowledgeable leader, tries to guide, stimulate and win cooperation. Uses encouragement and logical consequences. Creates a climate of fairness, equality, respect, and reason. He makes it safe to express dissent.	Child feels that his social world is safe, reasonable, and appealing. He can prepare himself for democratic living as an adult.
Authoritarian	Parent demands absolute and unquestioned obedience. Home is run like a military installation. Power and might make right.	Children may be polite, but shy and timid with evidence of nervous tension. Conforming children cannot solve their own problems always look others for direction. Rebellious children may resort to evasive maneuvers of lying and stealing. Child may wait until adolescence to rebel.
High Standards	Parents have excessively high expectation, goals, and standards.	If child feels he cannot live up to parents' expectation he may become discouraged and feeling inadequate. Even if he performs well he is often worried about possible failure.
Competitive	Family stresses success, each trying to outdo the others. Accentuated if both parents are very competitive.	Child who cannot be the best, may settle for being the worst. The competent child may be spurred on, but may feel anxiety and apprehension unless he believes he will come out on top. The discouraged child may begin to feel hopeless.
Suppressive	Child is denied freedom to express thoughts or feelings honestly. Frequent reprimands.	He learns to put up a front and begins daydreaming. He does not trust his own feelings and avoids close relationships.
Materialistic	Family values acquisition and money; security is based on what one owns or controls. Material possessions are given greater value than simple pleasures or warm human relationships.	If child is deprived of his possessions or what he feels entitled to, he feels distraught and empty. He usually lacks inner resources and creativity. Later on, he may find it hard to manage on a limited income, or rebel and become anti-materialistic.
Over-Protective	Child is prevented from learning by denying him practice in coping with difficult or unpleasant situations. The protection robs him of courage and self-reliance. The parent also rescues the child from experiencing the consequences of his actions.	Child may say a "baby" who feels small, weak, and helpless. He is unable to function independently and tries to put everyone in his service with charm, tears, or temper.
Over-Indulgent	Parents shower the child with attention, service, toys, or praise. The child is treated like a prince or princess.	Child passively waits for next offering of adults. Child may avoid contact with other children, since they have little to offer, and he may be expected to share

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Inconsistent	Discipline is erratic and routines are non-existent. Often related to substance abuse. Eating and cleaning schedule may be unreliable.	Child does not know what to expect of others or what is expected of him. Without order and kind, firm discipline, the child may not develop self-discipline. He may become unmotivated, uncontrollable, and crave excitement. His life may be a roller-coaster ride.
Inharmonious	Parents frequently quarrel or fight. Discipline varies with the mood of the parent. Child may be used a weapon in parents conflict.	Child may conclude that only power is important. May become aggressive and willing to hurt others to get even. May like commotion, rule breaking, and flirting with danger.
Disparaging	Frequent criticism. Parent relieves own inferiority feeling by making child appear worthless. Cynical attitude may also be directed against others outside family who are "different".	Child may become the "scapegoat" of the family, masking other parent or child problems. If the child is active, he may rebel violently, and duplicate the disparagement by hurting others.
Rejective	Child may be rejected because of appearance or behavior. Parents do not separate "deed" from "doer".	Child feels not accepted and unloved. He may not be able to trust others or himself. A "good" child may push down the "bad" child. Another child may be favored by the parents.
Martyrdom	Parent demonstrates how brutal others are and how innocent or helpless he/she is. Noble suffering is enhanced by looking down on the abuser. Frequent in co-alcoholism and physical abuse.	Child imitates the noble suffering, feels sorry for himself, and sees life as unfair. His accusation of others is concealed behind good intentions and self righteousness. The victim stance frees him from responsibility.
Pitying	Parent does not see that pity is a form of disrespect for the child. Even pity justified by a situation is damaging.	Child may be handicapped, sickly, orphaned, adopted, or has suffered a loss or misfortune. Child begins to feel sorry for himself and expects special privileges. Child may provoke further abuse or suffering to gain sympathy.
Hopeless	Parent is discouraged and pessimistic, and is consequently unable to encourage the child. (The hopelessness can be overcome by an encouraging teacher or therapist, or a series of successes.)	The child may feel absolutely defeated, seeing little hope for himself and an improvement in his situation. He may retreat into fantasy or get locked into acting out his despair.