

# Influences on Infant and Toddler Behaviour

Jean M Clinton BMus MD FRCP(C)

McMaster University

Voices for Children

# THE GOAL

## COMPETENT CHILDREN

SELF- CONTROLLED

SELF-RELIANT

SELF-ASSERTIVE

EXPLORATORY

CONTENT



# TEMPERAMENT

---

*“A child’s first and most natural way of reacting to the world around him”*

# TEMPERAMENT

---

## INTENSITY

**How strong are your child's emotional reactions? Does he laugh and cry loudly and energetically or softly and mildly?**

## PERSISTENCE

**If your child is involved in an activity and you tell her to stop, does she stop easily or fight to continue?**

# **SENSITIVITY**

**How aware is your child of slight noises, emotions and differences in temperature, taste and texture? Does he react easily to certain foods, tags in clothing, irritating noises, or your stress?**

# **PERCEPTIVENESS**

**Does your child notice people, colors, noises, and objects around her? Does she frequently forget to do what you asked because something else has caught her attention?**

# **ADAPTABILITY**

**How quickly does your child adapt to changes in his schedule or routine? How does he cope with surprises?**

# **REGULARITY**

**Is your child quite regular about eating times, sleeping times, amount of sleep needed, and other bodily functions?**

# **ENERGY**

**Is your child always on the move and busy or quiet and quiescent? Does he need to run, jump, and use his whole body in order to feel good?**

## **FIRST REACTION**

**What is your child's first reaction when she is asked to meet people, try a new activity or idea, or go someplace new?**

## **MOOD**

**How much of the time does your child feel happy and content compared with serious, analytical, or cranky?**

# TEMPERAMENT CONSTELLATIONS

---

*EASY*

*DIFFICULT*

*SLOW TO WARM*



# GOODNESS OF FIT

---

**Healthy functioning and development occurs when there is a goodness of fit (compatibility) between the capacities and characteristics of the individual and the demands and expectations of the environment.**

# PARENTING STYLES

---

**AUTHORITARIAN: ‘Brick Wall Family’**

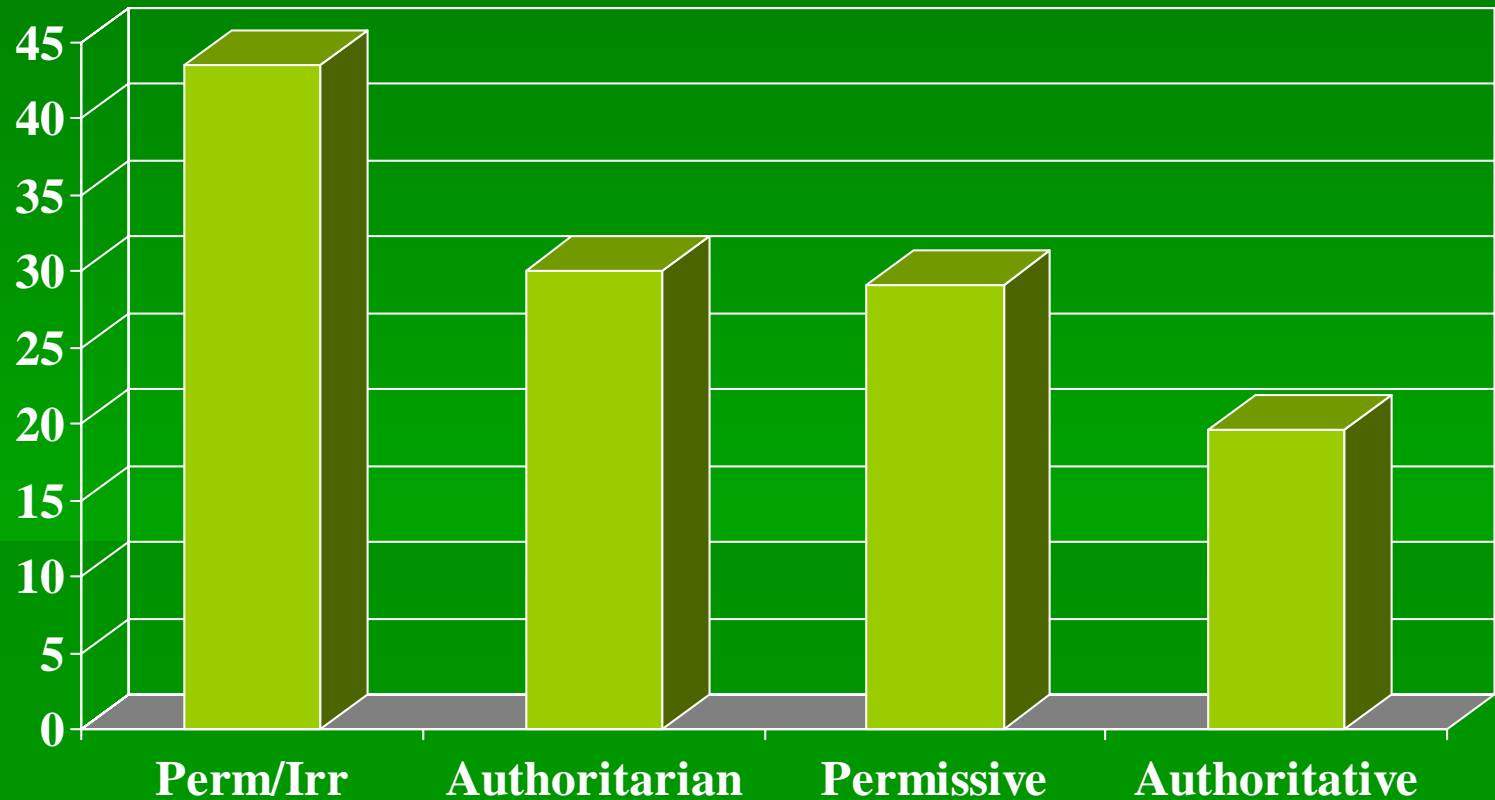
**“My way or the highway”**

**PERMISSIVE: ‘Jelly Fish Family’**

**“Please don’t put the cat in the oven....OK,honey?”**

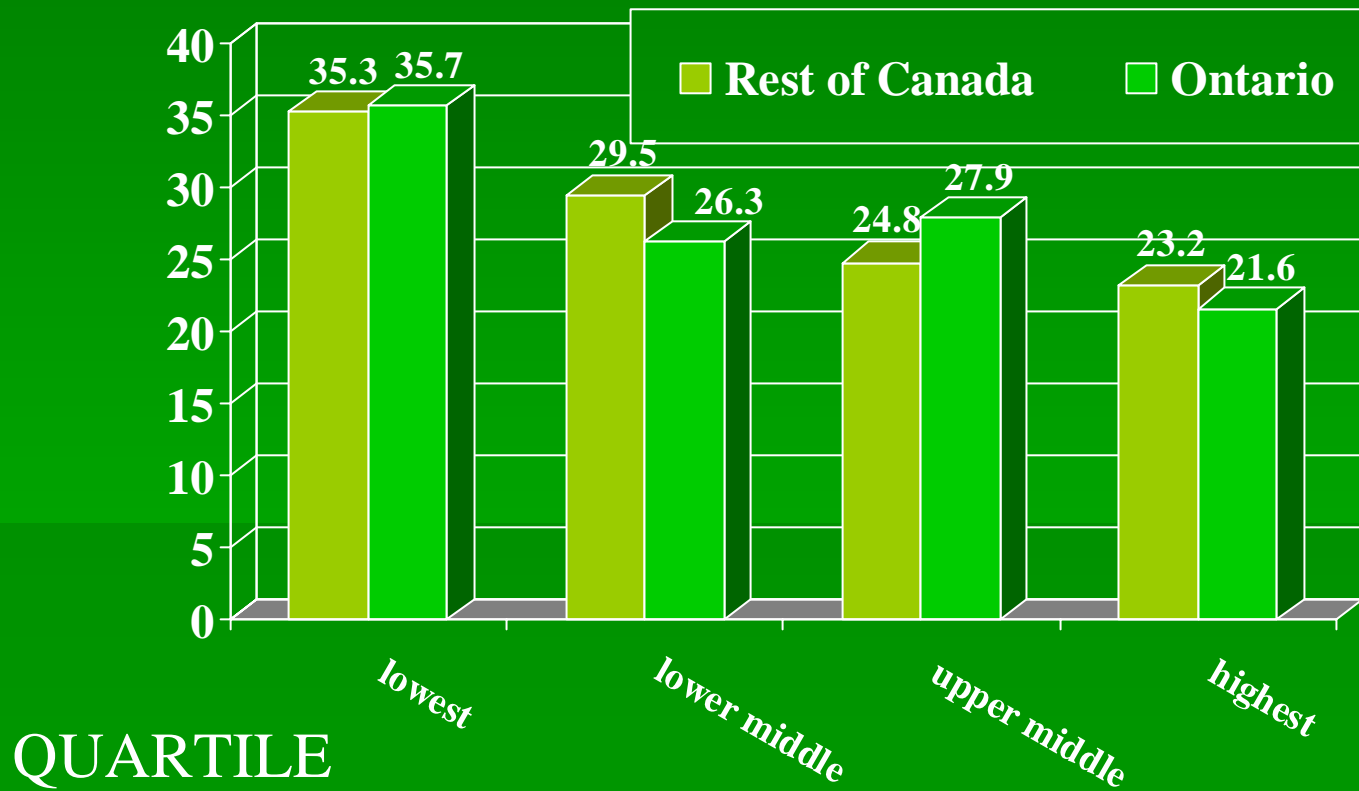
**AUTHORITATIVE: ‘Backbone Family’**

# Prevalence of Children With Difficulties by Parenting Style



## The Founders' Network

# The Prevalence of Children with Difficulties by Family Income



# PARENTING STYLES

- **READING** 'Just two extra occasions of reading to the child a week is enough to overcome the observed effects that we get for single parenthood or income'

# What is Attachment?

An affectional bond or tie between an infant and his/her mother figure

# What is Attachment?

## Bowlby's Attachment Theory

- proximity-maintaining behaviours
- for protection
- in balance with exploration system
- “secure base”

*“Attachment & Loss” (1969)*

# Internal Working Models

- Early relationship experiences create internal **representations** of the self in relation to the attachment figure and the world
- Influence **expectations** of significant others

*(Bowlby, 1988)*

# What is not attachment?

- Other parental roles:
  - Teacher
  - Playmate
  - Physical caregiver

*(Bowlby, 1988)*

# Attachment Classifications

- ***Secure***
  - Settles easily with mother upon reunion
  - History of consistently responsive caregiving
- ***Insecure – Avoidant***
  - Ignores or avoids mother upon reunion
  - History of predictably unavailable or unresponsive caregiving
- ***Insecure – Resistant***
  - Difficulty settling upon reunion
  - History of inconsistent, unpredictable caregiving
- ***Insecure – Disorganized***
  - Odd behaviour, confusion, fear upon reunion
  - History of abuse/neglect

# Developmental Implications of Insecure Attachment

- *Increased*
  - Social withdrawal
  - Aggression towards peers
  - Parent-child conflict
  - Behaviour problems
- *Decreased*
  - Persistence with challenging tasks
  - Cognitive problem-solving competence
  - Mental health
  - Physical health

# What Influences Attachment?

- ***Mother***

- Responsiveness
- Her own childhood experiences
- Personality
- Depression
- Stress – parenting, life events
- Marital satisfaction, social support

- ***Infant***

- Unique characteristics
- Reactivity to environment and people
- Special needs (e.g., premature, developmentally delayed)

# What's a parent to do?

- **Get peer support!** -  
family, friends, join a group or early years centre
- **Get rid of the “ghosts in the nursery”**  
-get counseling (*family doctor, local infant development program, hospital or mental health centre, or Employee Assistance Program*)
- **Education** - books  
(*e.g., Sears, Leach*) - videos  
(*e.g., A Simple Gift*)  
- home study (*e.g., the Parent Kit*) -  
courses (*e.g., Right from the Start*)
- **Have fun!**

# TODDLERS (REED)

- *If I want it ,it's mine*
- *If I give it to you, and change my mind later, it's mine*
- *If I had it a little while ago, it's mine*
- *If it's mine it will never belong to anyone else, no matter what.*
- *If we are building something together, all the pieces are mine.*
- *If it looks like mine, it is mine*
- *If it breaks, it's yours*

# **POSITIVE CHILD** **GUIDANCE**



Adapted from Nancy Samalin

*“Sticks and stones may break  
our bones...”*

---

## The Power of Words



# The Power of Words

---

- Avoid “Red Flag” words
- Avoid Labeling
- Talk about yourself and your feelings
- Clearly state expectations
- State rules and what needs to be done

Adapted from Nancy Samalin

*“What to do when your kids are  
‘parent deaf’ “*

---

## **Encouraging Cooperation**



# Encouraging Co-operation

---

- Talk Less
- Give Choice
- Suggestion Box
- Write Notes
- Make a game of it
- Notice them doing well

Adapted from Nancy Samalin

*“Sparing the rod won’t spoil the child”*

---

Positive Discipline as an  
Alternative to Punishment



# Positive Discipline

---

- Be selective if you want to be effective
- State the rule rather than criticize
- Describe problem, come up with a solution
- Emphasize what CAN be done
- Learn by Consequence
- Avoid the HAPPINESS TRAP

*“Well Mommy, it looked like a monster to me.”*

---

## **Acknowledging Your Child’s Feelings**



# Acknowledging Feelings

---

- Use therapeutic grunt
- Repeat or paraphrase
- Describe what you see
- Acknowledge what they're going through
- Respond to the wish itself
- Take a break

*“There’s nothing constructive  
about criticism”*

---

## **Building Your Child’s Self- Esteem**



Adapted from Nancy Samalin

# Self Esteem

---

## Avoid Criticism

- Focus on deed rather than doer
- Learn from Consequences
- Avoid ‘Advance” criticism
- Give your own feelings
- Keep it brief and specific

Adapted from Nancy Samalin

# Self Esteem

---

## How to Praise

- Comment on achievement not achiever
- Be descriptive and precise
- Let them overhear you
- Find one thing a day
- Notice the good

***Don't worry that children never  
listen to you.***

***Worry that they are always  
watching you.***

***Robert Fulghum***

***“We can do no great things;  
only small things with great  
love”***

**Mother Teresa**