

Teaching versus control a parenting challenge

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A well-taught child knows how to control impulses and takes responsibility for his actions. Parents cannot teach children everything, but can always inculcate the sense of responsibility for one's own actions and self-control (Barber, Stolz, & Olsen, 2005). Teaching plays a crucial role in child development during the 4-8 years of age.

On the other hand, parental control aims more at placing boundaries and setting rules than explaining why and how the children can avoid unacceptable behavior, or what will be the consequences (Skinner, Johnson & Snyder, 2005). The children are not taken into consideration to a great extent as they are kept in the dark of the why's, how's, and what's of it. They are punished if they violate the rules, as a discipline is not possible, without teaching.

However, this is only an aspect of control, as empirical research brings out multiple layers of meaning to the word 'control'. For example, Grolnick (2005) being in control and controlling the behavior of a child can be different. To be in control of the child's behavior is to protect them from dangers and equally assure civil behavior. This might at times be restrictive and sometimes allowing autonomy but under supervision.

As a technical term, 'control' is more narrow and precise. It interferes with the human need to feel autonomous and competent. In this case, the children are bound without choices and the actions uninitiated by themselves. But, while parents teach children and then avoid control, the parenting is said to be autonomy-supportive, where the child feels the agent of causality (Grolnick, 2005).

Teaching is to attempt at giving practical advice and guidance in the matters of what to do and what not to do. In the non-autonomy supportive

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environment, where parents control a child's behavior, the child has no choice and teaching makes no sense. In the stricter term, control cannot go hand in hand with teaching. However, 'control' is distinct from creating the structure or a system of rules and explicitly informing the child of expected behavior at the same time offering other acceptable alternative behavior. It is not always intertwined with some kind of reinforcement in the form of a punishment or a reward.

The manner in which parents convey this structure and implement it is what marks the demarcation between teaching and control (Baumrind, 2007).

Threats and punishments in a non-supportive environment are clearly devoid of teaching and moral guidance. If parents provide emotional and psychological support even when the child has done a disapproved act, then they can make the child understand their self-responsibility and the necessity of obeying the structure. Without wielding control over the choices, the parent helps the child develop thinking skills, discipline, and obedience. Virtues should be inculcated and not thrust upon them. If it is thrust, it is controlled and it may not last long if the string goes loose.

What is good and how much is good depends on the age of the child. 4-8 years in a child's life is the primary developmental stage and the pre-adolescent period (Roggman, Cook, Innocenti, Norman, & Christiansen, 2009). Parents need to balance teaching with control in order to prepare their children psychologically and emotionally ready for the vulnerable adolescent age.

Parenting is a challenge. Not only are every child unique, but also external forces come into play. Many a time, popular behavior succeeds and it becomes difficult for the parent to just stop with teaching. For example, if <https://assignbuster.com/teaching-versus-control-a-parenting-challenge/>

the child does not show restraint in watching television or using the internet, the parent may decide to refuse access to these. This act of control comes in desperate situations, which may, in turn, lead to rebellion from an otherwise normal child. In such cases, if the same control happens with a clear explanation and supportive guidance, then it becomes a structure than domination (Bergman, Larsr & Trost, 2006). The child is made to understand the reason for the parent's action and their intention, which is a psychological booster in the development.

Therefore, parents need to discern when and how to use the two parenting tools: teaching and control in order to shape their child's behavior. To allow them to develop is different from strictly thrusting them into the desired shape. The clay has to be in a suitable condition to undergo modification in the hands of the potter. Children in the age of 4-10 can be easily molded. Teaching molds them. But, teaching without control can be disastrous as children are to be protected as they are still vulnerable and developing and may otherwise lead to behavioral problems in society. So, parenting should be a good balance of teaching and control and provide an emotionally supportive environment for the child to grow.