

The effect of
parenting style on
childhood
development: a
reading of the glass
ca...



Many people have varying opinions on parenting, usually motivated by deeply personal beliefs. These differing outlooks on raising children develops children themselves into different people with very specific values instilled in them by their parents. The impact of childhood on their development is undoubtedly substantial, but its complete effects are rarely understood; studies by Cornell and Louisiana State University established that parenting style can lead children towards certain characteristics and values later on in life (“ The Influence of Parenting Styles on Children’s Cognitive Development”). The memoir *The Glass Castle* by Jeannette Walls recounts the story of Walls’s childhood and development under her parents. What makes her childhood unique is her upbringing in a poor family under her unusual parents that necessitated her gaining maturity much earlier than usual children. However, her parents still instilled in her a passion for learning and that combined with her maturity to enable her later success in life as a writer.

The reason that people are who they are is due in large part to the influence of their parents, and the style of their parenting. Jeannette Walls’s parents were extremely lax with their parenting, and she and her siblings were free to do as they wished for much of their childhood. This is first evident as Jeannette makes herself a hotdog, thereby causing herself to catch on fire. This freedom allows Lori, Jeannette, Brian, and Maureen to experience more independence as well as gain more responsibility for their actions. The children’s independence is displayed when Brian gets into a fight in Welch, but does not discuss the matter with his dad since he “ didn’t want to sound like a whiner” (Walls, 140) since his parents had left him to be independent.

Their father, Rex, once again emphasizes independence as he throws Jeannette into the water so that she knows “ if you don’t want to sink you better learn how to swim” (Walls, 66). However, the maturity gained through the children’s freedom allows them to eventually realize the responsibility and childlike behavior of their parents as they begin to resent them and desire to move out.

A large reason for the permissive attitude of the parents was not only their selfish nature, but also the fact that they desired the best for their children. Although they were extremely poor, Walls’s parents always made sure that they had an adequate house to live in; they first lived in the trailer, then in Battle Mountain, the large house in Phoenix, Welsh, and with Rex’s parents in West Virginia. They also ensured that their children always received an education, as learning was of paramount importance to them. Rex’s involvement of the children in the design of his great Glass Castle, as well as how “ after dinner the whole family stretched out on the benches and the floor of the depot and read, with the dictionary in the middle of the room so we kids could look up words we didn’t know” (Walls, 56), indicates the importance of knowledge and education to Jeannette’s parents. A parental emphasis on the importance of education allows Jeannette and her siblings to develop into bright, insightful young people who can take advantage of their eventual maturity to become successful individuals later on in life.

Another aspect of the parenting style of Jeannette’s parents was their belief that the way they lived and parented was the correct and proper way to raise a child, and they did not appreciate anyone else interfering in the development of their children. When Jeannette is taken to the hospital for <https://assignbuster.com/the-effect-of-parenting-style-on-childhood-development-a-reading-of-the-glass-castle/>

her burns, her mom becomes resentful of the amenities the hospital provides, as well as the nurse giving her daughter gum; she says, “ it was a disgusting low-class habit, and the nurse should have consulted her” (Walls, 12), as she is “ your mother, and I should have a say in how you’re raised” (Walls, 12). This episode illustrates the Walls parents’ belief that the way they raise their children is faultless. They do not want their children to believe they are being raised in a family that cannot completely provide for them. Although they may have an unconventional parenting style, they are trying their best, and this effort develops Jeannette into a successful woman as she leaves her family for New York City.

The effect of parenting style on Jeannette Walls’s development is thorough, as it instills in her the values of independence and education, along with a maturity that develops her into a successful adult. Her unusual upbringing enabled her to see that she desired more from her life, and she pursued her aspirations to become a famous writer. While *The Glass Castle* presents one perspective on raising children, there are many other methods that contribute to different results in similarly successful people.