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How Does Bad Parenting Affect Children?

By K. Nola Mokeyane ; Updated September 26, 2017



Ineffective parenting adversely affects a child's psychological, social and behavioral functioning. Ineffective parenting has been linked to behavioral problems such as delinquency, criminality and academic problems for children. Indiana Parenting Institute, a parenting education and resource center, finds that effective parenting provides a child with positive discipline, parental support, and respect for herself and others.

Behavioral Problems

Acting out, or misbehavior, is often associated with ineffective parenting. A study of 278 children conducted by the United Kingdom's Department of Education suggests that ineffective parenting can directly and indirectly influence antisocial behaviors, such as fighting, lying and stealing, in children. This research also found that ineffective parenting negatively affects children across socioeconomic backgrounds. While ineffective parenting might not solely be the blame for negative behaviors in children, parenting contributes significantly to children's behavioral outcomes.

Poor Coping Skills

When parents are lacking in skills such as anger management and conflict resolution, they will likely have difficulties modeling this behavior for their children. This, in turn, leaves children with poor coping skills for common occurrences, such as anger, disappointment and frustration. BBC.com Health section contributor James Tighe also notes that having a strong support network and realistic appraisals or perceptions of life's problems are essential coping strategies. A lack of healthful coping strategies can lead to many overall health and well-being concerns in children.

Academic Challenges

Parents who neglect their children's educational needs might contribute to poor academic performance in their children. Sufficient evidence, including findings reported by the state of Michigan's Department of Education, supports the idea that parental involvement in a child's education vastly improves academic achievement. Parents who are inattentive, harsh criticizers and ineffective disciplinarians fail to create a home environment that promotes and supports healthy educational attainment. Parents with an ineffective parenting style might also show a lack of interest in advocating for their child's education.

Mental Health Outcomes

Ineffective parenting can contribute to, and be exacerbated by, mental health problems in children, finds research obtained by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Nearly 22 percent of youths ages 12 to 17 in 2004 received counseling for emotional and behavioral issues, reports the USHHS. This research also notes that other socioeconomic contributors may pose significant barriers for parents to provide effective parenting to their children. There are other factors to consider in children with mental illnesses from low socioeconomic communities as well, such as ineffective teacher responses and poor social skills.

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About the Author



K. Nola Mokeyane has written professionally since 2006, and has contributed to various online publications, including "Global Post" and Modern Mom. Nola enjoys writing about health, wellness and spirituality. She is a member of the Atlanta Writer's Club.

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