

The Rise of the Millennial Parent

Parents today do not feel obligated to prescribe to any singular popular parenting style when raising their children. The recent trend in parenting has become much more eclectic, befitting the diverse cultures and backgrounds of children of the millennium. With descriptions such as “helicopter parents,” “tiger moms,” and “panda dads,” parenting has taken on a much more diverse course. Understanding these details is important for educators to stay current with the latest parenting trends because each approach has reverberating effects in the classroom.

Parenting Styles Today

Cataloging all of the current parenting terms today is a difficult task mainly because new styles seem to be frequently added. Today’s parents are bombarded with advice from everyone from trained child psychologists to anonymous bloggers on the Internet who are recommending best parenting practices. To better distinguish these styles, I’ve categorized them into the following five broad categories.

Hyper parenting is based on the work of Alvin Rosenfeld and Nicole Wise in their book, *The Over-Scheduled Child: Avoiding the Hyper-Parenting Trap*. This term describes high-energy, over-involved parents. These parents have preset goals for their children and are focused on making them successful, sometimes at any cost.

Hypo parenting distinguishes the type of parenting that leans to a more hands-off approach. These parents tend to allow children more control of their own decisions, see the importance of individuality, and value their children’s uniqueness.

Traditional/neo-traditional parenting is a style in which the parents try their best to ensure that one parent assumes the role of the primary caretaker while the other parent is chiefly responsible for the family’s financial obligations.

Divergent parenting refers to approaches often used out of necessity and that are present in more dysfunctional families.

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Millennial parenting is unique to the times in which we live and reflects the complexity of modern life in America where both parents work full-time jobs and are forced to find nontraditional ways to raise children.

Millennial Parenting Unveiled

The children of millennial parents currently are, or soon will be, in your elementary schools. Within this category, there are seven types of approaches to child-rearing.

Book of the Month Parenting. In “What Type of Parent Are You? Parenting Styles,” Jamie Sotonof explains that these parents often change their style depending on what book they are reading and what other parents are doing. They try their best to stay on top of current parenting trends

and research to better raise their children, but lack consistency.

Dry Cleaner Mom. This type of parent leaves much of the child-raising to others, such as teachers, nannies, or daycare workers. Tim Elmore explores these parents in his book, *Generation iY: Our Last Chance to Save Their Future*. These parents will spend a considerable amount of money on various activities for their children, but they prefer not to handle the major responsibilities of child-rearing.

Entitlement Parents. These parents are very informed and are aware of every service that is provided by the schools, district, or state. They believe that they are entitled to every service available to their children and will take full advantage of them, whether needed or not.

Fast Food Parenting. Fast food restaurants are known for being fast and consistent, much like these parents who are able to fit in their parenting in between their jobs and other obligations. They are often worn thin because of their responsibilities, but still manage to try and provide as much parenting as they can when they are with their children.

Panda Parenting. This style was created in response to the “tiger mom” phenomenon. According to Lisa Belkin’s 2011 *New York Times* blog entry titled, “Panda Dads and Parenting Goals,” a father referred to himself as a panda dad who was able to be cute and cuddly with his children but wasn’t afraid to show some claw when necessary.

Submarine Parenting. Deborah Skolnik coined this term in her article, “Stop Being a Micromanaging Mom,” for parents who remain “hidden” until their guidance is needed. These parents stay close to their children and only intervene when they feel it is necessary to do so. Unlike helicopter parents, these parents try to have their children address many of their own challenges by themselves, but are always on the lookout for possible danger.

Yes-Mom. According to Sheri Sears’ blog entry, “Are you a yes-mom or a no-mom,” this parent type values

every single moment with her child and is determined to make every moment memorable. A yes mom tries to say, “yes” to all of her child’s requests unless she has a good reason to say no. This style attempts to teach the child the difference between right and wrong through the child’s own instincts and is in stark contrast to children who are told, “no” as a typical response to their requests.

How to Communicate

Here are some tips that I have found especially helpful in working with millennial parents.

Set clear expectations at the start of the year regarding roles and responsibilities for parents, students, teachers, and administrators.

Be sensitive to parents’ views, listening carefully to their complaints and concerns. What might start out as a complaint may turn into a plea for help.


Be proactive. Contact parents before a problem arises or immediately after it occurs.

Use examples and evidence to support what you want to share with parents.

Separate the student from the behavior. Discussing a behavior is a lot easier for parents to understand than making generalizations about the student.

Don’t promise what you can’t deliver. Don’t go out of your way to placate parents.

Take time to answer questions. Sometimes reflection or additional information is needed to give an appropriate response to a parent.

What will the future hold for the children of the millennium and what will become of the school systems? One thing is for certain: It is important that educators understand the diversity that is occurring in homes across the country today because it will have a direct influence on our interactions in the classroom as well as our culture as a whole. 

James M. Pedersen is principal of South Plainfield High School in South Plainfield, New Jersey.

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