

# Parents – The Role Model

By Evelin Gerda Lindner

Lindner, Evelin Gerda (2005). Parenting Styles and their Impact on Children: Humiliation, Abuse and Neglect. In *Sahil*, 14 (32, April-June), 9

For thousands of years, almost everywhere on the globe, humankind believed in hierarchically ranking human value. Almost everybody thought that some people were born as *higher* beings and others as *lower* beings. This was called the “order of nature” or “divine order.” The cradle of democracy, the Greek city state of about 2,000 years ago - just to give you one example out of many - was adamant that women and slaves, per definition, had no voice.

Any pain or suffering that those had to endure who had their place somewhere at the bottom of the pyramid of power was deemed to be *necessary pain* or *prosocial humbling*.

## Strict Father Model

Parents typically were central to reproducing obedient underlings. Alice Miller (1983), spelled out how, in the period that lead up to the two World Wars, leading pedagogues of the time regarded *breaking the will of the child* as essential for childrearing.

The father has authority to determine the policy that will govern the family. Because of his moral authority, his commands are to be obeyed. He teaches his children right from wrong by setting strict rules for their behavior and by setting a moral example in his own life.

“Evidence from three areas of psychological research – attachment theory, socialization theory, and family violence studies – shows that the Strict Father model ...tends to produce children who are dependent on the authority of others, cannot chart their own moral course very well, have less of a conscience, are less respectful of others, and have no greater ability to resist temptations” (Lakoff & Johnson (1999), p. 327).

## Nurturant Parent Model

Article 1 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights stipulates that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.” This declaration represents a revolution insofar as it upsets the hierarchical ranking of human worthiness that was in place for millennia and calls for a new order, namely the order of *equal dignity for all*. In this new order it is regarded illegitimate to put down people; putting down people, beating and punishing them cruelly, is no longer labeled as “prosocial humbling” but as abusive *antisocial humiliation*. As might be expected, this revolution has consequences also for parenting.

The *Nurturant Parent model* of rearing children describes a parenting style that abides by the new Human Rights ideals.

It combines firmness with respect for equal dignity. “Genuine nurturance involves setting boundaries and expecting others to act responsibly” (Lakoff & Johnson (1999), p. 316). The point with the Nurturing Parent model is that “lessons” are no longer taught by

putting down children. “Breaking” children is no longer permissible. We need to develop new language, new proverbs and sentences that highlight that “lessons” are no longer to be taught by humiliation, but with love and humility.

### **Reference List**

Lakoff, George & Johnson, Mark (1999). *Philosophy in the flesh: The embodied mind and its challenge to western thought*. New York, NY: Basic Books.