

Controlling Parents vs. Autonomous Parents

Controlling Parents	Autonomous Parents
<p>Controlling parents give lots of unsolicited advice and direction. <i>"That's not the right way to load the dishwasher. Always wash the plates before putting them in and stack all the large plates on the left side. Don't leave the dishes in the sink and come back later. Do it this way. Do it now. Do it later."</i></p>	<p>Autonomy-supportive parents give feedback. <i>"Look down at your buttons; something looks off—can you figure out what's wrong? If you forgot to carry the two in that other problem, maybe you made the same mistake on this problem?"</i></p>
<p>Controlling parents take over. <i>"I'll just do it, you go play. We have to get to school, I'll just do it myself when I get home. No, not that way, just let me do it."</i></p>	<p>Autonomy-supportive parents allow for mistakes and help children understand the consequences of mistakes. <i>"It's not a big deal that you dropped the glass, I'll show you how to clean it all up, and you can remember to carry fewer next time. Pick out the lumps in the oatmeal, and I'll show you how to avoid that mistake for next time. The mop bucket spilled because it's too short to hold the weight of the mop handle; just clean up the mess and use the other bucket next time."</i></p>
<p>Controlling parents offer extrinsic motivators in exchange for behaviors. <i>"You get one jelly bean for every toy you clean up. If you walk the dog every morning, I'll buy you new sneakers. If you load and unload the dishwasher for an entire week without being asked, I will get you that video game you've been asking for."</i></p>	<p>Autonomy-supportive parents value the mistakes as much as the successes. <i>"I'm so proud of you for sticking with that worksheet even though it was hard for you. What could you have said to your brother that might have helped him understand you rather than throw his toy at you?"</i></p>
<p>Controlling parents provide solutions or the correct answer before the child has had a chance to really struggle with a problem. <i>"But honey, you know five times four is twenty, you just did that down here. I'll just look that word up for you while you do the spelling list. Just give me that pencil and I'll show you. Not like that, like this."</i></p>	<p>Autonomy-supportive parents guide children toward solutions. <i>"I know you know what five times four is, so what happens when you add another five? Why do you think the cold glass broke when you poured hot water into it? Try holding the protractor so you can read the numbers right side up."</i></p>

Controlling Parents Don't Let Children Make Their Own Decisions.

"Do your math first, and then your spelling. Do your homework here at the table where I can see you. You should play tennis rather than baseball this season."

Autonomy-supportive parents acknowledge children's feelings of frustration and disappointment.

"I get mad, too, when I can't do something right the first time, but I keep trying until I figure it out. Remember yesterday, when I did not get that job I wanted? That was really disappointing, but I know I'll figure something else out if I work at it. I can imagine how frustrating this math must be for you, but won't it feel great when you know how to do it?"

This information is directly from:

Lahey, J. (2015). *The Gift of Failure: How the Best Parents Learn to Let Go So Their Children Can Succeed.* (pp. 53-58). HarperCollins Publishers.

"Big choices for big kids, little choices for little kids."

-Dr. Garry Landreth