Virtual Child Report

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I have attempted to raise my Virtual Child in the Permissive style (McMahan & Thompson, 2022 call this "Indulgent"). Permissive parents are warm and responsive. They avoid placing extensive expectations on their children, granting them considerable freedom. Discipline is sporadic and inconsistent, fostering an environment where disagreements prompt children to view themselves as equal contributors with an equitable voice. These parents commonly believe that enforcing goals, rules, and restrictions could impede a child's creative and self-expressive growth.

This involved trying to choose options that best reflected this. After graduating from high school, at 17 years and 11 months, Suke intends to attend a nearby community college due to his grades and test scores, with the potential of transferring to a four-year institution. However, you are worried about his continued association with friends who have caused trouble in the last couple of years, including his latest girlfriend. To instill independence and responsibility, you insist that he cover as many costs as possible with his part-time job earnings.

> *High school has concluded, and Suke intends to attend a nearby community college based on his academic performance, possibly transitioning to a four-year institution later. Your worry stems from his continued association with friends who have caused issues over the last two years, including his latest girlfriend. To foster independence and responsibility, you insist that he cover as many costs as possible with his part-time job earnings.*

This is as close to what they are doing at 18 as the program will give me. From this, I can infer that my child lives at home since they only have a part-time job. The current BC minimum wage of $16.75/hr x 20hr/week (assuming 6 – 7 hours per day, three days per week) = $1,340/month or roughly $1100/month after taxes, etc. This is not enough for them to live independently and would be a stretch with roommates (MacMahon & Nassar, 2023). Further, if they go to a local community college, they will stay local, so it would make sense to live at home.

They have continued to associate with peers and friends who may be problematic. These associations have been an ongoing problem. From their 17-year report:

> *Suke's social circle is dynamic, often marked by frequent disagreements and periods of estrangement rather than stability. He is involved with a few cliques in school and occasionally spends time with them outside of class, many of whom exhibit rebellious behaviour. While you aim to support Suke in navigating friendships, you're cautious not to come across as intrusive. You're attentive when he seeks to converse and offer suggestions without exerting pressure for significant alterations in his social dynamics.*

From the 16 years, 11 months update, we know that Suke left campus with friends for a couple of days and was caught coming back to get his backpack from his locker and received detention. These behaviours suggest that my parenting has led to deviant peer associations and that I have not been able to break these connections or influence their choice of peer group. Hinnant et al., 2015 investigated how two measures of the sympathetic nervous system (SNS) activity influence the relationship between permissive parenting, association with deviant peers, and delinquency in adolescents. The research involved 252 adolescents (average age of 15.79 years; 53% were boys, 66% were European American, and 34% were African American). Using various methods, such as skin conductance level reactivity (SCLR) and cardiac pre-ejection period reactivity (PEPR), SNS activity was measured during both baseline and problem-solving tasks. The difference between these periods determined reactivity. Adolescents reported permissive parenting, connections with deviant peers, externalizing behaviours, and substance use (alcohol, marijuana). The study found indirect effects linking permissive parenting to delinquency through associations with deviant peers.

Moreover, the influence of permissive parenting on delinquency through peer associations was moderated by SNS reactivity. Lower SNS reactivity was identified as a risk factor for externalizing problems and alcohol use. This research underscores the significance of SNS reactivity in the pathways involving parenting, peer relationships, and adolescent delinquency. Based on these identified pathways, it suggests the potential for targeted interventions aimed at

vulnerable youth. These associations are partially responsible for their poor grades and lack of ambition.

Hinnant et al. (2015) demonstrate that permissive parenting has a direct link to deviant peer affiliations and delinquent behaviours. They used the deviant peer affiliations as a proxy for a link between permissive parenting and delinquent behaviours. While my child did not show particularly delinquent behaviour, there was a definite link between the parenting style and their less desirable friends. The study found that when your body's stress system (SNS) reacts strongly together with others, it could mean you are more fearless and seeking thrilling experiences. This can make you more likely to join groups that take risks. This finding directly contrasts with my child's early life tendency to avoid risk and act shy and risk-averse. It may be an evolution or attention-seeking behaviour, as permissive parenting tends to leave the child feeling neglected or ignored. Making the child an equal partner in child-rearing decisions has a similar effect to pushing off those decisions on the child.

Interestingly, this study shows that a nurture (as opposed to nature) paradigm has a direct, biological and long-term effect on the SNS. According to this research, permissive parenting leads to fearlessness and insensitivity to threats or punishment. In essence, the child does not believe they will suffer any consequences for their actions because they never have before.

Cucu Ciuhan, 2021 explored how permissive parenting relates to atypical behaviour in preschool children, focusing on the role of generalized anxiety. Researchers examined 293 children aged 3–5 using assessments from both parents and teachers. They used various tests, including the Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire, Behavior Assessment System for Children (Second Edition), Teacher Rating Scale, and Preschool Anxiety Scale. The findings revealed that children with permissive parents tend to display higher levels of atypical behaviour and generalized anxiety. Moreover, generalized anxiety significantly contributes to explaining atypical behaviour beyond just the influence of permissive parenting. It was observed that generalized anxiety partially mediates the relationship between a father's permissive parenting style and atypical behaviour, while it completely mediates this relationship with a mother's permissive parenting style.

This study reinforces that early behaviour tends to be risk-averse and timid. The child has not yet learned that they are free from consequences for their decisions, and this causes generalized anxiety as the child is forced to make novel and overly mature decisions. By making the child responsible for their child-rearing and abdicating their role as guide and mentor, the permissive parent causes the child's atypical behaviour but, since they are not taking responsibility for it, can readily blame it on the child. Presumably, this then causes the child to pursue more extreme behaviours, perhaps in an attempt to get some sort of reaction from their parents, which ends up in the delinquent, risk-taking end of the spectrum.

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