



Authentic Independence: A Positive Framework for Giving Children Roots *and* Wings

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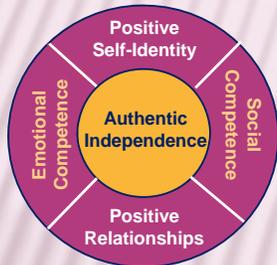


Abstract

"Don't try to hold the course you set and have been sailing together for seventeen years. It is very hard to sail a ship with two pilots." - Harvard Parents' Handbook

Authentic Independence is....

- Designed to be a positive response to "Helicopter" or Intrusive Parenting
- A four-part theoretical framework for promoting genuine
 - Autonomy
 - Self-determination
 - Motivation
 - Agency
- A four-part theoretical framework for creating parenting resources such as books, curricula for workshops, and tip sheets:



Research Outcomes

Research shows that :

- Psychologically controlling parenting can lead to children's internalizing problems such as
 - Loneliness, confusion, anxiety and depression
- Autonomy-supportive parenting can lead to
 - better psychological adjustment and competence.
- Parents and college-age children today have closer relationships than previous generations of parents & children because of
 - Technological ease (Average of 10.4 communications per week: (Hofer, et. al., in press).

The meta-construct "*authentic independence*" describes the positive outcome of helping children to arrive at adolescence and young adulthood with

- an independence rooted in healthy self-identity
- healthy relationships with their family, friends and community.

We propose that the development of "authentic independence" in children can be supported through intentional, autonomy-supportive parenting practices, focusing on four positive developmental tasks:

- developing the child's positive self-identity,
- fostering positive relationships
- fostering social competence
- fostering emotional competence.

Intrusive or Helicopter Parenting

What is Helicopter Parenting and what makes it dangerous?

While the motivations are caring, Helicopter Parents engage in both behavioral and psychological control (Barber, 2006)

Examples:

- Waking college-age child up for class – behavioral control
- Registering college-age child for classes – psychological control

Psychological control correlates negatively with healthy development (Grolnick, 2003):

- Stifles autonomy, intrinsic motivation and identity formation (Ballash, et. al., 2006; Barber, 2006; Baumrind, 2005; Grolnick, 2003).
- Encourages behavior motivated by external expectations (Deci, 1995; Deci & Ryan, 2002; Grolnick, 2003)
- Associated with psychological maladjustment (Barber, 2006).
- Disrupts the natural development of autonomy and identity formation in children and adolescents (Baumrind, 2005).

Authentic Independence is the antidote to parental psychological control .

Authentic Independence Promotes Autonomy

Autonomy is "acting in accord with one's own wishes" and a basic human need (Brown & Ryan, 2004).



- Provides an element of satisfaction with life regardless of cultures and across different behavioral domains (Sheldon, et. al., 2001)
- Associated with positive outcomes: e.g. self-regulation, internal motivation, & initiative (Brown & Ryan, 2004)
- Fosters engagement, enjoyment, greater effort, and ability to cope with stress (Brown & Ryan, 2004)

Authentic Independence Promotes Self-Determination

Self-Determination Theory:

- Human motivation related to three basic psychological needs: competence, autonomy, connectedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000)
- At our best, human beings are autonomously motivated to be curious, creative, and proactive, reaching for learning and growing – self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Authentic Independence Promotes Motivation

Cognitive Evaluation Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000)

- Intrinsic motivation is a primary and natural drive to be happy, interested and fulfilled.
- While autonomous, intrinsic motivation can be interrupted by external factors like parental control.
- Intrinsic motivation is linked with a number of positive outcomes, including creativity (e.g. Amabile, 1996), enhanced task performance



(Grolnick & Ryan, 1987), and higher psychological well-being (Czirkentimihajli & Rathunde, 1993; Ryan, Deci & Grolnick, 1995 as cited in Brown & Ryan, 2004).

Authentic Independence Promotes Agency

AGENCY = Self-Efficacy + Self-Regulation

Agency is doing *what we say we are going to do.* (Bandura, 2003)

- Before having the agency to take action toward their goals, emerging adults must first *believe* that they *can* take action—self-efficacy.



Five Sources of Self-efficacy (Maddux, 2002)

Performance experiences	Successful attempts at control that the student attributes to his own efforts
Vicarious experiences	Observations of the behavior of others and consequences of those behaviors.
Imaginal experiences	Imagining ourselves or others behaving effectively or ineffectively in hypothetical situations.
Verbal persuasion	What others say to us about what they believe we can or cannot do.
Physiological and emotional States	Associating success with pleasant feelings and perceived failure with negative feelings.

Authentic Independence: Key Elements & Pathways



For application purposes, we outlined three possible pathways for each of the four Key Elements of Authentic Independence. These pathways will be tested for their effectiveness and may be augmented in the future.

Authentic Independence Key Elements & Pathways

Key Elements	Positive Self-Identity	Positive Relationships	Social Competence	Emotional Competence
Pathways	Self-efficacy	Secure Attachment	Assertiveness	Self-Regulation
	Character Strengths	Mutual Support	Social Confidence	Emotional Awareness
	Meaning	Family, Peer, Community Relationships	Empathy	Resilience

Conclusions

- Conceptual framework of Authentic Independence is a solid theoretical foundation for creating practical parenting applications.
- Most parents are well-intentioned, but lack the knowledge and training to direct their efforts in ways that are more autonomy-supportive.
- The key elements of Authentic Independence are learnable and not primarily trait-based. Parenting training in these areas can yield positive effects.
- The field of positive psychology has much to contribute to parent learning. Traditionally parent learning has focused on the deficit model and there is limited research in this area. We hope that Authentic Independence will eventually be applied to adult growth as well.
- There is a critical need to marry positive psychology more with human developmental principles to support positive practical approaches for addressing the needs of developing children and parents.

Next Steps

Products:

- Parent Tip Sheets: Helping Children Believe in Themselves – Series of 5, based on Five Sources of Self-Efficacy (Maddux, 2002) Performance experiences, Vicarious experiences, Imaginal experiences, Verbal experiences, Physiological experiences
- Write articles or columns for Parents' Papers
- Parenting workshops: Based on Four Key Elements
- Book: *Parents and Emerging Adults: Bonding or Binding?*

Topics for further research:

- Refine the Key Elements and pathways of framework, examine distinct and overlapping pathways, to create clearer definitions
- Examine parenting education practices and the effects of parent education on parent behavior,
 - Explore motivations for parental controlling behavior.
- Research gender and parental control (the blaming of mothers),
- Other psychological constructs that contribute to intrusive parenting, such as affectionless control, choice and autonomy.
- Find more successful case studies of parents and emerging adults who have close, but independent relationships.

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