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What Type of Parent Did You Grow Up With?

This exercise identifies emotional immaturity in parental figures with the aim to better understand your lived experience. To assess which of these four types might fit your parent, read through the following lists and check off the characteristics you associate with your parent, bearing in mind that parents of any type can exhibit traits of the other types when very stressed. Characteristics of emotional immaturity common to all types include self-preoccupation, low empathy, disregard for boundaries, resisting emotional intimacy, poor communication, an absence of self-reflection, refusal to repair relationship problems, emotional reactivity, impulsiveness, and problems sustaining emotional closeness. At the end of the exercise, you'll find a table that conveniently summarizes these traits.

Emotional Parent

- Is preoccupied with their own needs
- Has low empathy
- Is enmeshed and not respectful of boundaries
- Is defensively non-intimate
- Doesn't engage in reciprocal communication; just talks about themselves
- Isn't self-reflective
- Has poor relationship repair skills
- Is reactive, not thoughtful
- Is either too close or too distant
- Blows up or cuts others off
- Has frightening or intimidating emotional intensity
- Expects their child to provide soothing and doesn't think about the child's needs
- Likes to pretend they don't run the show
- Sees themselves as a victim

Driven Parent

- Is preoccupied with their own needs
- Has low empathy
- Is enmeshed and not respectful of boundaries
- Is defensively non-intimate
- Doesn't engage in reciprocal communication; just talks about themselves
- Isn't self-reflective
- Has poor relationship repair skills
- Is reactive, not thoughtful
- Is either too close or too distant

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- _____ Has rigid values and perfectionistic expectations
- _____ Is goal-obsessed and busy, with machinelike tunnel vision
- _____ Sees their child as a reflection, without considering what the child wants
- _____ Likes to run the show
- _____ Sees themselves as a fixer

Passive Parent

- _____ Is preoccupied with their own needs
- _____ Has limited empathy Is enmeshed and not respectful of boundaries
- _____ Can be sporadically emotionally intimate
- _____ Engages only minimally in reciprocal communication; mostly talks about themselves
- _____ Isn't self-reflective
- _____ Has limited relationship repair skills
- _____ Can be thoughtful on occasion
- _____ Is either too close or too distant
- _____ Can be kindly and fun but not protective
- _____ Has a laissez-faire attitude that all is well
- _____ Is affectionate toward the child but doesn't stand up for them
- _____ Likes someone else to run the show or be the bad guy
- _____ Sees themselves as mellow and good-natured

Rejecting Parent

- _____ Is preoccupied with his or her own needs
- _____ Shows no empathy
- _____ Has impenetrable boundaries
- _____ Seems disconnected and hostile
- _____ Seldom engages in communication
- _____ Isn't self-reflective
- _____ Has no relationship repair skills
- _____ Is reactive, attacking, and demeaning
- _____ Is too distant
- _____ Ignores their child or can be rageful toward the child
- _____ Is often rejecting and angry
- _____ Sees their child as a bother and doesn't want to get near the child
- _____ Likes to mock and dismiss
- _____ Sees themselves as independent from others

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Emotional	Driven	Passive	Rejecting
Preoccupied with their own needs	Preoccupied with their own needs	Preoccupied with their own needs	Preoccupied with their own needs
Low empathy	Low empathy	Limited empathy	No empathy
Enmeshed, not respectful of boundaries	Enmeshed, not respectful of boundaries	Enmeshed, not respectful of boundaries	Impenetrable boundaries
Defensive non-intimacy	Defensive non-intimacy	Sporadic emotional intimacy	Disconnected, hostile
Nonreciprocal communication	Nonreciprocal communication	Minimal reciprocal communication	Rarely communicates
Not self-reflective	Not self-reflective	Not self-reflective	Not self-reflective
Poor relationship repair	Poor relationship repair	Poor relationship repair	No relationship repair
Reactive not thoughtful	Reactive not thoughtful	Thoughtful on occasion	Reactive, attacking, demeaning
Too close or too distant	Too close or too distant	Too close or too distant	Too distant
Blowing up or cutting you off	Rigid values, perfectionistic	Kindly and fun but not protective	Ignoring or rageful
Frightening, intimidating emotional intensity	Goal-obsessed and busy, with machinelike tunnel vision	Laissez-faire; "All is well."	Rejecting, angry
"You are my soother." ("Don't ask me to think about your needs.")	"You are my reflection." ("Don't ask me to consider what you want.")	"You are my sweetie." ("Don't ask me to stand up for you.")	"You are a bother." ("Don't get near me.")

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Likes to pretend they don't run the show	Likes to run the show	Likes someone else to run the show and be the bad guy	Likes to mock and dismiss
Sees themselves as victim	Sees themselves as fixer	Sees themselves as mellow	Sees themselves as independent

Adapted from: Lindsay C. Gibson. *Adult Children of Emotionally Immature Parents: Assessing Your Parent's Emotional Immaturity*, 2015.