Can you have two fun parents in the family?

Someone in the family needs to be the bad guy and take the heat that can come from disciplining kids. It’s best to share the roles as it’s hard work if one parent is always the firm parent, while the other has all the fun.

An interesting discussion point was raised recently on US sitcom Modern Family. Claire, one of the main characters, explained away some silly behaviour by a child as being the result of having two ‘fun’ parents.

“You can’t have two fun parents,” she told her young son. This comment says a great deal about modern parenting styles and how parents work together to raise their children. What’s more, she’s right!

There’s a great deal of evidence that points to the authoritative parenting style as being the most appropriate way to raise kids today.

A recent UK study showed the benefits of the authoritative approach. The study of 9,000 UK households in the Millennium Cohort Study found that while family structure and parent income levels impact on children’s development, it’s parenting style that has the greatest influence on outcomes for kids.

Children from wealthiest backgrounds were more likely to develop characteristics for success than children from the poorest backgrounds but, when parental style and confidence were factored in, the difference between children from richer and poorer families disappeared; indicating parenting was the most important influence. And it was the authoritative style that produced best results in school hands down.

A balanced approach

Getting the balance right is tricky. Some kids will bring out a certain parenting style in us. For instance, fathers are usually far stricter on first born sons, while their youngest daughters frequently have them wrapped around their little fingers. Even hard men can go to mush when raising girls.

In two parent families parents will sometimes unconsciously adopt different styles to suit different situations. A mother may be a little softer on her son to compensate for a father’s excessive firmness or be firm when parenting her youngest daughter in response to her partner’s parenting style. That’s natural.

Working together

Someone in the family needs to be the bad guy and take the heat that can come from disciplining kids. It’s best to share the roles as its hard work if one parent is always the firm parent, while the other has all the fun.

Parents who work together as a team often swap roles. Or, at least, the fun parent knows when to be firm and take a stand against children’s poor behaviour.

Parenting solo

Sole parents have to be both the firm and fun parent, which is quite a challenge. It helps if sole parents can share the load with family and friends, particularly when kids push the parental boundaries. Working with others gives you strength as a parent.

Kids need to experience a mixture of fun and firmness. Fun builds relationships, makes parents feel good and certainly relieves stress. Firmness lets kids know where they stand and teaches them to become social and be safe. Parents also need to work out how they can best ensure they get the balance right in the best interests of their children.

Let me know how you work out the fun/firmness parenting dilemma. Go to www.facebook.com/michaelgroseparenting and leave a comment.

Want to know if your parenting style is suitable for raising today’s kids?

Take my FREE Which Parenting Style Are You? Parenting quiz at parentingideas.com.au and discover your parenting style. There are also some practical implementation ideas to help you adopt a parenting style suitable for your kids today.