

Bonus material 3.1. Parenting models and styles

Every parent is different and no two cultures are the same. Therefore, when you take two people from differing cultures and make them parents, their ideas, expectations, previous experiences, goals and styles may not align when it comes to the smaller issues. Certain cultures, in terms of both countries and individual families, may call for the parents to take on the roles traditionally expected of them, while others are more flexible and progressive.

Early on, it may help everyone concerned if you both think about which type of parent you would like to be, including what you want to achieve and avoid, and then tell your partner, so that they are aware of what you are thinking and can support you and your ideas. This way, you will quickly discover if you match up in terms of your ideas or if further discussion and fine tuning is needed. There is nothing wrong with the latter, because discovering differences can lead to fruitful dialogue, healthy compromises and new solutions that work better than your own individual ideas – if they were even thought of in the first place. As we will discuss later in this course, you are creating a unique 'Third Culture' for your family which is like no other. This means that there is no right or wrong way to do things, up to a certain point, but only the way that makes you both feel comfortable and able to raise your child in the best way possible.

What is important to you and why?

When you raise a child, you want them to be happy and grow into the very best human being they can be. In order to achieve this, a good starting point is thinking about what is important to you – for example, what do you hold dear, what do you believe in, who or what is crucial to your life and what kind of person are you? Once you have answered these questions, then you can start to form an idea of what kind of person you would like to raise. Having thought about it personally, speak to your partner in order to find out if they are on the same wavelength. In the majority of cases, you will find that you share exactly the same ideas and ethics but may vary on the smaller details. For example, one parent may place great emphasis on their child doing as much sport as possible, while the other may want to focus on academics or music. As always, this is not a bad thing as by combining the best of both worlds the child will be the winner. However, it is not a good idea to wait until the last minute to discover that your partner has different ideals, so try to unearth any issues as soon as possible. Indeed, many parents come to realise that when it comes to parenting, they tend to agree on most matters. Something worth pointing out at this juncture is that research from Väestöliitto has found that intercultural couples do not argue any more than their Finnish-Finnish counterparts when it comes to parenting.



Take the time to think about what is crucial to you on many different levels. For example, are you religious; how much emphasis do you place on academics; where do you stand on ethical issues; and how important are material goods to you? By sharing the answers with your partner, and your child, you will be able to mould an excellent set of values for your child which will allow both parents to work together to achieve them. In order to illicit these feelings, try thinking about different life situations that may occur in the future and discover what kind of reaction this prompts from within both you and your partner. This is an excellent way to work out how close you are in terms of reactions and the actions you may take.