

Harsh parenting can harm children

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our parents."

With her kids, Ms Hor said she sets clear boundaries and will withdraw privileges such as not allowing them to go for the next family outing if they misbehave. Conversely, she is generous with praise when they are obedient; and encouraging when they need assurance.

She feels that today's parents must focus on children's **self-esteem** and character development rather than just making sure they excel academically.

Polytechnic student Ernest Chin, 23, is another Singaporean who knows what **unyielding** parenting is like.

His father imposed strict curfews on him even when he was in junior college. He must be home by 5pm every day, and, if he was late without a valid reason, his dad would order him to get out of the house.

Every Sunday, when he was in primary and secondary school, his father would force him to wake up at 6am to go for a 5km jog. If he didn't get up, he would be caned, he said.

And his dad never tried to understand him or talk sense with

him, said Mr Chin, who is **estranged** from his father.

"He always said to me: 'When I say one it means one. You don't question my authority. I am the breadwinner of the family and it's for your own good,'" he said.

He added that the curfew rules also apply to his younger sister, 21, a pharmacist, who "stays home most of the time and doesn't have many friends".

He feels his father does not love him, and "treats me like a subordinate instead".

Dr Adrian Wang, a consultant psychiatrist at the Gleneagles Medical Centre, said harsh parenting can be harmful if the child already has low self-esteem. "Constant hammering and telling them they are not good enough can worsen anxiety and make them even more insecure," he said.

Strict parenting and having high standards for your child need to be balanced with love and nurturing, he said.

Mr Nicholas Gabriel Lim, executive director of psychological-services provider iGrow, said regimental parenting might lead to children either becoming very **submissive** or overly rebellious.

"There is a lot of hurt, resentment and anger within these children, and which they may or may not understand or express appropriately," he said.

Parenting is about preparing the children for the future, where they can be independent people and care for themselves, said Dr Carol Balhetchet, director of youth services at Singapore Children's Society.

But children taught to follow authority blindly will not be able to develop their own personality, ideas, and individual wishes and needs, she said.

"Most children want to please their parents and not upset them. So it's sad when parents abuse their position of power to bully their child into obedience," she noted.

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HELPEDESK 我的字典

Self-esteem: 自尊心 zì zūn xīn

Unyielding: 顽强的 wán qiáng de

Estranged: 失和 shī hé

Submissive: 唯命是从的 wéi mìng shì cóng de

MY PAPER POLLS 25 PARENTS

DO YOU AGREE WITH PROF AMY CHUA'S PARENTING METHODS?

All 25 disagreed. But they said instilling a sense of excellence and discipline is very important.

Mr Poh Yeang Cherng, 42, a coach and a parent of three kids, said: "There are many different approaches to parenting. It boils down to the child's personality, and the parent's approach should be tailored to the child."

DO YOU THINK HER APPROACH IS STILL PRACTICED?

Nine felt that there are parents here who are like her. Teacher Wincy Tsang, 30, said while Prof Chua has "mixed up excellence with perfection", she believes that a mother has to strive for excellence for her kid.

Hence, she thinks that Prof Chua's requirement that her daughters have three hours of piano practice daily and must score A is not that extreme.

DO YOU FEEL SUCH METHODS ARE RELEVANT TODAY?

Fourteen felt that such methods are outdated.



TIGRESS MUM: Professor Amy Chua has been vilified in the US. (PHOTO: AP)

Civil servant Haslindah Mispan, 51, who has four children aged between 16 and 26, said forcing the child to do something he or she does not want to do could "leave long-lasting, negative effects". Parents need to "enable the child to think and subsequently decide for himself or herself", she said.

POLL DONE BY ALEXIS CAI, GERRARD LAI AND SHAHIDA HASSIM

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