PARENTIFICATION and ADULTIFICATION

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Presentation:

What is Parentification?

A role reversal form of adultification were a child is burdened with being a confidant to regulate the emotional needs of an unstable parent. Typically the child is introduced to situations and information that adolescents and children are ill-equipped to process. The child may also be thrust into the role of caregiver to the parent and or siblings.

Parentification is the phenomenon where children take caregiving responsibilities and assume such a role for their parents, siblings or other family members, at the expense of their own developmental needs.
Parentification refers to the process through which children are assigned the role of an adult, taking on both emotional and functional responsibilities that typically are performed by the parent.

The parent, in turn, takes the dependent position of the child in the parent-child relationship.

Parentification occurs when children provide caregiving for family members that typically exceeds their capacity and developmental stage.

Parentification roles and responsibilities are often linked with deleterious outcomes, including robbing children of age-appropriate opportunities, activities, and support.

Research has demonstrated that parentification can potentially lead to insecure attachment.
Parentified children often do not gain the opportunity to understand who they truly are. Some learn that they are not fully capable of managing the responsibilities forced upon them, and they may begin to feel that they will never be good enough.

These childhood feelings often lead to adult feelings of anger, anxiety, poor self-esteem, and feeling an overall sense of mistrust in peer and romantic relationships.

Parentified children also often continue the role of caretaker into adulthood. This includes over-functioning, perfectionism, and catering to the needs of others in their life, while often disregarding their own.

Since they experience this throughout most of their lives, parentified children may see these feelings as personality traits and since they were unable to form a sense of identify, they may feel as if it’s “just who they are”.

Healing from the negative impacts of parentification is possible!

## 10 Toxic Ways How Parents Damage Their Children’s Lives Without Realising It

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviour</th>
<th>Consequences on the child</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Rely on their children as emotional support</td>
<td>▪ Become caretakers and suppress their own needs – causing depression.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Justify their bad behavior at the expense of their children</td>
<td>▪ Internalise blame and feel depressed or anxious.</td>
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<td>5. Make their children feel guilty regularly</td>
<td>▪ Seek for an unhealthy amount of external approval as an adult.</td>
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<td>6. Lack of boundaries</td>
<td>▪ Difficulties recognising boundaries in relationships as adults.</td>
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<td>7. Providing the silent treatment after a argument (passive aggression)</td>
<td>▪ Copy this behavior as adults, and develop toxic relationships.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Urge children to suppress their emotions (especially negative ones)</td>
<td>▪ Become prone to depression and an inability to deal with negative situations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Being selfish and want to dominate in every situation</td>
<td>▪ They prioritise their needs and feelings.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Have unrealistically high expectations</td>
<td>▪ Grow into people who believe they are always disappointing their parents. Become perfectionist.</td>
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**Adultification** is a form of role corruption characterised by a parent’s enlistment of a child in a peer- or partner-like role. As distinct from (but not mutually incompatible with) parentification, the adultified child becomes the parent’s friend, confidante and ally.

Together, this enmeshed dyad functions in a more mutual and reciprocal manner than the parentified pair.

Parentified children often suffer from:
- Shame.
- Depression.
- Social isolation.
- Excessive guilt.
- Suicidal thoughts.
- Unrelenting worry and anxiety.
- Other internalizing symptoms (e.g. psychosomatic problems).

Parentification during a youngster's formative years is often the prologue to an adult life characterised by interpersonal distrust, and inability to function independently, and perpetuating the cycle of a tendency to misuse parental authority.


The Devastating Damage of Parentification Follows Into Adulthood

*This is how the drama unfolds*....

It doesn’t matter how much children gives, it can never enough to their parents. So, sadly, they feel they have failed.

They feel they were never enough. They believe this because they never received the true love and attunement they truly deserved.

As the child becomes an adult she no longer can discern her true self. It was oppressed under the weight of parentification.

Her core identity has been suppressed by the demands of her needy parent(s).

She cannot pin-point her feelings or emotions. She cannot ask for what she needs. She does not know what her own needs are. She is incapable of saying no. She has no boundaries. She spends her life tirelessly helping others, taking on the emotional load of those that are happy to take more than they will give.

She often ends up in emotionally neglectful or abusive relationships or marriage.

*The child learns that she must grow up too fast, change her true self, shape-shift in order to be deserving of love and praise.*
The Parentified Child
When a Child Has to Act Like an Adult

Some children don’t get much of a childhood. When children have to act like adults – taking responsibility for their siblings, parents, and running a household – there are lasting effects.
When Does Parentification Occur?

The effects on self-worth are far-reaching because the child unconsciously comes to discover that her/his natural way of being does not rouse the safety, validation and love that she/he needs.

Often it occurs as result of:
- Parents’ separation/divorce.
- Death of a sibling or parent.
- Parental disability or chronic illness
- Family unpredictability and instability.
- Abusive relationship between parents.
- Parental alcoholism or drug addiction.
- Parents or siblings with a mental illness.
- Siblings with a disability or chronic disease.
Common Traits of Children of Alcoholics

- Isolation
- Approval-seeking
- Low self-esteem
- Fear of abandonment
- Victim perspective
- Fear of authority
Something to Be Aware of and Consider – Especially if you are an older sibling!

In some circumstances, such as caring for a sibling vs. caring for a parent, parentification may engender feelings of self-efficacy, competence, and other positive outcomes.

HOW TO RECOGNISE PARENTIFICATION

- You were pulled into adult arguments
- You were used by a parent as a substitute for their partner
- You grew up feeling responsible
- You grew up caring for younger siblings
- You don't remember having time to be a child
- You feel as though part of your childhood is missing
- As a child you felt the world on your shoulders
- As a child you felt socially isolated
- As a child you experienced depression, anxiety, over working, overwhelmed by life
- As a child you felt guilt and shame
## Types of Parentification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotional Parentification</th>
<th>Logistical Parentification</th>
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<tr>
<td>the child's emotional and psychological needs are not satisfied, poorly recognized, or ignored</td>
<td>the child attempts to meet the physical needs of the caregiver or family</td>
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<tr>
<td>• intervening in marital conflict or conflict between caregivers</td>
<td>• cooking, cleaning, grocery shopping, paying bills, getting siblings ready for school, etc.</td>
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<td>• managing a caregiver’s emotions or serving as their therapist/confidant</td>
<td>• not the same as assigning chores</td>
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<td>• becoming a surrogate spouse or significant other for a caregiver</td>
<td>• activities are not age appropriate and the child may struggle to complete them</td>
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<tr>
<td>• taking responsibility for a caregiver's feelings</td>
<td>• doing these activities leaves the child with little or no time to engage in normal childhood play, school, sleep, etc.</td>
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<td>• serving as a scapegoat to keep peace in the family</td>
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IT IS NOT A CHILD’S JOB TO:

- Mediate the arguments of adults
- Make sure the rent and bills are paid
- Keep themselves safe from adults
- Ensure the care of parents + siblings
- Do the majority of the housework
- Be an emotional support for their parent
# Emotionally Immature Parents

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<tr>
<th>Emotionally Immature</th>
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<td>Find boundaries selfish</td>
<td>Boundaries are healthy</td>
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<td>Have to be centre stage</td>
<td>Can share the space</td>
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<td>Difficulty with self-reflection</td>
<td>Active self-reflection</td>
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<td>Reactive and rigid</td>
<td>Respond rather than react</td>
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<tr>
<td>Like co-dependent relationships</td>
<td>Like interdependent relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td>Can’t cope with differences of opinion</td>
<td>Find differences natural and interesting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low stress tolerance</td>
<td>Self-regulated during stress</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seek external validation – love addiction, owning things, business success etc</td>
<td>Find internal validation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How Emotionally Immature Parents Have A Lasting Effect In A Child's Adult Life
The Four Types of Emotionally Immature Parents

1. The Driven Parent
   - Appears most normal.
   - Unhealthily concerned with child’s success.
   - Know-it-alls.
   - Goals > feelings.
   - Proud of independence they possess because of their immature parents.
   - Can appear very emotionally insensitive.

2. The Emotional Parent
   - Very obviously infantile.
   - Ticking time-bomb.
   - At worst, appear mentally ill and feelings can escalate quickly to violence.
   - In milder cases, severe mood swings.
   - Low tolerance for stress or emotional triggers.
   - See world in black and white.

3. The Passive Parent
   - Most likely a partner of a more aggressive personality type.
   - Only emotionally available to a degree.
   - Appear easy-going and playful.
   - Can show empathy for children conditionally.
   - Will turn a blind eye to harmful situations regarding their children.

4. The Rejecting Parent
   - Prefer being alone.
   - Children learn to avoid approaching them if possible.
   - “If pushed for a response, they may become angry or even abusive.” (pg 78)
   - Rule the home.
   - Least empathetic of all four types.

www.thegiftedfly.com // Book review of Adult Children of Emotionally Immature Parents by Lindsay C. Gibson
10 Common Traits Of Toxic Parents

1. They make children feel they are never 'good enough'.
2. They pit their children against each other.
3. They assign roles to their children like 'scapegoat' & 'golden child'.
4. They act differently around people outside of the home.
5. They make their children 'parent' the parent.

6. They have no healthy emotional/physical boundaries.
7. They have no genuine interest in their children's needs or wellbeing.
8. Their children's accomplishments are used to impress others and stroke the parent's ego only.
9. They mock, belittle, get angry - when a child tries to stand up for themselves.
10. They create a toxic environment where the children walk on eggshells around the parent.
5 Side Effects of Toxic Parenting

- You have a higher risk of developing an anxiety.
- You may suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).
- You may be highly self-critical and blame yourself for everything.
- It's all my fault!
- You're more likely to experience health problems.
- You may develop an insecure attachment that affects your relationships.

Psych2Go

https://psych2go.net/5-side-effects-of-toxic-parenting/
7 “Innocent” Things Parents Say to Their Children That Can Emotionally Scar Them

1. Comparing your child to others
2. Denying your child's feelings
3. Gaslighting or lying to your kids
4. Loving them conditionally
5. Questioning their abilities
6. Labelling them with their mental abilities and/or physical features
7. Making them feel like they owe you something
I threw you a birthday party, bought you a new toy car and still you want to go outside.
10 Years Later

vs.

After being abused

- PTSD
- Anxiety
- Sad
- Depressed

After being raised by loving parents

- Confident
- Friendly
- Happy
- Outgoing
BREAKING THE CYCLE OF PARENTIFICATION

- Learning that everyone’s wellbeing is NOT your responsibility
- Resigning from being the family peacekeeper
- Reconnecting with your inner child
- Reconnecting with playfulness and fun
- Learning to accept support
- Boundaries with work
- Boundaries with others
- Increasing your self-care

Ensuring YOUR children have the space to be children - break the cycle.
Healing from parentification

In our need to heal and recover from recurrent depression and anxiety that was rooted in our childhood neglect.
References


Resources – Videos

7 Signs Your Parents Are Emotionally Immature
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XFQmHM0ZNdM

Parentification (7 Signs of Parentification, and its Long Term Impact)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NQjnqYpM_Ag

What is PARENTIFICATION? What does PARENTIFICATION mean? PARENTIFICATION meaning & explanation
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2KMmD_jFpSU

Your Parents Are Emotionally Immature
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4uDLqL3zxr4

Adult Children Of Emotionally Immature Parents Book Summary
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fbim235Ssf0

10 Signs You are Emotionally Immature | Is Emotional Immaturity a Mental Disorder?
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gvZJXenaK5Y

Podcast ***(Highly recommended)***

043 What Is An Emotionally Immature Parent & How To Identify a Healthy Relationship with Lindsay...
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vcF9KeJ6ifo
Adult Children of Emotionally Immature Parents: How to Heal from Distant, Rejecting, or Self-Involved Parents Paperback – June 1, 2015

by Lindsay C. Gibson (Author)

5 stars ⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐ 5,212 ratings

#1 Best Seller in Parent & Adult Child Relationships

https://www.amazon.com/Adult-Children-Emotionally-Immature-Parents/dp/1626251703

Get Your Free Audiobook

Recovering from Emotionally Immature Parents
Practical Tools to Establish Boundaries and Reclaim Your Emotional Autonomy

By: Lindsay C. Gibson PsyD
Narrated by: Saile Athens
Length: 7 hrs and 16 mins
Categories: Health & Wellbeing, Psychology & Mental Health

Non-member price: $16.54

Free with 30-day trial

After 30 days, Audible is $16.48/mo. Cancel anytime.

Self-Care for Adult Children of Emotionally Immature Parents: Honor Your Emotions, Nurture Your Self, and Live with Confidence Paperback – September 1, 2021
by Lindsay C. Gibson PsyD (Author)

https://www.amazon.com/Self-Care-Children-Emotionally-Immature-Parents/dp/1684039827

Get Your Free Audiobook

Adult Children of Emotionally Immature Parents
How to Heal from Distant, Rejecting, or Self-Involved Parents

By: Lindsay C. Gibson PsyD
Narrated by: Marguerite Gauth
Length: 6 hrs and 56 mins
Categories: Health & Wellness, Psychology & Mental Health

Dealing with Emotionally Immature Parents: How to Handle Toxic Parents

Unabridged

Priscilla Posey (Author, Publisher), Robin Howatt Shrock (Narrator)

⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐ 21 ratings

More Resources – Videos

What is Enmeshment and Are You Enmeshed?
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z2QcH8Mb6HM

Enmeshment--The Problem of Too Much Togetherness
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fRw0C35Ahao

Mission Impossible: The Parentified Child
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jvxSddeM8Vw

Building Up Your Ability to Go Without Love or Approval
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aCyHlgb-o2Y

Getting Your Painful Childhood Out of You
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jkw9Uqz85_k
Unhealed trauma can look like:

- Low sense of self-worth
- Codependency in relationships
- Fear of being abandoned
- Putting your needs aside for other people
- craving for external validation
- An innate feeling of shame
- Not being able to tolerate conflict
- Always fearing what might happen next
- Resisting positive change
- Tolerating abusive behaviors from others
- Difficulty standing up for yourself and asserting boundaries
- Being overtly agreeable
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