

# How to Build Family and Parenting Models?

(guide for future and novice spouses and parents)

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## Disclaimer

THE AUTHOR OF THIS DOCUMENT IS NEITHER PROFESSIONAL MEDICAL WORKER, NOR PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGIST, NOR PROFESSIONAL ANTHROPOLOGIST, NOR PROFESSIONAL PEDAGOGUE, NOR PROFESSIONAL LAWYER, NOR PRACTICING PARENT.

ALL PUBLISHED MATERIAL IS BASED ON AUTHOR'S MEMORIES FROM HIS OWN CHILDHOOD, READING 20+ BOOKS AND SEVERAL HUNDREDS ARTICLES ON THE TOPIC OF PARENTING (IN THE RANGE FROM POPULAR LITERATURE UP TO SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH), AND OBSERVATIONS MADE IN TRAVELS OVER 30+ COUNTRIES AROUND THE WORLD.

THE PERSONAL LIFE OF THE AUTHOR IS RIDICULOUS DUE TO MANY CIRCUMSTANCES. SO, YOU SHOULD NOT READ THIS DOCUMENT TOO SERIOUSLY.

## Introduction

My childhood passed in 1980's and 1990's in Kazan city, in Tatarstan region of Russia. I grew up in a mixed family:

- officially (by documents), it consisted just of Ashkenazi Jews (25%) and Tatars (75%);

- visually, Finno-Ugric origin was clearly seen in many relatives (as usually, in Tatars);
- all parents and grandparents grew up and lived in Tatarstan region of Russia, Moscow city in Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan, as a result of multiple turmoils of 20<sup>th</sup> century;
- in family talks, some ancestors coming in 19<sup>th</sup> century from Egypt and Southern parts of Central Asia were mentioned by father, although I don't remember his talks exactly, and me or he could mistake;
- the first results of genetic testing made when I became adult revealed the map of ancestors for the latest 500 years from Mediterranean sea up to Mongolia, and from North-Western Europe up to Middle East; regular updates on genetic testing service upon improvement of its technology show genetic micro-admixtures from super-exotic places like North America (Native Americans), Vietnam, China, Sicily, and even Sudan and Ethiopia; but all this list is changing regularly, on each update; so, checking new updates is more like fun for me now;
- the most important result of genetic testing was that my origin turned from being “officially, 75% Asian” into “factually, 92% European” which much more correlated with my relationships with females.

In terms of culture, it may be said that the following cultural family and parenting models were used by my parents and grandparents: Ashkenazi Jewish model and general Central Asian model, as main elements, with minimal admixtures of general Russian/Soviet model and general Islamic model; Russian language was the main one used in family, although some quiet xenophobic attitudes towards Russian/Soviet culture were present (yes, the life is complex!).

It was the period of USSR collapse and expansion of Western cultures into Soviet and later Russian mass media. So, I had a chance to extract from classic and mass movies/literature the models of Mediterranean family, Protestant family, and modern US family (“modern” for 1980's and 1990's), with integrating them into my vision of family life successfully. At the same time, a lot of popular science TV programs and popular science books depicted traditional aboriginal families from different parts of the world, and these models were integrated into my vision of family life too.

That's why by the time when I started thinking about marriage and raising kids seriously, and also started travelling around the world actively, I came to the question: **how to summarize my understanding of successful family life into some *single reasonable scientific* model** that will be compatible with my past, with my current living environment, with possible changes in demographics policies around the world, and with all risks that children and parents suffer in the modern society?

The main answers to this question have been found in two books listed further; so, I decided to simplify the work for you, and extracted the most important ideas in readable format.

## Inspirational literature and discussions

- "The Anthropology of Childhood: Cherubs, Chattel, Changelings", 2<sup>nd</sup> edition by David F. Lancy;
- "Families Across Cultures: A 30-Nation Psychological Study" by James Georgas, John W. Berry, et al;
- the following question on ResearchGate has been written by me, but I have not access to ResearchGate, so I asked one random lady whom I found online to post it (and, as you can see, "the effect of girl on forum" worked completely, I received some important information from several professional researchers):  
[https://www.researchgate.net/post/Can\\_the\\_following\\_particularities\\_of\\_parenting\\_be\\_considered\\_as\\_a\\_comprehensive\\_list\\_of\\_components\\_for\\_building\\_personal\\_parenting\\_style](https://www.researchgate.net/post/Can_the_following_particularities_of_parenting_be_considered_as_a_comprehensive_list_of_components_for_building_personal_parenting_style)

## Clarifications

The terms *family model* and *parenting model* used in this document describe full set of interactions between all family members that may be presented either in quantitative or in qualitative format and either measured in strict numerical values (number of objects, amount of expenses etc) or described in categorical terms (like "very high, high, average, low, very low, none" or "in according to rules of Betsimisaraka culture", for example), which have clear meaning for local population in your region and circle of communication.

For each of the models, the list of questions describing the interactions is given further. So, if you want to build your own models, you should just provide some numeric or categoric value in the response to each question. It is supposed, that both lists of questions are either exhaustive or almost exhaustive, and can be used as solid basis for your family life, if the models obtained by you from your parents are either too bad or inapplicable to the modern world and your lifestyle. Please, note that only material applicable to countries of the modern 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> worlds has been included into this guide. Items taken from my personal experience or unknown/forgotten sources are marked with blue color. Present and future tenses are used in the questions with an assumption that you are either in the very beginning or in the middle of your family life marathon.

It should be mentioned that in many WEIRD countries the responses to some questions listed further must have fixed value in according to local laws and cultures; "manipulating" with values in these items may cause losing your children completely and/or getting imprisoned. (WEIRD is acronym for "Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic".)

The books listed above have been read by me much time ago, and this document is written with using my old short notes as a first draft. So, it is recommended to perform deeper research by yourself, if your interest and intentions are serious.

I understand that for many people, family building and parenting processes are strictly emotional and financial experience; but if you prefer to sort out, categorize, and quantify everything that you see around yourself, then my short guide may be very helpful for you.

After you will respond all questions, it is good idea to sort your responses (and parts of responses, if some responses contain multiple items) in according to your personal vision of importance of each question/response. Mixing responses from both questionnaires in this new sorting order is completely fine. Such sorting will give to yourself and to your partner the better understanding of your vision of family life.

## Building family model

Items marked with **blue color** in this section are mainly based on my personal dating experience with females from several tens countries and cultures; so, they are not theoretical constructs but classified data from “field research”.

1. What is your ideal ratio between family as biological necessity and family as social and intellectual construct implemented to conform social rules?
2. What is your ideal ratio between elements of nuclear family and elements of extended family?
3. If you plan to build nuclear family (at least partially), then what of the following cultural basements will be used by you: Northern European nuclear family, post-modern family living in society with high mobility, family of hunters-gatherers societies? **The last case looks absurd at the first sight, but considering popularity of outdoors lifestyle in the modern world, elements of hunters-gatherers society may be implanted even into modern urban family lifestyle easily, if this family spends every weekend for hiking in nature.**
4. If you plan to build extended family (at least partially), then what cultural basements will be used by you? (For example, “modern provincial Turkish family”, “Haredi family” etc. In this case, the choice is much more rich than in the previous one, as you can guess.)
5. If you plan to use elements of extended family (at least partially) then what elements you will use and in what amount? Elements may vary from financial/professional networking up to cohabiting. Numerically, all may be expressed in amount of communication between relatives per month, for example.
6. What is your ideal ratio between relatedness and autonomy in family relationships? It may be expressed as in numeric values as in exact details of lifestyle.
7. What is is your ideal ratio between monogamy, polygamy, and promiscuity in family relationships? It is obvious, that in many WEIRD countries only monogamy is practiced officially, but unofficially you may meet there all family structures.
8. What is your ideal ratio of household responsibilities between yourself, your partner, and other family members?
9. **What is your acceptance level of cohabiting without romantic feeling and even without friendly relationships? It is supposed that it is obvious that romantic feeling will become less**

- intensive over many years, even if it was present in the beginning; so, we describe here just one border case.
10. What is your acceptance level of formalizing relationships in marriage contract? It is supposed that other methods of formalizing marriage, like cohabiting without registration of marriage, official registration of marriage, and religious registration of marriage are standard widely used practices that do not affect much in subsequent relationships; so, we describe here just one border case that really affects all.
  11. What are accepted level and format of aggression in sexual relationships? Possible formats of aggression: physical, verbal, psychological, playful, visual, and maybe, some others. The term *aggression* is used in its scientific meaning; so, in its minimal amount, it may describe just habitually unidirectional initiation of mutually desired sexual contacts.
  12. Who is dominating partner in sexual relationships involving aggression?
  13. What are your ideal amount and format of play in sexual relationships? Probably, possible formats of play are too numerous to list them here.
  14. What are family building prerequisites that you consider as obligatory for your potential partner?
  15. What are family building prerequisites that you consider as obligatory for yourself?
  16. What is acceptable level of involvement of state and society in your family life?
  17. Will you give your children for adoption upon the appropriate decision made of state/society? (It is just the most important border case for the previous question.)
  18. What are your sexual taboos or strictly undesired sexual practices?
  19. What are your preferred amount and intensity of sexual contacts per day/week/month?
  20. What are your preferred methods of contraception and birth control?
  21. What is your acceptance level of abortion as a method of birth control?
  22. What are your preferred methods and behaviour styles for protecting yourself against HIV and other STDs?
  23. Who is head of the family in communication between family and society, and who is head of the family in communication within family? Partially, this question intersects with the questions about household responsibilities and aggression in sexual relationships, but it makes the description of family relationships more clear.
  24. What ethnocultural and social groups you and your family members (including your children) identify yourself with?
  25. What ethnocultural and social groups you and your family members (including your children) try to match, even if you don't identify yourself with them?

26. What ethnocultural and social groups you and your family members (including your children) try to distance from?

27. Do you or your family members have some genetic and/or other medical issues that affect deeply the life of your family?

## Building parenting model

This questionnaire is based on differences between modern and traditional cultures. Speaking, shortly, after responding all questions, you will have clear vision of your parenting model in the format of approximate numeric ratio like “25% modern, 35% traditional, and 40% mixed”, for example, which is completely enough for personal use, and will allow you to make more conscious practical steps further. However, you should note that if you sorted your responses by importance in such way that, for example, all traditional elements are considered as more important, then the aforementioned numeric ratio will not reflect the real level of traditionality of your family.

1. What is your ideal ratio of value between parenthood and every of the following activities: romantic relationships, family relationships, professional activities, entertaining activities, social activities?
2. What are obligatory prerequisites for comfortable and successful parenthood? (Activities, objects, social and natural environment etc.)
3. What is priority of child's wellbeing in relation to priority of wellbeing of other family members?
4. What are emotional and social values that you assign to newborn?
5. What are emotional and social values that you assign to severely defective newborn?
6. Do you assign equal value to newborns of all genders? If not, then what is the difference in value?
7. What is age of child when you consider her/him as thinking human?
8. What is amount of protection against adult world that you will provide for your child?
9. What is real and expected fertility in your family (and families of your relatives, if some elements of extended family are used)?
10. What is amount of home environment created in your house/apartment especially for using by your child?
11. What is age when mother will stop nurturing child actively and will push her/him to be cared by other family members primarily (or mainly)?
12. What is age when you will start intentional intellectual stimulation of child?
13. What is amount of child's participation in household duties?
14. What is amount of child's participation in caring of younger siblings?

15. What is amount of childcare (including pregnancy and birth) performed by grandparents and other relatives, and what is expected quality of this childcare?
16. What is amount of father's involvement in childcare (including pregnancy and birth) and expected quality of this childcare?
17. What is reasonable intensity of toddler rejection?
18. What is amount of usage of services of professional child caretakers?
19. What is amount of reliance on scientific materials in the process of parenting in comparison to all other possible sources of information? I'm not sure how scientific the following list of the alternative sources looks, but probably, it may include relatives, friends, mass media, mass informational literature, fiction literary and cinematographic materials, memories from own childhood, informal research of child's behavior and parenting practices performed by yourself.
20. What is ideal ratio in passing knowledge and cultural values between formal schooling and observation/imitation?
21. What is amount of efforts applied to intentional socializing of child through conversations?
22. What is amount of adult interfering with child's autonomy?
23. What is amount and quality of toys purchased for child?
24. What is amount of adult interfering and guidance in child's play?
25. What is level of tolerating aggressive behavior in child?
26. What is level of strictness of gender roles applied to child?
27. What is amount of value given to child's play?
28. What is level of acceptance of child's solitary play (the play performed without other children)?
29. What is balance level for child between being recipient of care and being active part of the family/community?
30. What is expected length of adolescent period?
31. What are expectations of presence/intensity of conflict between adolescent and parent?
32. What are expected "typical" and "non-typical" adolescent problems, and what are acceptable methods for resolving them?
33. What are amount, topics, and quality of teaching provided by parents to child?
34. What is level of interpreting "happiness" as a normal condition for child?
35. What is balance level for child between "learning by doing" and "learning by listening lectures"? Probably, "learning by reading/watching" may be added into the list, but I'm not sure how scientific this addition will be; checking with professional researchers is desired.

36. What is level of acceptance of physical punishments?
37. What is level of acceptance of psychological punishments?
38. What is level of acceptance of economical punishments?
39. What are expectations for child to conform “good manners” rules and community rules?
40. What is the model of future family life and sexual life of your child? See “Building family model” section to understand how to construct the model. In other words, you should respond the same questions separately for yourself, your spouse, and every of your children.
41. What is amount of adult interfering and guidance in child's social life and sexual life?
42. What are acceptable age and format of starting sexual life by your child? Possible formats may be described shortly with general environment/circumstances where it should happen and general scenario of the process.
43. What are acceptable age and format of starting professional and business activities by your child?
44. What is ideal sleeping environment for little child? Probably, the term *little* may include children up to 5-7 years old. As I know, separated sleeping environment is given much larger attention in US than in other parts of the world. At the same time, considering small sizes of houses/apartments in many developing countries, even sleeping in separate room may be difficult to be categorized as “separated”.
45. What is ideal ratio between real world and fantasy in child’s make-believe play?
46. What are parenting strategies that you will follow, if reality in your parenting process will differ from expectations?
47. What is amount of magic and/or religious procedures that you will use for curing your sick child, in addition to scientifically proved medical procedures? Magic and religious procedures are considered here just as addition to scientifically proved medical procedures, because it is de facto standard even for the countries of 2<sup>nd</sup> world, and all questions are provided for the countries of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> worlds only.
48. What are your familiarity and trust levels to so-called “medical fashion” in curing your sick child? The term “*medical fashion*” describes some popular medical practices that are rather recent, no more than 5-15 years old, have weak scientific basement, but may be promoted too widely either due to business/political reasons, or because they provide easily tracked positive effect without resolving real reasons of medical problems.
49. What is your acceptance level of adopting biologically unrelated child?
50. What is your acceptance level of having at home such additional risk factors as firearm and large (or potentially dangerous) domesticated animals? I understand that this question is not directly related to parent-child communication, but in US and on periphery of 2<sup>nd</sup> world these factors may be widespread or even considered as a norm by local population, and



that's why they should be reviewed here too, because they may easily become important parts of the parenting process.

51. What levels of ethnocultural and social segregation in local community are considered by you as ideal for raising your child?

52. How childcare responsibilities will be redistributed between family members in case of divorce and/or long-term relocation of some of family members?

## **How to convert this document into scientific guide: notes for professional researchers**

Obviously, it is possible to raise quality of this guide up to scientific level because it may be extremely helpful for anthropologists, medical professionals, and family counselors. Here is the list of actions you should do, if you want to work in this direction.

- Re-read referenced literature and include into this guide some details that could be skipped by me either accidentally or because they were obvious for me even earlier.
- Extend questionnaire to cover all life aspects of 3<sup>rd</sup> world countries, including communities of hunters-gatherers just recently contacted with civilization.
- Re-formulate questions to meet some scientific standards for questionnaires.
- Perform deeper research in sexological literature, because sexological topics were not explored deeply in the referenced literature, and have been added here basing on my personal experience mainly.
- The questions #9, #10, and #17 in family model questionnaire were formulated by me with a purpose to describe border cases of different situations, because from my point of view some parts of relationships are highlighted much better if we concentrate at border cases, but not on standard situations. I'm not sure how this "border cases approach" is applicable.
- All questions marked with blue color should be validated with use of professional literature.
- After that, cross-nation and cross-culture studies are desired to validate questionnaire with expectations of ordinary people and practicing family counselors. I'm almost sure that some minor additions will be made by all these people.

## **Possible usage of this guide in official high school curriculum**

Simplicity and brevity of this guide may be extremely beneficial for using it (after completion) in official high school curriculum in the course of family relationships and sexual education.

Obviously, it should be clarified to the level of typical teenage audience with giving for every question officially recommended response and responses acceptable in local cultures.