**Kia ora tatou from the Counsellors.**

In our role as counsellors we are sometimes asked for suggestions in bringing up teenagers, particularly when boundaries and rules are challenged as young people grow towards greater independence. With this in mind we thought it might interest to you to read some of the research into parenting styles.

An approach to parenting which is linked with the most successful child outcomes is an authoritative parenting style. The following website is well worth a browse for more in depth research into this approach and its outcomes. <http://www.parentingscience.com/authoritative-parenting-style.html>. Briefly though, here is a summary of this approach.

**The authoritative parenting style is about setting limits, reasoning with kids, and being responsive to their emotional needs.**

**Setting limits**: Authoritative parents take a firm stand, expecting their kids to behave responsibly. An example of this might be an agreed time for a teen to return home from being out with friends,

**Reasoning with children**: When kids make mistakes or misbehave, parents attempt to reason with their children. They emphasize the reasons for rules. Authoritative parents encourage a verbal give-and-take, and explain the consequences of good and bad behaviour. In the example above, the reasons for the set time for return home are fully discussed (eg. safety, need for family or homework commitments). Consequences of not meeting the curfew are also discussed before the teen goes out and are stuck to if they return late.

**Being responsive to their emotional needs**: Authoritative parents show high levels of warmth and connection. As children reach their teens it can be a challenge for parents to find ways to connect with them. Sometimes, previously chatty kids can become withdrawn and non-communicative. A lovely resource for creating opportunities for talk in a fun and non-confronting way can be found at <http://momastery.com/blog/2015/04/24/key-jar/>. The Key Jar, as the name suggests, offers keys, by way of conversation starters, to open doors for talk around a whole range of topics, some light-hearted, some more serious, and all providing opportunity for connection with our kids. Great for meal times! (Thanks to Natasha Sarich-Dunn for sharing this resource.)

Kids raised by authoritative parents are more likely to become independent, self-reliant, socially accepted, academically successful, and well-behaved. They are less likely to report depression and anxiety, and less likely to engage in antisocial behaviour like delinquency and drug use. Some food for thought perhaps, as we grow our gorgeous children into good young men and women.

Na mihi nui kia koe, Nancy Macmillan and Neil Carter.