

# How Parental Support Affects Children's Well-Being and Pursue of College Education

Niemiec, Lynch, Vansteenkiste, Bernstein, Deci, and Ryan (2006) conducted two studies to investigate the relations among [perceived need support](#) from parents, their adolescents' [autonomous](#) self-regulation for academics, and the adolescents' well-being.



These are their findings:

## Study 1

- Perceived need support from parents independently predicted adolescents' well-being.
- Although the relation was stronger for mothers than for fathers, the unique relations for each parent, provided strong support for the association of need support from each parent with their adolescents' well-being.
  - This means that adolescents who perceive their parents to provide more need support for autonomy and [relatedness](#) tend to experience less depressive symptoms, greater positive affect (e.g. interested) than negative affect (e.g. ashamed), experienced greater vitality (e.g. I feel energised), are more satisfied with their present life and are less likely to be engaged in deviant behaviour such as smoking.

## Study 2

- Adolescents who perceive their parents as providing more need support are likely to experience greater psychological health.
- Need support from parents was a significant predictor of their adolescents' autonomous self-regulation for continuing their education.
- Autonomous self-regulation for planning to attend college was a significant partial mediator of the relation of adolescents' perceived need support to well-being.
  - This means that adolescents who perceive their parents to be more supportive to their needs for autonomy and relatedness would be more likely to pursue college education for autonomous reasons such as [identified regulation](#) (e.g., because it is personally valuable), and [intrinsic](#) reasons (e.g., because I like to study). This in turn supported adolescent's well-being.

- On the other hand, adolescents who perceive their parents as providing less support to their needs for autonomy and relatedness would be more likely to pursue college for less autonomous reasons such as [external regulation](#) (e.g. because others expect me to do so), and [introjected](#) regulation (e.g., because I would feel ashamed if I didn't do so). This in turn does not support adolescent's well-being.
- However, this relationship is only partial as the autonomous self-regulation measured was specific to the academic domain (i.e. pursuing college education) whereas, parents need support and adolescent's well-being are general, cross-domain variables.

In conclusion, perceived need support from both mothers and fathers play an important role in developing adolescents' autonomous self-regulation to pursue college education and their psychological well-being.

Hence, it would be advisable to:

Provide support to adolescents' need for autonomy and relatedness so as to develop their autonomous self-regulation to attend college and enhance their well-being. For example,

- Understand how adolescents feel about things (relatedness).
- Let them know that they can count on you to help them out, if they have some kind of problem (relatedness).
- Allow adolescents to decide things for themselves (autonomy).
- Make them feel special (relatedness).

**Key definitions:**

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<b>Autonomy</b>	The degree of volition one feels in pursuing the activity and the need to feel congruence between an activity and one's values (Deci & Ryan, 2000).
<b>External Regulation</b>	Doing an activity because of external pressures or incentives (Ryan & Deci, 2002).
<b>Identified regulation</b>	Involves identifying with the personal value of an activity so that the person can regulate the behaviour more willingly or volitionally (e.g. planning to attend college because of its personal relevance) (Niemi et al., 2006).
<b>Intrinsic goal</b>	Goals with strongly salient intrinsic content (e.g., relationships, growth, community, and health).
<b>Introjected regulation</b>	Involves taking in a contingency or value or regulation but not accepting them as their own (e.g. planning to attend college to avoid feelings of guilt). Controlled motivation accompanied by feelings of inner compulsion, based on self-esteem being contingent upon approval and worth that had previously been applied by others (Niemi et al., 2006; Roth, Assor, Niemi, Ryan, & Deci, 2009).
<b>Perceived need support</b>	Perception of support of the three innate needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. For a high level of intrinsic motivation people must experience satisfaction of these needs. (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Sheldon, Elliot, Kim, & Kasser, 2001).
<b>Relatedness</b>	The desire to feel connected to significant others (Deci & Ryan, 2000). E.g., "I get along with people at work"

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