

Impact of parents on the well-being of young people greater than expected

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According to a recent study, parental support for the autonomy of young people promotes the well-being of the latter in all major educational transitions: from primary to lower secondary school, from basic education to upper secondary school, and from upper secondary school to university. Professor Katariina Salmela-Aro points out that autonomy support provided by mothers and fathers prevented depression during all three transitions and increased the self-esteem of youths in the final two transitions. The study was performed with funding from the Academy of Finland.

The relevance of the result increased with the age of the young person in question. "In the past, it was thought that parents only play an important role during childhood, but this research demonstrates their importance during adolescence and even young adulthood," says Salmela-Aro.

For a long period, the importance of self-regulation only was highlighted with regard to well-being and success in life. However, the new results indicate that people have a strong interactive and regulative effect on each other's well-being. Parenting affects youngsters' well-being, but the well-being of [young people](#) also affects that of their parents. Young people play a greater role in affecting [parental support](#) than previously thought. When a [young person](#)'s performance declines, parents provide less support for their autonomy.

"However, from the perspective of young peoples' well-being, it would be important for parents to provide more support in such cases, because

autonomy support has been shown to reduce depression," says Salmela-Aro. Corresponding studies have generally been performed as cross-sectional research. The study included around 2,000 Finnish young people whose educational paths and well-being were investigated by the researchers during all educational transitions.

More information: Jasper J. Duineveld et al, The link between perceived maternal and paternal autonomy support and adolescent well-being across three major educational transitions., *Developmental Psychology* (2017). [DOI: 10.1037/dev0000364](https://doi.org/10.1037/dev0000364)

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