

The Cataclysm of Nurture: Helicopter Parenting

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Abstract:- In psychology today, there exist a few evidently recognized parenting styles: authoritative, neglectful, permissive, and authoritarian. But one more, in this league, taking many countries by storm, is ‘Helicopter Parenting’. Each type of these parenting styles possess different characteristics and bring about diverse reactions in the children which they are used on. Correspondingly, it is vital to understand that every parent-child relationship is different, so there is not one ‘ideal’ way to go about parenting. Helicopter parenting, on the other hand, is overcontrolling, overprotecting, and overperfecting, a child in a way that is much more than responsible parenting. This paper will give you an insight of how Helicopter parenting impacts the lives of children and how we can diverge to better parenting styles to raise happier children.

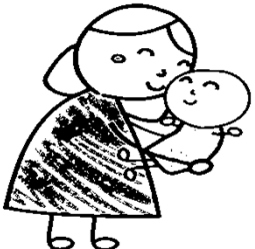

What is meant by parenting styles?


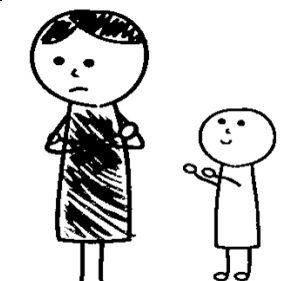

The parenting style construct commonly used in psychology today is based on the work of Diana Baumrind, a developmental psychologist.

Baumrind noticed that preschoolers exhibited three different types of behavior. Each type of behavior was highly correlated to a specific kind of parenting. Based on extensive observation, interviews and analyses, Baumrind identified three initial parenting styles: authoritative parenting, authoritarian parenting and permissive parenting (1967).¹

Here’s a peek at the major parenting styles influencing the development and cognition of children, namely Authoritative, Authoritarian, Permissive, Neglectful and Helicopter parenting.

The table below explains these parenting styles:

PARENTING STYLES AT A GLANCE			
Style:	What it look like:	How it feels like:	What it leads to:
Authoritative		Also known as the Democratic parenting style, this kind of parenting has high expectations for achievement and maturity, but they are also warm and responsive.	Good academic performance of children and better social skills along with high self-esteem.
Authoritarian		Authoritarian parents demands blind obedience of children and these parents use stern discipline and often employ punishment to control children’s behavior.	This parenting style leads to poor self esteem, lower academic performance and poorer interpersonal skills.

Permissive		Permissive parents are unwilling to enforce rules and they set very few rules and boundaries. These parents are warm and caring but they do not like to refuse anything as they think that it may disappoint their children.	Children nurtured with this kind of parenting turn out to be impulsive, egocentric and often have trouble managing their relations.
Neglectful		Neglectful parenting is free from firm boundaries or high standards. These parents are indifferent towards their children's needs and uninvolved in their lives.	These children often are victim of substance abuse and suicides. They often possess an impulsive attitude that leads to rebellion.
Helicopter		Helicopter parenting is when the parent is overly involved in the life of their child. They tend to hover over their every movement and decision by taking control of all their tasks.	This type of parenting can trigger anxiety in children, and hamper their emotional and cognitive development.

What is Helicopter parenting?



In a similar fashion like a helicopter hovering overhead, a helicopter parent always hovers around his/her child, doing things for them that they are capable of doing alone. They take over their children's chores and their problems. More often than not, these are things/problems that the children are capable of managing by themselves, without any help from their guardians.

Helicopter parents believe that the child is old enough to take care by himself/herself – in short, micromanaging every aspect of the child's life. Some other terms used to describe the same trait of parenting are – “lawnmower parenting”, “cossetting parent”, or “bulldoze parenting”.

A helicopter parent is also called a cossetting parent or simply a cossetter. Helicopter parents are “over-involved” in their child's life, over-managing everything and being “over-them” all the time. A helicopter parent “over-parents” or focuses too much on parenting. Some other terms used to describe the same trait of parenting are – “lawnmower parenting”, “cossetting parent”, or “bulldoze parenting”.

The term "helicopter parent" was first used in Dr. Haim Ginott's 1969 book *Parents & Teenagers* by teens who said their parents would hover over them like a helicopter; the term became popular enough to become a dictionary entry in 2011. Helicopter parenting refers to "a style of parents who are over focused on their children," says Carolyn Daitch, Ph.D., director of the Center for the Treatment of Anxiety Disorders near Detroit and author of *Anxiety Disorders: The Go-To Guide*. "They typically take too much responsibility for their children's experiences and, specifically, their successes or failures," Dr. Daitch says. Ann Dunnewold, Ph. D., a licensed psychologist and author of *Even June Cleaver Would Forget the Juice Box*, calls it "overparenting." "It means being involved in a child's life in a way that is overcontrolling, overprotecting, and overperfecting, in a way that is in excess of responsible parenting," Dr. Dunnewold explains.²

Examples of Helicopter parenting:

- ❖ *Latha selects the clothes her daughter Mita has to wear daily. Mita is five.*
- ❖ *Revathi has been sitting outside her son's preschool waiting to be called in to pacify her inconsolable son. He has been going to school for over 3 months now without crying. Revathi still waits outside.*
- ❖ *Ashish loves taking his daughter Piya to the park. However, he never leaves her hand. Piya is 3. His wife, Meena still spoon-feeds their 5 year old.*
- ❖ *Prachi calls her daughter's school teacher almost every other day to complain about other kids who seem to be annoying her child.*
- ❖ *Swati helps her 10 year old complete all his school projects.*

Why do parents become helicopters?

When parents have a rich INNER life, are able to impart meaning in their own lives, they understand life is a marathon, not a race. They trust that their child will build resilience and learn through failure, and are more focused on the long haul -- character, compassion, communication, and respect. But when parents are focused on The OUTER life -- results and appearances, they aren't able to allow their child to fail. Their fear and insecurity causes them to exert control via helicopter parenting.

One cannot say that a helicopter parent loves his/her child more than any other parents but there are some people who fear too much that their child may make some wrong decisions in life so they make the choices for them.

Another reason maybe that a Parent doesn't want his children to commit the same mistake they did. An exceptional case would also be that the parent might have had a dark childhood, so he didn't want the same for kid.

Helicopter parents are just people who fear too much for their child. There's nothing wrong in fearing for your child but to pamper them like this and making every decision for them is scary.

Here are a few reasons why Helicopter parenting is becoming prevalent:

Anxiety:

Parents, being the caring souls they are, are always anxious about their children's safety, happiness and their ability to cope with the world around them. Every move parents make, they project their fears into their children constantly being too involved in their lives. "Worry," Carolyn Daitch, Ph.D., director of the Center for the Treatment of Anxiety Disorders near Detroit and author of *Anxiety Disorders: The Go-To Guide* says, "can drive parents to take control in the belief that they can keep their child from ever being hurt or disappointed."

Love:

This amplified parental feeling emerges out of love, undoubtedly. Parents love their child so much that they want him/her to know no pain and no struggle in life and wish to keep him out of harm's way forever. But in the attempt, they tend to give excessive attention to their child's life. At times, adults who felt unloved, neglected, or ignored as children can overcompensate with their own children. Too much attention and monitoring are attempts to remedy a deficiency the parents felt in their own upbringing.

Need for control:

Irrespective of the child's age, parents still feel like he/she is still their "baby" and that they need to control their child's life.

Overcompensation:

A parent who was not loved or showed enough affection as a child would try to overcompensate for this loss by overwhelming his/her child with more attention and care than the child requires, thereby resulting in overparenting.

Peer pressure:

Some parents see their neighbors and friends fussing over their kids for everything to perfection, and they suddenly feel less of a parent. So, they start following their footsteps too.

Changing world:

In the fast progressing world, parents know that the competition their children will face is much more than what they faced when they grew up. They are worried that if they let go of their children, they won't be able to find a place of their own in this cold, competitive world.

Are there any positives of Helicopter parenting?

Parents hover over their children and start parenting this way for a reason. More often than not, they begin reacting against the free-form, unbounded childhoods that they experienced, in which they might have faced daily dangers and years of floundering without oversight or steady guidance. They could possibly be the kids who came home to empty houses and wandered the neighborhood all afternoon, getting themselves into physically and emotionally treacherous experiences. Because their parents were afraid to broach the subjects of sex, drugs, and violence, they got the information from their friends, who got all sorts of details wrong. As a result, many grew up feeling unseen, unsupported, and confused.

While helicoptering has its flaws—most notably how it often fails to teach kids how to think on their own and make bold decisions in the face of uncertainty—it also has many advantages, some of which have gone unheralded.

Here are some of the reasons parents may choose to be very involved in their kids' lives, and some of the benefits to both children and society.³

No matter what it leads to, Helicopter parenting always starts with a good intent. Here's how it may prove to be beneficial to children, according to helicopter parents:

1. These children feel acknowledged and supported.
2. They have a sense of community and connectedness.
3. They benefit from doing things they're not good at.

4. They have tried a little of everything and thus are better equipped to make good career choices.
5. They will take care of their parents (and pass on the same family values).

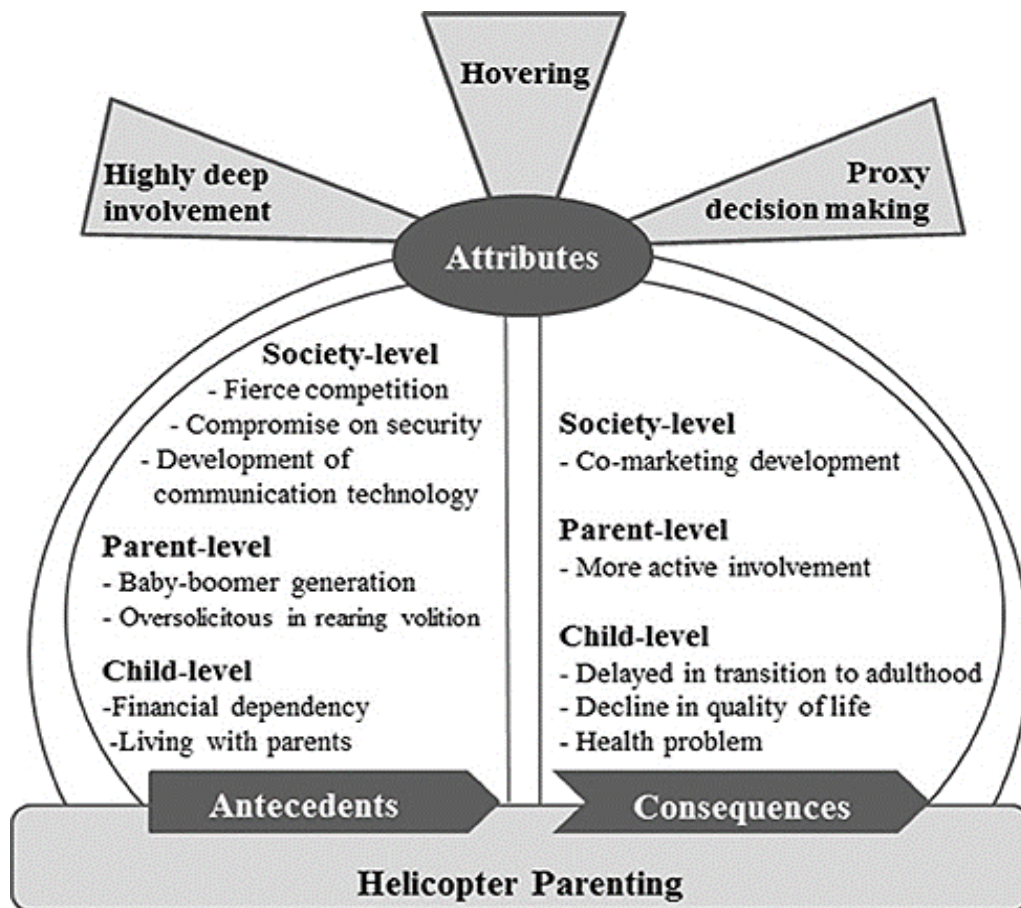
Finally, there's an upside to parents as well as to kids. In addition to having children who like us and want to stay in touch, we may also be creating a community with an overall sense of family connectedness. As they grow, children who were parented closely often want to remain close.

Perhaps this will diminish the fears we have about an aging society, where seniors become lonely and neglected. Perhaps, just perhaps, helicoptered children may someday hover over their parents and return the favor.

There's a lot of fear in society about the ways technology creates distance and isolation. We look at the younger generations with their heads buried in their phones and wonder if they will know how to make conversation or form connections. But we forget that, even on those phones, they are in constant communication—not only with their friends, but with us.

Through this lens, helicopter parenting might be considered an antidote to the loneliness of the digital age, a way to create snug, loving bonds with our children.⁴

What are the consequences of Helicopter parenting?



Helicopter parenting, by all means, signifies a negative type of parenting where the children in question might lose their personal identity altogether. Several negative consequences surround this parenting style and some of them are given below:

Low self-esteem and confidence:

Helicopter parenting usually backfires on both children and their parents. In fact, it can destroy the basic concept of family culture. Parents, with their parenting style, send an invisible and indirect signal saying that “look child, I may not believe you and I will help you in my own way.” Over insistence on controlling a child's mind will eventually result in the development of low esteem and confidence.

Failure to manage with crisis and emergencies:

Children, who are managed under a helicopter parenting style, are more likely to under develop coping skills that are so much required to manage emergencies, anger, frustration, disappointment, failure and crisis. If parents keep managing their children's affairs, how do they expect them to become independent and self-sufficient? Previous studies show us that children who are nurtured under helicopter parenting style are more likely to face serious problems in life.

Enhanced anxiety and panic state:

The results of helicopter parenting could be the development of over anxiety, fear, panic syndrome, and depression and isolation tendencies. Just because children were raised under a strict regime of controls, they are made to suffer unnecessarily in a number of ways.

A deep sense of entitlement and rebel tendencies:

Helicopter parented children are more likely to develop a sense of entitlement that leads to having their own way of leading a protected life. They might even develop a tendency to become rebels against their own parents.

Lack of life skills:

Lack of life skills is possibly the most damaging result of over parenting. Life skills are far more important and critical than academic skills. Parents who do all the work for their children may snatch away a child's ability to develop life skills.⁵

Undeveloped coping skills:

If the parent is always there to clean up a child's mess--or prevent the problem in the first place--how does the child ever learn to cope with loss, disappointment, or failure? Studies have found that helicopter parenting can make children feel less competent in dealing with the stresses of life on their own.

Increased anxiety:

A study from the University of Mary Washington has shown that overparenting is associated with higher levels of child anxiety and depression.

Sense of entitlement:

Children who have always had their social, academic, and athletic lives adjusted by their parents to best fit their needs can become accustomed to always having their way and thus they develop a sense of entitlement.

Undeveloped life skills:

Parents who always tie shoes, clear plates, pack lunches, launder clothes, and monitor school progress, even after children are mentally and physically capable of doing the task, prevent their children from mastering these skill themselves.⁶


How can ‘the hovering’ be avoided?

It's challenging to send your child out into a hostile world, knowing he or she may fail, face ridicule, and struggle. Rest assured, children must struggle to grow and learn. Saving your child from consequences and challenges now only ensures he or she will face more challenges down the road. A few guidelines can help you avoid becoming a helicopter parent by nurturing independence in your child:

- ❖ Listen to your child, rather than imposing your goals and wishes on him or her. Listening to your child encourages independent thought and critical thinking. It also helps you avoid a common downfall of helicopter parents: imposing your values on your child.
- ❖ Don't manage your child's relationships or communications for him or her.

- ❖ Don't try to help your child escape consequences for his or her actions, unless you believe those consequences are unfair or life-altering. It's fine to hire your child a lawyer if he or she is in legal trouble, or to intervene with a bullying teacher. But don't try to get your kid out of detention or berate another parent who talks to your child about problematic behavior.
- ❖ Don't raise your child to expect treatment that is different from, or better than, the treatment other children receive. Every child deserves an equal chance at a sports team or scholarship. Your child shouldn't expect to get something they don't deserve or didn't earn.
- ❖ Encourage your children to solve their own problems by asking them to contemplate potential solutions.
- ❖ Don't do your child's work for them, or keep track of deadlines for them. Even school-aged children can learn to remember test dates and classroom projects. By middle school, your child should be managing their schoolwork largely on their own, with only as-needed help.
- ❖ Support your child's teacher, and encourage your child to respect the teacher's opinions.
- ❖ Allow your child to face natural consequences for their actions. Don't allow a child to stay home sick just because she or he didn't timely complete a school project.⁷

Conclusion:

OUT OF 100,000 COLLEGE STUDENTS, STUDIES FOUND THAT:		
84%	felt overwhelmed by responsibilities	
60.5%	felt very sad	
57%	felt very lonely	
51.3%	felt overwhelming anxiety	
4%	had seriously considered a suicide	

Whatever we label it, overparenting - anxious, invasive, overly attentive, and competitive parenting - may have finally backfired. As we witness the first generation of over parented children becoming adults in their own right, many studies show that when baby boomer parents intervene inappropriately - with too much advice, excessive favors, and erasing obstacles that kids should negotiate themselves - their "millennial" children end up ill-behaved, anxious, narcissistic, entitled youths unable to cope with everyday life.

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