



# Back -to- School

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The Progressor-Times & Mohawk Leader

Information for  
Carey Public Schools,  
Our Lady of Consolation School and  
Mohawk Schools.

## Avoid helicopter parenting

The fallout from doing too much for your kids

The term "helicopter parent" was first coined in 1969 by teenagers who were quoted in Dr. Haim Ginott's book "Parents & Teenagers." Helicopter parent describes an overbearing parent who would "hover over kids like a helicopter." Nearly 50 years later, the term has persisted, and was even included as a dictionary entry in 2011.

Helicopter parenting, sometimes called "lawnmower parenting" or "bulldozer parenting," refers to a style of parenting in which parents are overly focused on the lives of their children, taking extreme responsibility for their children's experiences.

As discovered during the study "Helicopter Parents: Examining the Impact of Highly Involved Parents on Student Engagement and Educational Outcomes," by Rick Shoup, Robert M.

Gonyea, and George D. Kuh, 38% of freshmen and 29% of seniors in the United States said their parents intervened on their behalf to solve problems either "very often" or "sometimes."

Helicopter parenting may seem like parents are simply being overprotective, but such an approach might have a serious impact. Many therapists say that parents need to get over being overly involved; otherwise, they risk potential psychological damage to their children.

According to Chris Meno, an Indiana University psychologist, helicopter parenting can take a serious toll on the psychological well-being of children into adulthood. Those who have been over-parented may have difficulty knowing when to ask for help versus when to make their own decisions. Being overly

focused on their children can be problematic for adults, too – potentially making their lives more about their kids and less about their own lives. This may lead to unnecessary anxiety.

According to Ann Dunnewold, Ph.D., a licensed psychologist and author of "Even June Cleaver Would Forget the Juice Box," helicopter parenting can start with shadowing a toddler, ensuring a child has a certain teacher in elementary school and providing an unhealthy amount of assistance to youngsters when arranging school schedules or helping with homework.

Adults who are helicopter parents may have good intentions, but they may end up hurting their kids' decision-making ability and self-esteem. Finding the right balance between offering assis-

tance and hovering can be challenging. Adults can first recognize the following signs of potential helicopter parenting and then take strides to give children more breathing room:

- Paying adult children's bills or offering extensive financial assistance.
- Doing chores for children that are age-appropriate and fully within kids' abilities to handle.
- Calling teachers or professors to negotiate grades.
- Texting or calling a child constantly for updates on his or her day.
- Using mobile phone technology or social media to "spy" or keep close tabs on kids' interactions at all times.
- Failing to let children make their own mistakes, including getting poor grades or missing assignments.

## Finding balance with activities



packed schedules were perfectly happy unless they were doing more than four hours a day.

The "over-scheduling hypothesis" may be overhyped. This is the concern that too much organized activity participation leads to poor developmental outcomes. This hypothesis also suggests that hectic schedules also undermine family functioning, detract from schoolwork and possibly increase the risk of copycat behaviors and excessive competitiveness.

However, in the study "The Over-Scheduling Hypothesis Revisited: Intensity of Organized Activity Participation During Adolescence and Young Adult Outcomes," researchers J.L. Mahoney and Andrea Vest determined that, controlling for demographic factors and baseline adjustment, extracurricular intensity was a significant predictor of positive outcomes and unrelated to indicators of problematic adjustment (e.g., psychological distress, substance use, antisocial behavior) at young adulthood.

Data from the U.S. Census Bureau states that, in 2014, 57% of children between the ages of six and 17 participate in at least one after-school extracurricular activity.

Children are more likely to participate in sports than clubs or lessons, such as music, dance and language, but each of these activities can be beneficial to students' development.

Students who participate in extracurricular activities may want to limit their participation to 20 hours per week. This is according to a group of professors from Stanford University and Villanova University who have been collecting data on the issue since 2007. In their report "Extracurricular Activity in High-Performing School Contexts: Stress Buster, Booster or Buffer?", Jerusha Conner and Sarah Miles found that 87% of kids who would be considered to have

Even though extracurricular activities are largely positive – even when schedules are packed – parents need to be aware of the diminishing returns of too many activities. This is something called the "threshold effect." Benefits from extracurriculars can level off when too many activities are being juggled. If a child is experiencing anxiety, sleeplessness or depression, or seems overly stressed, it could be time to reduce students' time spent doing structured activities.

It's essential that families use the cues given by kids to assess what students can handle. And children should be encouraged to be honest with their parents about their extracurricular activities as well.



Helicopter parenting may actually lead to a strained relationship between parents and children. A 2015 study published in Social Development found that toddlers who are given space to explore and interact with their surroundings on their own have a better relationship with their parents. The experts say parents should be available for their children, but let the kids take the initiative to seek their parents out. Altering helicopter parenting behaviors can take time, but it is possible, and kids can benefit greatly from such changes.

## Put a Back-to-School Checkup on Your Checklist

Regular medical checkups are important to your child's healthy development and growth. Make an exam part of your back-to-school routine to ensure kids are ready for the classroom and a successful school year!

- Immunizations & vaccinations
- Vision & hearing screenings
- Developmental screenings
- Scoliosis evaluations
- ADD, ADHD & behavioral assessments
- Nutrition & weight management programs
- Back-to-school & sports physicals
- Year-round pediatric care for kids & teens

Contact your family healthcare provider for a back-to-school checkup; or if you don't have a healthcare provider, contact UrgentCare at 419-294-4991, extension 2126.



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