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*Listening, learning,  
and living together:  
it's the science of life.*

## Helicopter Parents<sup>1</sup>

*Suzanna Smith<sup>2</sup>*

Are you a helicopter parent? This term refers to parents who hover over their child, fighting off threats to their child's success and happiness. Of course, we all want the best for our children, but helicopter parents keep children from succeeding—or failing—on their own. For instance, they take over a younger child's school projects. Parents of college students register them for their courses, question professors' grades, and even intervene in roommate disputes. Sociologists and psychologists point out that baby boomers are the first generation to focus so much attention on parenting and raising well-adjusted and fulfilled children. In the process, boomers often haven't pushed their children to be independent.

Eventually, this can hurt the child. They don't learn to solve their own problems or how to take responsibility for themselves. In addition, parents' mental health may suffer because they "base their own self-worth on their child's success" and "feel like a failure when [their] child fails" (College Board, 2006). Psychologists have found that parents who "judge their own self worth by their children's accomplishments report sadness," [and anxiety], think about themselves in negative ways, and are less content with life in general (College Board, 2006; Penn State, 2006).

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2. Suzanna Smith, associate professor, Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611.

Hovering is not all bad all the time. Some children who are shy or have mild learning difficulties may need a parent to be involved. Parents and children like to be close. The key is to encourage your child to develop the independence they will need as an adult and to be there when they need you.

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