

# What is a helicopter parent? Experts say this 'very watchful' style of parenting could cause kids to 'miss out on learning.'

[Josie Maida](#) June 6, 2022



Is it OK to be a helicopter parent? Experts say the parenting style could leave kids unprepared in the long run.  
(Photo: Getty Creative)

Most parents want what's best for their children and would do anything to protect them. But are there situations where a parent's love and willingness to guide a child can go too far?

Helicopter parents, those who practice a style of child-rearing that can lead to them becoming overly focused on their kids' experiences, successes and

failures, can be easy to spot at playground or school events. But what exactly qualifies as helicopter parenting? And having a helicopter parent safe for kids?

Niyla Carson is a self-proclaimed "cool aunt" to two nephews ages 7 and 9, who believes her sister is a bonafide helicopter mom. "I have observed my sister's parenting techniques these past nine years," says Carson, who lives in Orlando, Fla., "she tends to take things to the extremes sometimes."

Carson says her sister doesn't allow her children to go out with friends, hovers over their social interactions and refuses let them learn from their own mistakes. "All of their clothes and toys are picked up by her and food in the house is prepared and served bite-sized," Carson says. "She gives them everything they want and doesn't encourage them to do anything themselves — from school assignments to house chores."

Carson fears her nephews are learning to expect the same treatment from other family members and society.

### **Video: What leads to helicopter parenting?**



## What is helicopter parenting?

[Charlotte Reznick](#) is a Brentwood, Calif.-based child and adolescent psychologist and the author of [The Power of Your Child's Imagination](#). "I've seen plenty of helicopter parents in my time," Reznick tells Yahoo Life. "Parents want to do their best ... [but sometimes] their care and concerns come out in a very watchful style of parenting where, like a helicopter, they hover above, checking out everything their child is doing."

## Is helicopter parenting safe?

According to Reznick, this parenting style can get in the way of the fundamental purpose of parenthood.

"Considering part of a parent's job is to launch a responsible young adult when they are about 18," she says, "then a process of letting go and giving progressively more freedom with responsibility is important."

Reznick believes by constantly stepping in to protect and correct a child, it becomes difficult for growing kids and teens to find the opportunity to develop the skills necessary to be responsible and independent young adults. "Although most kids I see love it when their parents do things for them and fight having to do much for themselves," she says, "if parents do everything for their child, kids miss out on learning simple tasks like doing laundry, making beds, cooking meals, knowing how to get out of jams or choosing friends and jobs wisely because they never had a chance to learn from their own mistakes."

Brent Crane, a marriage and family therapist in Sugar Land, Tex., works specifically with teens suffering from severe behavioral struggles. One of the things Crane teaches families to recognize are signs of problems caused from overindulgent parenting, and how to work on correcting those behaviors.

"In a world full of risks that often feel undefinable to parents, helicopter parenting can be very soothing," Crane says. "Parents get to feel like they're making a difference for their children and it provides a feeling of safety for parents." While these factors may reinforce parents and provide some tangible benefits in protecting their children, for kids, it's a whole different story.

According to Crane, when parents hover, children develop either resentment or dependence — in some cases, both. This creates conflict between parents and their children, as it implies a lack of trust or confidence.

"When children feel that parents don't trust them, they naturally either accept the view of themselves as less capable and the world as more dangerous, *or* they begin to feel their parents are an untrustworthy source of information," he says.

Christina Garret, a pastor's wife, productivity coach and homeschooling mom of five kids who range in age from 3 to 13, identifies as a "recovering helicopter mom."

"With my children being around me all day, every day, I became unintentionally preoccupied with their small and large decisions," Garrett, who lives in Montgomery, Ala., shares. "Now, after having challenging conversations with my budding pre-teens, I realize that I will not be around 24/7 to monitor their behavior."

While it takes immense trust and communication to teach children about the world around them and allow them to determine their own direction, Garrett shares it's something she realized she needed to do. She encourages parents to be attentive, but reminds them that their own needs, health and growth are often forgotten about when a helicopter parenting style is adopted.

Crane says it's OK for parents to stop hovering. "The painful truth is children need to fail," he explains. "They need to fall down and they need to experience rejection and loneliness."

"And while parents play a crucial role in moderating the level of exposure and challenge their children face," Crane adds, "sometimes they must take a step back and let the child stand on their own two feet."

His final tips? Crane says parents should express confidence that their child can figure things out and then cheer from the sidelines. "It might just save your child," he says.