

# 3 Things You Should Never Do for Your Kids |

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As parents, we only want the best for our children. But sometimes our judgment is clouded, and our actions can actually impede our kids' progress. By nature, we want to see our children succeed, even if it means giving them a gentle nudge. Unfortunately for some parents, that nudge often turns into a huge push, and before we know it, we're actually doing things for our children that they should be doing for themselves.

Admit it. We've all been there. You see that sweet little face struggling to tie his shoe, write a Pulitzer-worthy paragraph or even make his bed. When you sense his frustration, your maternal instinct kicks into high gear, and the next thing you know, you're doing the deed for him. Your intentions may be good, but the end results are not.

You've essentially become the dreaded helicopter parent, a mom or dad who gives eagle-eye attention to every aspect of the child's life. From report cards to recreational activities, you're the gatekeeper of your child's affairs. You exact precise oversight in everything he does to ensure that there is nothing holding him back.

The term "helicopter parent" was actually coined in the 1990 self-help guide *Parenting with Love and Logic: Teaching Children Responsibility*. It's frequently used to describe those parents who sweep in to rescue their children from the perils of higher education. For some, it's hard to believe that parents would actually appeal to a college professor on behalf of their young adult offspring, but it shouldn't come as much of a surprise.

This trend begins long before teens ever don their cap and gown and head off to college. It's a behavior that we as adults begin even in the earliest stages of parenting. However, helicopter parenting can have some serious implications on our children. While it might seem like we are doing our children a favor at the time, that couldn't be further from the truth. What we're essentially creating are children who are reliant on us for everything.

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Parenting expert and educational psychologist Michele Borba addresses the trend of helicopter parenting on her personal Web site, [www.micheleborba.com](http://www.micheleborba.com). On her blog, the author of *No More*

*Misbehavin'* and *Don't Give Me That Attitude* points out that children will continue to sink if you don't teach them to swim. Dr. Borba writes, "Look down the road at the big picture. If you keep on with any hovering behavior now, how will your kids turn out later? Every once in a while, we need to fast forward your parenting and think ahead.

"It just may help that you alter you current response with your kids. And here's a big reason why: Researchers are seeing this phenomenon of "parental hovering" (aka micro-managing, overparenting or helicoptering) as a dangerous trend when it comes to how our kids turn out. The long and the short is: If we keep the hovering we'll rob our kids of an essential trait for L.I.F.E. called self-reliance!"

And Dr. Borba is definitely onto something. The ramifications of helicopter parenting are far reaching. Take a recent poll conducted by Harris Interactive for the National Endowment for Financial Education. It showed that 40 percent of American adults aged 18-39 reside at home or have done so in the recent past. That figure also excludes students.

Even more disturbing is the fact that 26 percent of parents with adult children living at home have incurred their own debt to support these adult children, with 7 percent delaying retirement.

While it may seem like a giant leap to take, the point is it's never too early to teach your children to be independent. You want your children to be able to stand on their own two feet so they can make the transition from impressionable children to responsible adults.

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### **Here are three things you should never do for your children:**

**1. Homework** - How many times have you watched parents do their children's homework for them? One minute you're shaking your head in disgust and the next minute you're holding a #2 pencil in your hand writing an essay on the French revolution. Face it. It's easy to get sucked in by your child.

Those frustrating cries of "I can't do it!" can weaken even the most steadfast parent. Sometimes it seems far easier just to do the work for your child. But before you give in, stop, look and listen hard. Your child first should attempt to the work on his own.

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If he is genuinely confused about the subject at hand, take a moment to look over the questions. Ask your child what he thinks the questions mean. If possible, show examples of how to solve

the problem. Avoid doing the actual problem for your child. Once you feel like he has a grasp on the subject matter, send him back to his desk to finish the work.

Do not sit over him while he is doing his homework, as he will be inclined to ask for further assistance repeatedly. After all of the work is completed, glance over the assignment for any glaring errors. When you find mistakes, have your child redo the problems until they are correct. While it's fine to show examples, brainstorm and encourage, do not -- and we repeat -- do not do the work for him. Doing reports, projects and homework independently will actually increase your child's self-confidence and self esteem. Nothing compares to the sense of accomplishment your child will have knowing that he earned that "A" on his own.

**2. Speak for them** - It's far too easy to put words in your child's mouth. Children are works in progress. As they get older, they come into their own.

However, being a child can often be intimidating. Children are often insecure and, at times, unable to properly express themselves. In many cases, he may expect you to be his spokesperson. Whether it's asking a neighborhood child to play or requesting a cup of water at a restaurant, always encourage your child to use his voice.

It might be just as easy for you to do your child's bidding, but how will he ever gain self-confidence if he never has to speak for himself? Oftentimes, we feel compelled to speak on our child's behalf. For example, in school your child might have issues with a fellow student. If the situation puts your child in danger, it's understandable that you would get involved. However, if things haven't escalated, encourage your child to work things out on his own. It's fine to make suggestions of things he might say to smooth things over and resolve the conflict. However, try not to take things into your own hands unless it's an absolute necessity.

Keep this important rule of thumb in mind when you are also among a group of people. When your child is asked a question, it might be instinctive to respond for him. Don't. Give your child a chance to speak for himself. Over time, you will notice him becoming more and more confident in the way he expresses himself. Remember, practice makes perfect.

**3. Choose their friends** - This one is a real doozy. It's only natural to want to pick your child's friends - whether it's the sweet little boy from Sunday school or that adorable girl from the playground. In your mind, you think you know what - and who - is best for your child. And you probably do. But this is one of those lessons your child needs to learn on his own. While you will probably be responsible for fostering many of their friendships through play dates in the early years, your child will be more and more inclined to choose his own pals as he gets older. This is one of those cases when you should go with the flow.

Just because you might be friends with someone doesn't necessarily mean your child when be friends with that person's child. First and foremost, don't force it. Your child will only resent you in the end if you make him spend time with someone he doesn't particularly care for. There's nothing wrong with introducing him to new faces. However, let him take the lead when it comes to building lasting friendships.

At the same time, you still have a responsibility to ensure that your child is playing with kids who have similar values. In other words, you probably want to prevent your children from hanging out with kids who swear, steal, misbehave and have other habits you don't want your own child picking up. Always be aware of who your child is hanging around.

At the end of the day, what you don't do for your children is every bit as important as what you do. Sometimes a more hands-off approach actually will benefit your child.