



The Effects of Overparenting on Young Adult Children

Most of us have heard the term ‘helicopter parenting’.

It’s a term used to describe overly involved parents who hover over their kids, ready to swoop down and resolve any problems their child may encounter. The term is most often used in reference to parents of late adolescent or young adult children. It’s a version of overparenting in which parents demonstrate excessive involvement in their children’s lives and apply developmentally inappropriate parenting tactics by failing to allow for levels of autonomy and independence suited to their child’s age.

In a United States study, overparenting was hypothesised to be associated with dysfunctional family processes and negative child outcomes.

So researchers tested 500+ parents and young adult children in a study designed to examine associations between overparenting, the quality of parent-child communication and both positive and negative traits in young adult children.

The findings showed that this undoubtedly well-intentioned parenting practice is associated with otherwise flawed family processes, it does not contribute to flexible traits in young adult children, and appears to cultivate a sense of entitlement in young adult children.

KEY FINDINGS

- The study showed that overparenting is associated with lower quality parent-child communication.
- When children are overparented they come to expect that problems will be solved for them and that they should not have to tolerate going without what they want.
- Overparenting is associated with problems of emotional regulation in children.

- In very young children, overparenting has been linked to anxious, withdrawn, depressive and insecure tendencies.
- In young adults, parental control is similarly linked to problems with emotional regulation and management, especially in the areas of depression and frustration.
- Overparenting is often a by-product of tangled family systems in which the parents' goals and desires are projected onto, and confused with, the child's.

THINGS YOU CAN DO

- ✓ Keep a check on how much parental time and effort is being put into keeping your child constantly happy.
- ✓ Try not to be at the beck and call of your child or feel they must be constantly entertained.
- ✓ Allow them to try, have a go, make an attempt, experience mistakes.
- ✓ Encourage resilience and resist the urge to rescue.
- ✓ Don't protect them from natural consequences, but rather allow them to learn from these.
- ✓ Instigate age-appropriate responsibilities that don't require a high level of parental support or monitoring.

Source: The Association Between Overparenting, Parent-Child Communication, Segrin, et al., Family Relations; Apr 2012; 61, 2; ProQuest, p237.



TAKEAWAY

FROM PROFESSOR MICHAEL BERNARD
FOUNDER, YOU CAN DO IT! EDUCATION

When we attempt to solve all of our children's problems and to assume responsibility for their well being well into adulthood, our kids are denied opportunities to develop a strong belief in their own ability to solve problems and achieve goals.