



Grown Up Kids and Helicopter Parents

We've all heard of helicopter parenting of young children.

But what happens when parents are still providing intense support to their grown children? A US team of researchers set out to evaluate what positive and negative impact intense support has on both parents and their grown children. The study involved 592 adult children and 399 parents, who had at least one child participate in the study.

Existing research suggests parents in the 21st century provide more financial support to grown children than parents did in the 20th century. The research described below set out to examine whether intense parental involvement (financial, advice, emotional, practical and socialising – many times a week) is viewed by grown children as normal in today's world and whether frequent

support is detrimental or beneficial to the parents and grown children involved.

Parents completed computer-assisted telephone interviews while grown children answered the survey either via land line, cell phone or a web-based survey. Parents and children indicated how often parents provided six forms of support to the grown child: (a) emotional, (b) practical, (c) socializing, (d) advice, (e) financial support and (f) listening to them talk about daily events. Intense support of grown children was defined as the average of the six forms of support several times a week. Grown children evaluated the amount of help they received. Parents completed the same 5-point scale for the amount of help they provided to each grown child. In addition, parents completed a 3-point scale evaluating their grown children's needs compared with other adults the same age.

KEY FINDINGS

- Frequent parental involvement, including a wide range of support, was associated with better well-being for their young, adult children.
- Parents did not suffer from providing such support per se but did report less life satisfaction when they appraised their grown children as needing too much support.
- More than one-fifth of grown children reported receiving intense parental support
- Parents who reported that their children needed more support than others of similar age also reported poorer life satisfaction.
- Daughters received more frequent support than sons, and mothers provide more frequent support than fathers.



THINGS YOU CAN DO

- ✓ Set clear expectations. From a young age, kids need to know you're there for them, but not to the extent that they can rely on you for every need and requirement.
- ✓ Avoid setting a precedent if you have more than one child. If you allow one child to come back home to live, be prepared for similar requests from your other children.
- ✓ Helping without enabling. Enabling is fixing problems for others but in a way that interferes with growth and responsibility.
- ✓ Know where to draw the line. Resist the temptation to save your kids every time they're in trouble. If you rush in and remove the consequence of your child's impulse, they are only learning not to stand on their own two feet.
- ✓ Need to be needed. Believe it or not, most kids can get by without our micromanagement. If our need to be needed is taking precedence over our kids' independence, we may need to make some changes to our thinking.
- ✓ Let them know you too have a life. Always being there for our kids is healthy, but always being available isn't. Set boundaries about your available time and encourage them to figure it out on their own.