

# NO, DON'T BE A HELICOPTER PARENT. BUT BE INVOLVED

"THERE IS NO JOB MORE IMPORTANT THAN PARENTING. THIS I BELIEVE."

## *Parenting styles*

WRITTEN BY PSYCHOLOGY TODAY

"Parenting style" was popularized by developmental psychologist Dr. Diana Baumrind. She conceptualized the approach to parenting falling along continua of "responsiveness" and "demandingness." According to her original work, based upon whether parents were high/low along these continua, a parent could be categorized as having one of three parenting styles:

- Authoritarian - These parents are high in demandingness but low in responsiveness. They tend to be harsh and lacked warmth.
- Permissive - These parents are low in demandingness but high in responsiveness. They might be viewed as "coddling" kids, spoiling them, and overindulging them.
- Authoritative - This is sometimes referred to as democratic parenting and is considered the "Goldilocks" approach. These parents tend to be both demanding and responsive. Thus, they are involved, give expectations, set limits and boundaries, and also provide warmth, acceptance, and encouragement.

Baumrind and other parenting researchers and experts often point to "authoritative" parenting as the the recommended parenting style because it is associated with healthier outcomes. The combination of warmth and involvement in children's lives gives them the best of both worlds. Kids get the positive love, attention, and acceptance that they need, but they also get expectations and limit-setting.

# ***Where Does Helicopter Parenting Fit In?***

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Helicopter parenting typically describes hyper-involved, extremely concerned parents who pay close attention to a child's every move. They try to guide, coax, compel, or even force children to do what they think is "best" for him/her. They are highly demanding in terms of Baumrind's original model, but not very accepting. Their warmth is mostly conditional, such that children receive love and positive attention primarily when they are meeting the parents' high expectations. These parents often justify these behaviors because they want their child to be "successful" in life.

What are we measuring; High school grade point average? SAT scores? Which college he/she goes to? Happiness? Longevity? Income at 35 years old? A happy marriage? It's possible that helicopter parenting produces outcomes both positive (e.g., high school class rank) and negative (e.g., higher incidence of mental health problems).

Parenting is a balancing act. There is not a playbook that can tell us exactly what to do on every step of the parenting journey. It is characterized by being involved in our kids' lives through providing love, warmth, acceptance, guidance, boundaries, and limit-setting. We need to be developmentally sensitive so that we gradually back off as they grow older.

Finally, we should just aim for "good enough" parenting. A lot of this comes out in the wash, and we can make ourselves crazy trying to be the "best" parents.