Research Update for Professionals

New Study on Helicopter Mothering!

Selected Research Article:


What were they trying to find out?
- Parental involvement is generally considered to have positive effects on kids, but too much of the wrong type can be detrimental.
- The authors wanted to better understand whether helicopter mothering was correlated with lower well-being of college students.

What did they do?
- They created a 9-item scale of controlling involvement (aka helicopter mothering: things like "my mother monitors my exercise schedule," and "my mother monitors who I spend time with")
- They surveyed 297 college students

What did they find?
"Students who reported having over-controlling parents reported significantly higher levels of depression and less satisfaction with life. Furthermore, the negative effects of helicopter parenting on college students' well-being were largely explained by the perceived violation of students' basic psychological needs for autonomy and competence" (p. 548).

What does it mean for parenting educators?
- We want to encourage parental involvement, but we also need to encourage parents to allow age-appropriate opportunities for kids to develop new skills and gain autonomy.
- Maternal "helping" isn't always helpful!

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