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Know! Not to Be a Lawnmower Parent



By this point, we're likely all familiar with the term *Helicopter Parenting*, where parents keep an overly watchful eye on their child's every move and then swoop in to save the day at the first sign of trouble. But have you heard of **Lawnmower Parenting**? And are you possibly guilty of it?

While the helicopter parent hovers and worries, the lawnmower parent takes it even further, stepping in to clear their child's path of potential obstacles and challenges. This prevents their child from having to experience any feelings of pain, sadness, discomfort or disappointment.

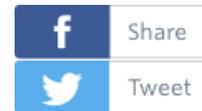
If any of these scenarios sound familiar, you might be a Lawnmower Parent. (Keep in mind these examples refer to middle and high school parents.)

- You panic when you realize your child forgot his math homework on the kitchen table, so you run it right over to the school in time for class.
- Your daughter misses a day of school from illness, but instead of having your child follow up with her teachers, you reach out to the school to collect her makeup work.
- Your son has a dentist appointment that conflicts with next week's baseball practice, but instead of having



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- him communicate it to his coach, you reach out to the coach to explain.
- Your child is feeling really anxious about having to make a presentation in class, so you contact the teacher and push for an alternate arrangement.

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While it's normal and natural for us (parents) to want to protect our children, this type of parenting can have long-lasting, harmful effects.

When a parent constantly intervenes in a child's life in this manner:

- It sends the message that, "my parents – not me – are the only ones equipped to make decisions and handle challenges in my life."
- It creates youth who increasingly feel "entitled" and expect things to always go their way with minimal effort on their part.
- Most dangerously, this type of parenting shelters children from experiencing and dealing with any type of adversity. It's only a matter of time before something goes wrong and it's out of our control. – When that happens, our children need to have positive coping skills to deal with their situation, but lawnmower parenting doesn't let them develop those coping skills. Instead, our children may act out aggressively, negatively internalize what they're feeling, or possibly turn to substances in an attempt to get a handle on their emotions.

Another name being given to this style of parenting, which may paint an even clearer picture, is "Curling Parents." Think back to the Olympic sport where the players slide a stone down the ice toward a target, but then rush just ahead of it to smooth and attempt to direct its path to success. Call it curling, bulldozing, snowplowing or lawn mowing—it all means the same thing, and it's truly a disservice to your child. If we want our sons and daughters to become happy, healthy and successful adults, we must teach, encourage, and guide them to begin to think, speak, and make decisions for themselves. We need to let them learn from their mistakes and help them process and handle adversity appropriately and positively. If it comes time that they have done their part advocating for themselves and a situation remains unresolved, then we can step in to assist.

Source: [Karen Fancher: Pittsburg Moms Blog - The Rise of the Lawnmower Parent. June 25, 2016.](#) [Ramy Mahmoud The Dallas Morning News: Arizona Daily Sun - Guest Column: The dangers of lawnmower parenting and preventing failure. August 30, 2017.](#) [Murphy Moroney. PopSugar.com: Worried You're a Lawnmower Parent? Follow These Steps to Nip It in the Bud. September 13, 2018.](#) [WeAreTeachers.com: Life & Wellbeing - Lawnmower Parents Are the New Helicopter Parents & We Are Not Here for It. August 30, 2018.](#)