

# Are Helicopter Parents On To Something?

By Kim John Payne

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There has been a resurgence of media attention and poking fun of the now well known "helicopter parent". I have even heard new terms such as "black hawk parent", (a deadlier version of the helicopter parent), "stealth bomber parent" (cloaked from detection, moves in at very high speed, bombs and vanishes) and also "drone attack parent" (tracks children via the GPS via their cell phones and can launch an email or Face Book raid at any moment should family security be challenged). The recent Winter Olympics inspired "curling parent" (frantically sweeps in front of the child so that the path is always smooth).

OK, it's kind of funny and we all get the picture, but what if on a basic level these parents are right? Here's the thinking...

Stressed children have become the new normal, with teachers, friends and especially the media telling us it's OK. "It's just the way things are now".

However on a gut level many parents have the gnawing feeling that

something is wrong, very wrong with the pressures our kids are being put under. Here's an example that sounds so far fetched it must be real. I was teaching a group of experienced educators at university in Boston. I had set what I'm sure was a wonderfully enlivening and insightful small group discussion topic but the three teachers in one of the groups were talking in an animated way about "buckets and paper towels". What they had discovered was that the custodians in all three of their schools had started issuing these supplies so that the nine year old

children taking their tests under the "No Child Left Intact Act" could get up and vomit into the bucket placed in between the desks. This is what we have come to. No adult concepts and outrage here that could be challenged as being out of touch with modern needs, just children so stressed by their education they vomit.

Now here's the thing, (and I've been in the US for long enough now to know you have to say something good when this term is used), our kids are suffering from moderate grade and ongoing soul fever resulting from too

much, too fast, too soon. What do we when our children have a normal body based fever... we hover and we stay very close. This is exactly what many parents are doing; only it is playing out on an emotional level. Maybe these much derided parents actually have intact instincts. Pushing this a little further, it could be argued that if a parent was not very concerned they might have bought so far into the great 'American Anxiety Dream', that their instincts were dulled, even dead.

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So, does this mean that hyper parenting is OK? No, not at all, but to understand what is happening and why this behavior is so wide spread, not only mellows our side swiping (parents are perfectly well adapted to beating themselves up without anyone needing to offer help), it is possibly a starting point to change this hovering dynamic that is, at its core, eroding our kid's emerging independence and resiliency.