



USEP-OHIO PARENT TIP: Micromanaging Our Kids

This brief Parent Tip is provided at no cost by United Services for Effective Parenting-Ohio, Inc. as a tool to assist parents, teachers, grandparents and all who help care for and raise our children. For more information on this and other tools from USEP-OHIO refer to the conclusion of this Parent Tip.

We have all experienced it - that uncomfortable feeling as we watch a child being micromanaged by an overprotective parent or an over-involved teacher.

When someone shadows me and seems to want to control my movements, thoughts and actions, the first thing I want to do is escape! Most children have the same reaction, but do not have the power to leave. So they act out, get nervous, feel stressed or inadequate. Youngsters from preschool to young adult resist being “handled” by parents and teachers. They become passive-aggressive, resisting the attention and too distracted to keep learning. Most important is that they usually suffer a loss of self-esteem and sense that they must be incapable of completing the task and just are not able to meet teacher or parent expectations on their own.

Are you a helicopter teacher, parent or grandparent? In other words, do you hover over the children? In trying to help, helicopters often do more harm than good. Micromanaging every minute of a child’s day does the youngster a huge disservice.

We need to raise and educate children who can think on their own, fend for themselves, and be self-reliant and confident. They will become adults who know how to approach a task, organize it, and take joy in completing it.

Teachers and parents can help by presenting a problem or task, then giving the learner a little time to think about and analyze it, assuring the child that help is available if needed.

Clear directions, given in as few words as possible, help the youngster get started. Then attempts to do what is needed, allowing for plenty of mistakes and experiments, keep the child on the road to success. When adults are available to coach or mentor the student, they can offer help when needed. The best learners figure out all the things that don’t work, and then settle on some strategies that do work. Knowing when to ask for some guidance is a skill youngsters learn if adults give them some space to figure it out.

The three year old who builds the block tower learns by trial and error how to design the structure so it will stand on its own. But if a parent or teacher intervenes or takes over, learning is interrupted.

A teen who is writing a paper gains confidence in his ability if he is allowed to create a story and write it on his own. The mistakes in grammar or spelling, once corrected by the teacher, create a model for life and work. They embody the goal which is to be *continuously improving*. A child, who looks at each task as a draft that he will work to correct and improve, learns to keep working until he gets it “just right”.

The hardest part of parenting and teaching is standing back and letting go, so children will take over and learn. Whether the assignment is to make a bed or create a project, offer clear directions, then encouragement, and finally modest praise for improvement. Let kids learn to manage themselves!

We invite you to share this USEP-OHIO publication with other parents, students and professionals at home or work. You have permission to copy Tips as written, send on as email, or print for a newsletter or handout. Email usepohio@usepohio.com to add email addresses to our list, go to www.USEP-OHIO.com for other topics, publications and programs.19 Cindy McKay cljfmckay@msn.com 4 12