

ARE YOU ONE OF THESE PARENTS?



4 Parenting Styles to Avoid

By Dr. Tim Elmore

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At times, parents struggle with drawing the line between mothering and smothering; fathering and bothering.

Y SON PARTICIPATES IN A COMMUNITY THEATER

program. He loves the drama of a Broadway show. He loves the drama of movies. He loves the drama of musical theater. Unfortunately, he has seen a little too much drama from the adults in his life. If parents in this program feel their children are not cast appropriately or if the program does not spotlight their children's abilities when the talent scouts are present, these parents can turn into guerillas.

It is a sign of the times. This is a new generation of parents. This new generation of parents started with the Tylenol® scare in 1982. During the rest of that decade, parents prioritized the safety and future of their children. That is the good news. The bad news is — they did not know where to draw the line. There are millions of healthy families, but most families slip into habits that are not so healthy. I have spotted a handful of damaging parenting styles that have plagued our culture over the last decade. Let's examine these styles and explore what we can do to correct them.



HELICOPTER PARENTS

These parents hover over their kids, working to make sure they get every imaginable advantage. They ensure that doors open for their children and no negative incident affects their self-esteem or diminishes their chances at being accepted at an Ivy League school. Helicopter parents are committed to helping their children make the grade, make the team, and make the money. They create unfair environments and unrealistic scenarios that their children must recover from when they enter the real world as adults.

The Problem: Helicopter parents do not allow their kids the privilege of learning to fail and persevere. Adults who struggle with being “out of control” or who find it difficult to trust others and delegate tend to be hovering and micro-managing in style. They mean well, but they feel it is up to them to make sure life turns out well for their kids.

The Solution: If you tend to be a helicopter parent, you must learn to trust the process and to trust God. One day your child will enter an adult world, and you must prepare her for it.

- Decide on a task for your child to do — and trust her to do it. Let her know it is OK to fail, but that the project’s success is completely up to her.

- Talk to your child about responsibility, then back off and let her “own” her activities, chores, or assignments. Trust the process as she grows up.

KARAOKE PARENTS

Like the karaoke bar, where you can grab a microphone and sing like Barry Manilow, these parents want to look and sound like their kids. They want to dress like, talk like, and be cool like their children. They somehow hope

to stay “cool” and “hip” so they can relate to their children through their young-adult years. They do not like the thought of being out of style — and work hard to maintain an image. Sadly, these karaoke parents do not offer their kids the boundaries and authority they desperately need.

The Problem: Frequently, parents become karaoke in their style because of their own emotional insecurities. These parents will rationalize why they do what they do, but in the end, the only remedy is for them to embrace their own age and stage and relate to their children in an appropriate manner.

The Solution: If you tend to be a karaoke parent, you must embrace who you are and give your child what he needs, not necessarily what he wants.

- Decide on values you hope to build into your child and embody them. More than being a “buddy” to him, target being a role model and leader for him.

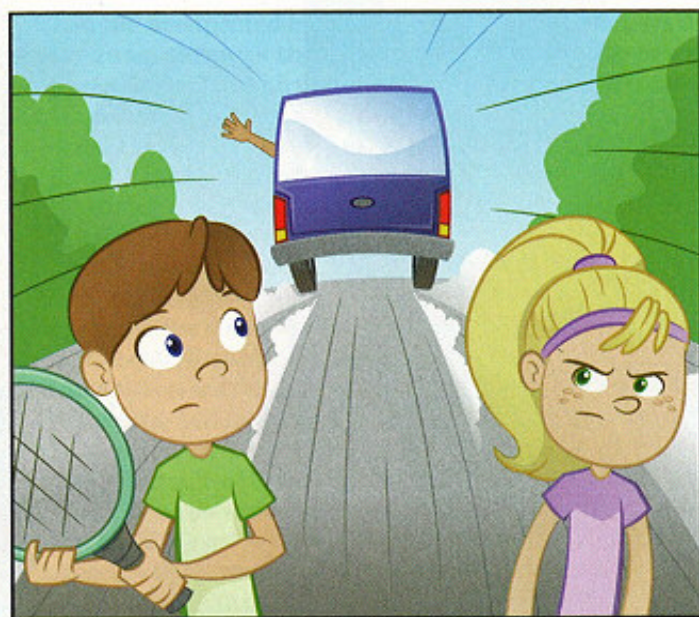
- Talk about your child’s friends and his goals when he is old enough to do so. Usually, kids have plenty of friends, but they only have one mom or dad. Fill that role!



DRY CLEANER PARENTS

You take your wrinkled or soiled clothes to the dry cleaners to have them cleaned and pressed by professionals. It is so handy to drop them off and have them handed back to you looking like new. These “dry cleaner” parents do not feel equipped to raise their kids, so they drop them off for experts to raise them. Although the home environment has damaged their children’s character, they hope a school, counselor, or church group can fix them. Sadly, these parents forget that no one is a “pro” at raising kids. It is a learning experience for everyone, but parents must recognize that it is their most important task.

The Problem: Dry cleaner parents do not give their kids the mentoring and face-to-face time they require. Connecting with kids is not their specialty. They do not feel



motivated to react to your child or the activities in his life. Motive checks usually shed light on heart issues.

- Consider seeing a counselor to discuss your predisposition to being consumed with your child's life. Is it because he is a reflection on you? Do you have control issues that need to be dealt with?



Dr. Tim Elmore is the president of Growing Leaders (www.GrowingLeaders.com). This article is taken from his newly released book: *Generation iY: The Coming Shift, The Potential Collapse, the Critical Solutions*.

adequate for the task, or they just do not believe it is part of their identity. Consequently, they hide behind the fact that they are busy with so many other priorities.

The Solution: If you tend to be a dry cleaner parent, you must build bridges of relationship that can bear the weight of truth. Run toward the very challenge in which you feel you are weak.

- If possible, trim down the activities in your day and spend time with your child. Do a date night or take a trip with good drive time. Time often earns influence.

- Talk with your child about “stuff” that matters to her. Ask her: “What is the most important part of your life? What is your favorite song and why? TV show? Web site?”

VOLCANO PARENTS

These parents can transform out of rage if they are backed into a corner. They erupt like a volcano. Why? Life has not turned out as they planned. They will write papers for their children, do homework, apply for colleges just like the helicopter parent — but for a different reason. They attempt to live out their unfulfilled lives through their children. When their children do poorly — they erupt. Why? It is a bad reflection on them. Sadly, they do not provide the model or the healthy environment children long for.

The Problem: These parents want so much for their children to make it, because their children are their last hope of leaving some sort of legacy themselves. Their behavior is often the result of baggage from their past.

The Solution: If you tend to be a volcano parent, the best step you can take is self-care. Address your own emotional health so you do not further damage your child in your wake. The best way you can help your child become a healthy leader is to model it for him.

- Check your own heart. Ask yourself “why” are you so

LIVES WORTH IMITATING

Most parents lean toward one of these styles as their children grow. I know I do. Healthy leadership from healthy parents produces healthy children who become healthy leaders themselves. I am haunted by the truth that James Baldwin once penned: “Children have never been good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them.” I am voting that we as parents become the healthy mentors our kids need and live lives worth imitating.

WHAT KIND OF PARENT ARE YOU?

Not sure if you fall into one of these categories? Visit the *ParentLife* blog this month to take our quiz and find out — www.lifeway.com/parentlifeblog/