

Before elaborating on some solutions to the hovercraft crisis, I'd like to applaud the many parents who are still raising kids with common sense, self-control, and grit. Kudos also to the wonderfully responsible young adults I meet every day. They are still out there!

Yep...hovering has reached a zenith. So are vague notions about what we ought to do instead. Some authors suggest giving children free rein to run with scissors, roam dark streets at night, and wire 220-voltage appliances unsupervised. A totally hands-off approach is their motto.

Going to extremes is never healthy. Instead, wise parents consider each specific situation and ask themselves the following questions:

*What are the real risks?*

Too frequently, we forget that we cannot eliminate all risk from our lives or our children's. We can only ask ourselves, "Is this really a life-and-death issue?"

*Am I removing the joy by trying to remove the risk?*

A life lived with no risk is a life not lived.

*Has my child been allowed to blow it when the "price tags" were small?*

If a child has a history of being over-protected, a parent may want to start by giving more freedom over smaller issues...instead of suddenly giving great freedom over much larger ones.

*Have I provided the training required for my child to handle this risk safely?*

For example, if I allow my children to use the lawnmower, have I shown them how to do so safely? Have we practiced using the mower together? Offering training helps our children experience the joy of conquering risks independently.

*What is my characteristic style of parenting?*

Great parents do their best to allow their children the freedom to make mistakes, experience the consequences, and solve the problems they encounter. Great parents also protect and rescue from time to time. How might you answer the following?

Do I protect or rescue most of the time, or do I tend to err on the side of allowing my kids to experience life and learn from it?