Helicopter parents
http://www.usatoday.com/money/jobcenter/workplace/bruzzese/story/2012-08-26/helicopter-parents-hurt-generation-of-workers/57292900/1

Self-sufficiency elusive to young adults of hovering parents

By Anita Bruzzese, Gannett

Helicopter parents— those folks who hover over their offspring continually — have prompted much debate, and nowhere may their influence become more evident than in the next generation of workers.

On the Job

By Anita Bruzzese

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Being a helicopter parent doesn't help your college student or recent grad in the long run.

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While some managers have complained for years about the need for the youngest generation of workers to be rewarded and mentored constantly, the truth is they may not have seen anything yet.

The generation in elementary school when 9/11 happened that has grown up with "stranger danger" now has experienced the Great Recession. Many are graduating from college and attempting to get their first jobs with expensive educations that have cost their parents dearly.

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So those hovering parents? They're in full helicopter mode, especially in a challenging job market. That's why employers had better get prepared, says Kathleen Elliott Vinson, a professor at Suffolk University Law School in Boston.

"This (helicopter parenting) all started in utero with Baby Einstein tapes when the mother is pregnant, and continues to the arms race for extracurricular activities for the child and the parents taking on teachers over grades," she says. "But what happens is that we've got a generation of kids that have a great anxiety of failing."

Professors often refer to the children of helicopter parents as "teacups" because "they're ready to break at the slightest stress" or "crispies" who "come to college already burned out from the treadmill of success their parents have placed on them," she says.

That translates into a generation of workers inexperienced at hearing criticism and lacking in independence and self-advocacy. If Mom or Dad isn't there to run interference, these kids may not have a clue about how to succeed on their own or understand how to bounce back from failure, she says.

"It's doesn't mean they can't succeed," she says. "It just means that they may not have any experience with taking the initiative and following through."

But wait, isn't that what college is for? To teach independence and how to get past the bumps in the road?

That may have been true once and still may be for some students, she says. But the constant barrage of parental interference during the college years have exacted a toll.

Vinson, who wrote this year about the ramifications of helicopter parenting in higher education, says many college professors need to make sure they're not falling into "helicopter teaching" by "constantly reminding students of deadlines, continuously checking up on students, being available or reachable at all times, continuously giving them extensions, or inflating grades, rather than see their student falter."

By accommodating helicopter parents, who may call and complain to university officials about their children's grades, "higher education could be enforcing" helicopter parenting, she says.

Vinson says professors and university officials aren't the only ones who have been targets of helicopter parents. College career centers are becoming a lightning rod for anxious parents concerned about their child getting a job, and some employers are even appointing workers to deal with the parents who may accompany junior to a job interview or feel no qualms about hounding human resources because they believe the salary offered isn't enough.

Vinson, herself a parent, says it's natural that parents hover over their children to a certain extent. But those who carry it too far are in real danger of turning unprepared and anxious kids into the world who have no idea how to succeed without extensive support.

She says parents can help their youngsters be better prepared by:

• **Letting the child think.** Not every minute of the day has to be scheduled with an activity. Simply allowing a child to have down time can help develop critical thinking skills.

• **Making the child ask.** Instead of calling a teacher or employer, parents should have the child talk to the person if a problem or question arises.

• **Allowing them to make choices.** If a parent continually directs the child, then the child doesn't have experience in making decisions. That can lead to making poor choices when confronted with serious issues such as alcohol or conflict resolution.

"There is nothing more controversial than when you're talking about people's kids," she says. "But we're talking about our future leaders and innovators."

Anita Bruzzese is author of "45 Things You Do That Drive Your Boss Crazy ... and How to Avoid Them," www.45things.com. Find an index of On the Job columns . Write to her in care of Gannett ContentOne, 7950 Jones Branch Drive, McLean, VA 22107. For a reply, include a self-addressed, stamped envelope.