**Article of the Week #2**

**Directions:**

1. **Show evidence of a close reading (highlighting key points and making notes in the margins – can be questions, thoughts, confusion, etc.)**
2. **Do the activity at the bottom of the article.**

# Former Stanford dean explains why helicopter parenting is ruining a generation of children

By [Emma Brown](http://www.washingtonpost.com/people/emma-brown) October 16

Julie Lythcott-Haims noticed a disturbing trend during her decade as a dean of freshmen at Stanford University. Incoming students were brilliant and accomplished and virtually flawless, on paper. But with each year, more of them seemed incapable of taking care of themselves.

At the same time, parents were becoming more and more involved in their children’s lives. They talked to their children multiple times a day and swooped in to personally intervene whenever something difficult happened.

From her former position at one of the world’s most prestigious schools, ­Lythcott-Haims came to believe that mothers and fathers in affluent communities have been hobbling their children by trying so hard to make sure they succeed and by working so diligently to protect them from disappointment, failure and hardship.

Such “overhelping” might assist children in developing impressive résumés for college admission, but it also robs them of the chance to learn who they are, what they love and how to navigate the world, Lythcott-Haims argues in her book, “[How to Raise an Adult: Break Free of the Overparenting Trap and Prepare Your Kid for Success](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1627791779/ref%3Das_li_qf_sp_asin_il_tl?ie=UTF8&amp;camp=1789&amp;creative=9325&amp;creativeASIN=1627791779&amp;linkCode=as2&amp;tag=thewaspos09-20&amp;linkId=USLQZGP2WKJGKP5E).”

“We want so badly to help them by shepherding them from milestone to milestone and by shielding them from failure and pain. But overhelping causes harm,” she writes. “It can leave young adults without the strengths of skill, will and character that are needed to know themselves and to craft a life.”

Lythcott-Haims is one of a growing number of writers — including Jessica Lahey (“The Gift of Failure”) and Jennifer Senior (“All Joy and No Fun: The Paradox of Modern Parenthood”) — who are urging stressed-out “helicopter” parents to breathe and loosen their grip on their children.

“Don’t call me a parenting expert,” Lythcott-Haims said in an interview. “I’m interested in humans’ thriving, and it turns out that overparenting is getting in the way of that.”

She cites reams of statistics on the rise of depression and other mental and emotional health problems among the nation’s young people. She has seen the effects up close: ­Lythcott-Haims lives in Palo Alto, Calif., a community that, following a string of suicides in the past year, has undertaken a period of soul-searching about what parents can do to stem the pressure that young people face.

Her book tour is taking her to more school auditoriums and parent groups than bookstores. She tells stories about overinvolved mothers and fathers and shares statistics about rising depression and other mental health problems in young people, which she hopes will spark change in communities across the country where helicopter parents are making themselves, and their children, miserable.

“Our job as a parent is to put ourselves out of a job,” she said. “We need to know that our children have the wherewithal to get up in the morning and take care of themselves.”

And how can parents help their children become self-sufficient? Teach them the skills they’ll need in real life and give them enough leash to practice those skills on their own, Lythcott-Haims said. And have them do chores. “Chores build a sense of accountability. They build life skills and a work ethic,” she said.

Lythcott-Haims said many parents ask how they can unilaterally deescalate in what feels like a college-admissions arms race. How can they relax about getting their child into Harvard if every other parent is going full speed ahead?

She said colleges could help tamp down on the admissions craze by going test-optional, leaving it up to students whether to submit SAT or ACT scores. And perhaps top-tier schools could agree to limit the number of such schools that each student may apply to, she said.

She urges families to think more broadly about what makes for a “good” college. Excellent educational experiences can be had at schools that are not among U.S. News and World Report’s top 20, she said, and several schools will accept students who don’t have a perfect résumé.

Parents need to see that even children who succeed in doing the impossible — getting into Stanford, Harvard or other elite schools — bear the scars of the admissions arms race.

“They’re breathless,” Lythcott-Haims said. “They’re brittle. They’re old before their time.”

**Create the following chart on looseleaf and staple it to this article for marks:**

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| Three things that you learned from the article (main ideas/important points). These can be written as quotes or examples. | Why learning that piece of information is of value to you in your life. |
| 1. |  |
| 2. |  |
| 3. |  |