



Written by [Lenore Skenazy](#) on June 23, 2023

Show The Nice Man Your Resume, Tyler

A recent front page article in The Wall Street Journal chronicles a problem that seems to be a sign of the times: parents accompanying their kids on job interviews.

And calling their kids' bosses to demand better treatment.

And showing up at their kids' jobs to fight their battles.

These stories can seem apocryphal, but The Journal's Te-Ping Chen dug up some jaw-dropping examples. One Seattle restaurateur recalled a co-worker whose mom asked the manager to let her son have Sundays off to watch football.



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That idea got sacked.

A Dollar Tree shopper told The Journal she was going into the store one day when an angry woman barged past her. It was the cashier's mom. A customer had given her daughter a hard time and the mom had come to give 'em hell.

But parents aren't just intervening once their kids *get* their jobs. Some are lurking not so subtly on the sidelines when their kids have online job interviews. "You'll sometime even hear them whispering," one recruiter told the paper. And some are actually accompanying their kids to those interviews in real life:

"At Smugglers' Notch Resort in Jeffersonville, Vt., parents haven't only applied for summer jobs on behalf of their children, they frequently try and sit in on their interviews, too, says human-resources coordinator Sam McDowell. 'They generally come in the door first, and their children come behind,' McDowell says. 'Sometimes it's a little bit confusing about who's actually there to interview.'" — The Wall Street Journal

Reporter Chen chalks up a lot of this behavior to the COVID-19 cocooning of parents and kids. But these problems were mounting long before the pandemic. In fact, here's a Wall Street Journal piece by Sue Shellenbarger from 2006:

"Helicopter parents are going to work. From Vanguard Group and St. Paul Travelers to General Electric and Boeing, managers are getting phone calls from parents asking them to hire their 20-something kids." — Sue Shellenbarger

The problem starts long before that first job interview. It starts in a childhood, with adults organizing a child's whole day: showing, teaching, saving, soothing the child all day long. Instead of learning to deal with risk, fear, snags and jerks, an adult has always been there to sort of pre-chew the experience.

Result? Kids lose out on learning how to deal with the confusion and drama of everyday life.

If young people are arriving at college or work unaccustomed to frustration and misunderstandings, that's a serious lack of experience.



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And if they don't develop the resources to work through obstacles, molehills come to look like mountains.

And job interviews look like Kilimanjaro.

I don't blame "helicopter parents" for overprotecting kids. I blame a culture so obsessively risk-averse it is forcing parents to helicopter.

But kids need the chance to be on their own sometimes, playing, roaming, taking risks, getting scrapes, making things happen and taking responsibility. After all: How can you learn to solve problems if there's always someone there, solving them *for* you?

How can you grow brave when someone's always watching over you?

How can you become an adult when someone who gave you birth is calling your boss?

It's great that our culture wants to protect kids from danger! But it has gone too far. Always helping kids is hurting them.

Deep down, today's parents know that.

And so do bosses.

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