

# OVERBEARING **VS** LENIENT PARENTS

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When was the last time you made a major life decision? Was it your decision to make or did someone else take the reins? We are born a blank slate and we look to our parents to make sure we have enough of that space filled with life-lessons before we step out of their protective embrace. But parents differ in their philosophies on how much of that space they fill and how much of it are left for us to write by ourselves. So should they keep their children on a tight leash or give them free rein?

During adolescence, we are moulded by parents' experiences and our interactions with others. We are impressionable, yet detest being dictated. These opposing, contradictory traits make for a very confusing and tumultuous phase for teenagers. It is one thing to ensure that we head in the right direction but what happens when our parents choose to exercise control over even the minutest detail? This is an approach known as 'helicopter parenting' – owing to the inclination to hover over their children, watching their every move.

*Aruba Adil, a private O-Level candidate says "My parents were making all my life decisions for me without even asking. Perhaps they thought those decisions would make me an accomplished human being, yet all it did was make me very, very unhappy and uninterested with the direction my own life was going in."*

Young adults rely on their parents for a great many things. We seek acknowledgement when we do something we are proud of and secretly wish to be reprimanded when we don't. We look to our parents before making decisions but in the end, they are our decisions to make. We reap the benefits of a decision well-made and it is we who bear the consequences of one that wasn't.

Overbearing parents seek to groom their children in their image, which is understandable since they

often have shoes worth filling. Wanting their children to choose the same path that led them to success and happiness is relatable, but we're talking about different generations. Times have changed since the parents were adolescents, and it is not sensible or sometimes even possible for teenagers now to make the same decisions their parents made when they were young.

*"My father was a bookish student from the 1980s, all he did was study and read and that worked out well for him. As a result, he rarely approves of me doing anything outside of school. If he had his way, I would've never picked up writing, been part of the school quiz team or found success in the Olympiads I decided to participate in despite his objections. I wouldn't have accomplished a lot of the things that I did and I would've been worse off for it," says Abrar Chowdhury, an SSC candidate.*

By smothering their children, parents are suffocating their initiative and sense of independence, preventing them from growing into self-sufficient individuals. Studies have shown that helicopter parenting can cause young adults to have a skewed view of the world. They may also exhibit a false sense of entitlement and narcissism.

So is 'democracy' the answer then? Should parents give their children full autonomy and trust them to distinguish right from wrong? As prevalent as overbearing parents are in our culture, the other end of the spectrum exists too and is often overlooked. Teenagers are, after all, young and there will be times when they need their parents. So what happens when parents, in their attempt to demonstrate leniency and trust, fail to notice when their children really need help or guidance? What happens when the children themselves, oblivious to the ramifications, begin to abuse the freedom they've been afforded?

*"The only reason my parents are so liberal is because they trust me and my decision to do the right thing," says Nadia Hossain, a first year BBA student at BRAC University. "But many, who are in my position, don't tell their parents what they are doing and go off on their own and the worst part is that some parents don't even bother to find out."*

Also, sometimes I feel like I don't exist. They don't call to check up on me or ask about my grades. I'm so busy I don't even get the time to sit with them during lunch, but they don't say anything about it. I miss them being stricter and more involved, it gets lonely sometimes."

It is easy to get overwhelmed when presented with too many options. Teenagers with parents, who allow their sons/daughters to make all major life decisions on their own without offering input, often find themselves confused and dazed. It also gives off the impression that the parents don't care about them, which can be disheartening.

If it isn't evident already, parenting is an art form. Shoving their opinions and ideologies down their children's throat is not the answer and neither is giving them free rein and hoping they find their own way. Raising a teenager is a monumental task. Parents need to strike a delicate balance that is nearly impossible to achieve. Just as we, in our fledgling years struggle to grasp the complexities and nuances of the world and our place in it, our parents struggle between the conflicting urges to protect us and to let us have room to grow. Regardless of their methods though, there is no doubt that their intentions remain noble and benevolent.

