

# Helium Parenting

**BY RABBI DAVID WOLPE**

There are some colorful descriptions of “helicopter parenting,” the practice of parental hovering to monitor children’s every movement. Colleges complain that when students matriculate, they are often lost — they do not know how to budget their time, handle disappointment, cook their own meals, and even laundry defeats them.

A few times while teaching at UCLA fathers and mothers accompanied students to meetings, to my astonishment. Years ago it would have been unspeakably humiliating to arrive a professor’s office with one’s mother. So for parents I have a new metaphor to aspire to — helium parenting.

We should hold on to our children as a child holds a balloon. Let them rise, float on their own, but have a grasp on the string so that they do not float away to unknown parts. The time will come when we need to release the balloon but in the meantime instead of hovering from above, we should be lightly holding from below. Think of it as parental string theory. Remember, we are not trying to create “good kids,” but competent, kind adults. Helicopters are big, expensive, cumbersome and dangerous. Balloons are colorful, joyous, and free.