

## Overparenting: What's the Problem?

Overparenting refers to unnecessary corrective, cautionary or disciplinary comments made by parents to kids.

Adults who overparent usually do it repeatedly and overparenting has predictable, negative effects on children. The negative reaction is what we call the “Anxious Parent, Angry Child” syndrome.

Continually expressing unnecessary worries about kids to the kids irritates the youngsters because it insults them. The parent's basic message is this: “I have to worry about you so much because you're incompetent; there's not much you can do on your own without my supervision and direction.” No child likes to be put down, and overparenting is definitely a put-down.



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## Three Reasons Why Overparenting Is Unnecessary

Overparenting comments can be unnecessary for several reasons:

1. The child already has the skill necessary to manage the situation.
2. Even if the child doesn't have all the necessary skills to manage the situation, it would be preferable for the youngster to learn by direct experience. When we moved in to our first house, the kids were about two and four. I'd watch them playing outside with other children, and every five minutes or so I'd see some kind of dispute that I thought needed my intervention. Then one day my wife asked me how I thought the kids survived all day while I was at work. No eyes poked out, no broken arms, no trips to the emergency room. That shut me up. I'd been overparenting the whole neighborhood!
3. The issue is trivial. Mike and Jimmy are out in the front yard playing catch with a baseball. Jimmy's Dad is washing the car in the driveway while the neighbor, Mr. Smith, is cutting his grass next door. Mike misses Jimmy's throw and the ball rolls over toward Mr. Smith, who smiles and tosses it back. Dad tells the two boys they will have to go somewhere else or stop playing catch. Should Dad have kept quiet? Yes, he should have. Let the two lads work it out with Mr. Smith, if necessary. The boys were having innocent, constructive fun, and Mr. Smith probably enjoyed trying out his old pitching arm again!

Want to encourage independence in your children? Be a good listener and avoid overparenting.