

# Overparenting

## When good intentions go too far, kids can suffer

By Victoria Clayton  
Contributor  
MSNBC1:13p.m ET Dec.7,2004

1 You can spot them in the grocery store. They’re the moms with the shopping cart  
cover that’s supposed to protect babies from germs. You can see them on the  
playground hovering over\* their toddlers\*, negotiating toy disputes for their 7-  
5 anything other than A’s.  
They’re not just parents, they’re superparents.

And while in many communities the above behaviour is par for the parental  
course\*, experts say that superparenting is really not so super. It’s more like over-  
anxious, over-vigilant and just plain overdone.

10 *Fragile creatures?*

“In the last few decades the belief became popular that children are exceptionally  
fragile creatures and we should treat them that way,” says Stearns.

15 The fact that many Americans are waiting longer to become parents and are  
having fewer children has also contributed greatly to the phenomenon. “If you  
have one or two children – rather than four or five – obviously, the individual child  
becomes much more precious,” he says.

*Love them the way they are.*

20 Nobody is suggesting that parenthood can or should be anxiety-free. What they are  
suggesting is that parents love their children for who they are, not what they want  
them to be. Most people don’t excel in every subject. So getting straight A’s is  
probably more about what you want rather than a true reflection of your child’s  
abilities.

25 Also allowing your child to fall, experience frustration and negotiate his or her  
own way in school and life – suffering consequences and reaping the benefits – is  
not only wise, it’s essential.

\* *Hovering over* = looking after

\* *Toddlers* = children

\* *Par for the parental course* = comportement attendu de la part des parents.