

## WHAT TYPE OF HELICOPTER PARENT ARE YOU?

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Colleges across the country are trying to educate parents about being helicopters. So called because many baby boomer parents these days hover over their children.

"Well, what it does is it keeps them a child," says Dr. Cary Anderson. Dr. Anderson, Student Life Vice President at St. Joseph's University, tells prospective students and their parents touring the school that

If you're a helicopter, choose what kind of helicopter you want to be," says Anderson.

The doctor describes three basic kinds of helicopter parents:

- **The Gunship Helicopter** - This parent typically swoops in to fight all the battles for their teenager.
- **The Rescue Helicopter** - A parent who flies in to save their young adults from crisis after crisis.
- **The Traffic Helicopter** - The parent who hovers above, offering guidance so their child can make their own decisions. Anderson says it's best to take the role of traffic helicopter. Jack, a high school senior from Phoenixville, says his mother can be a bit of a Rescue Helicopter. "It's good that she's trying to help me, but at the same time I want to be able to do it myself. Stand on my own two feet," says Jack. His mother said her defense, "That's my first instinct to give him as much as I know, so bad things won't happen."

Anderson says many schools encourage students to handle issues and conflicts that come up in college themselves. "We do that for 2 purposes. The 1st is to resolve the conflict. The 2nd is to teach the skills for conflict resolution that can be used later in life," Dr. Anderson explained.

In the end, experts and parents suggest it might make sense for parents to be traffic helicopters. But be ready to change with the situation. Anderson suggests, "When students are making poor decisions, that is the time to really get involved."

### **Take the Helicopter Parent Quiz:**

1) Your daughter receives a D grade on her first paper in philosophy. She believes it was Grade A work. You should:

A: Call the professor and demand that she change your daughter's grade.

B: Tell your daughter that grades don't matter and she should go shopping to make her feel better.

C: Encourage her to talk to the professor to find out why the professor felt the paper deserved a "D."

2) You receive a letter from your son's university stating that he has been placed on disciplinary probation for underage drinking. He insists he was only at the party, not drinking. You should:

A: No matter what time it is, have your attorney call the Dean of Students at home and insist that your son has never had a drink of alcohol because "he wouldn't do that."

B: Call your son and congratulate him for finally adjusting to college life.

C: Talk to your son

3) Your daughter calls you at 2 in the morning, complaining that her roommate is a monster and she cannot live with her for even one more day. She insists that you must have the "monster" removed immediately. You should:

A: Get the roommate on the phone and give her a lecture about disturbing your daughter. Tell the roommate she must go to the housing office tomorrow and move to a different room.

B: When the phone rings, pretend that the answering machine came on and make a long beeeeeep sound.

C: Wait a day and talk to your daughter about resolving conflicts. Offer suggestions on where she can go on campus - such as her RA - to get help if she needs it.

4) Your son is scheduled to call you at 4 p.m. and it's 8 p.m. You should:

A: Call the campus police and demand that they convene a search party immediately

B: Have a cocktail.

C: Leave a message and remind your son that just because he's away at college, he still needs to keep his commitments. If you still don't hear anything by the next morning, call the university.

Helicopter parents can be grouped into three general categories:

**"Gunship"** helicopter parents dive immediately into any issue, demanding immediate resolution in their child's favor, usually without input and always without involvement of

the student. If you answered "A" to these questions, you qualify as a gunship helicopter parent.

**"Grounded"** Helicopter parents are disengaged to the point of not being helpful at all. If you answered "B" to these questions, you should consider taking a bit more of an interest in your child's college career.

**"Traffic"** helicopter parents guide their child away from pitfalls and keep them on the road to maturity. If you answered "C" to these questions, you are a traffic 'copter - involved in your child's life, but not living yours over again. Helping your child learn to navigate the processes of grade disputes, roommate conflicts, and judicial procedures leads to a well-rounded student who is better prepared for independent life after college.

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