

# Helicopter Parents are Hovering

☒ “They’re called ‘helicopter parents,’” my niece said. I don’t know how this slipped by me, but I had no idea there was an actual name for parents who overparent and refuse to let their children take responsibility for their wrongdoing or impose any consequences of their children for their own actions. In other words, these are parents who want to eliminate any and all obstacles their children face.

While visiting with my family over the holidays, one of my nieces, who is a math teacher in a Catholic high school, told me a story about a recent incident she had with one of her students.

While giving her class a test, she noticed one of the boys looking behind at another student’s answer sheet and then changing his own answers. The second time he did it, he looked up and saw my niece looking at him and, at that point, she just shook her head. Immediately after the test was collected and all the other students left the classroom, she said to this boy, “what do you have to say about this?” He said, “I deserve a zero; I regret it.”

About twenty minutes later, she received an email from him which said he didn’t cheat. Later that night, he emailed again and said he couldn’t understand why she didn’t notice others cheating. (I guess that makes his cheating alright.) That same night, his mother emailed her and said she wanted a meeting with my niece and brought up the fact that her son had anxiety disorder for which he was medicated.

At the meeting which lasted 80 minutes (!), and included my niece, the student, his parents, and the assistant principal, it was discussed that neither my niece nor the school was

aware (which is a school requirement) that this kid had been diagnosed with anxiety disorder or that he was on any medication because the parents did not want their son to be labeled as such.

The mother took her son's side and said, even though she wasn't there, he was looking around the room to see how other kids were progressing with the test. The student said at the meeting that he was being sarcastic when he told my niece "I deserve a zero; I regret it." According to my niece, his statement never came across as being sarcastic.

To top it all, the mother then blamed my niece for not having multiple versions of the test! My niece, who used to teach in a low-scoring, high poverty inner city school, told the mother cheating was never an issue in her previous high school, and the mother accused her of being "naïve."

I never cheated once all through Catholic grammar school, public high school, college and law school. Not once. I may have been paddled and slapped around by the nuns in grammar school for talking too much and one of my English teachers in high school threw a book which landed on my desk to get my attention, but it never dawned on me to cheat. My sister-in-law and my husband, who were also part of the conversation with my niece, both agreed that our parents would never have allowed us to get away with this type of behavior.

While talking with an acquaintance, helicopter parents are not in short supply where I live. Rather than face threatened lawsuits by parents, the local high school's policy of "get a DUI, get suspended" isn't enforced.

It's a very sad state of affairs when children aren't taught right from wrong or that when they do something that's inappropriate, they should own up to it. What are these kids going to do when their parents are no longer around to clean up their messes? What kind of lesson does a child learn when

someone is there to bail them out of trouble and they never have to suffer the consequences for their bad choices?

I can't imagine how this type of behavior does children any good. Since the talk with my niece, I heard about a college student who told a recruiter after he was hired that "my father wants to speak with you." Sounds like these parents are producing an entire generation of weak, immature, irresponsible spoiled men and women. I know I wouldn't hire anyone like this. Would you?

I don't get it, but if you do, God bless you.