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# A generation chained by apron strings

**Sam Schulman**

*The Wall Street Journal*

Why can't modern parents leave their children alone for just five minutes? asked Sam Schulman in *The Wall Street Journal*. It's abundantly clear that we're now raising "the most closely watched generation in history." The pattern starts in grade school: The moment the bell rings at 3 o'clock, we drive our little darlings "to gymnastics, soccer, karate, or violin lessons." In the summer, the kids aren't allowed to laze around the neighborhood, making their own fun; they're packed off to adult-supervised camps, where they send daily reports home via e-mail. Later, parents become involved in every detail of their budding teenagers' lives, from college prep to dating. High school graduation offers no escape; one college recently found that its freshmen talk to their folks by cell phone "as many as 15 times a day." Mom and Dad, of course, say they just want to make sure that their kids are happy. But overprotectiveness actually reduces that possibility. To become successful adults, kids need experience making decisions—good and bad. They have to experience failure, and heart-break, and the skinned knees Mommy and Daddy try to save them from. So if parents really want to help their kids, they'll back off—and let them make their own mistakes.