



## Votes from Facebook

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### Mary Doster Cuda

Micromanage a child's life and you end up with an adult who can't manage his or her own life.



### Michael Lopez

Absolutely not! Those days are long gone. If anything, children today need more parenting and supervision, especially with all the peer pressure they are and will be exposed to.



### Vicki Denley

This was called the everyday norm for me and my siblings. Children do need some sort of freedom to figure out right from wrong and [solve problems].



### Susanne Newman Cash

I just think the world is different now.



### Kary Bashford-Blumer

Our society has become too obsessed with helicopter parenting. Kids need some space to creatively problem-solve and build their own social skills. Kids need opportunities to take some chances and learn natural consequences.



### Christopher Kaphaem

Kids need supervision. Until a certain age or maturity level is reached, they need direct supervision and progressive education about their environment and potential dangers within.

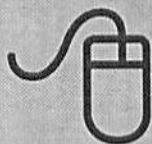


MEDIA BAKERY / DIGITAL VISION

# Is hands-off parenting a good thing?

**HANDS-OFF PARENTING** (also called simplicity, free-range or slow parenting) is a parenting style that reduces the amount of parental supervision, for example, letting a child walk to the park or use public transportation alone. Proponents say it encourages children to be safe and self-reliant. Critics argue this type of parenting is too permissive and exposes children to unacceptable risks and problems.

What do you think?



Find out more about this topic on the search engines of your choice.

Search these titles:

- "The Case For Free-Range Parenting"
- "Parenting Styles: What They Are and Why They Matter"
- "Ask the Expert: Supervision Challenges and Solutions for Outdoor Play"
- "The Murky Law on Free-Range Kids"
- "The Free-Range Parenting Quandary"
- "Free-Range Kids - Crime Safety Security for Women & Children"



**Lenore Skenazy** is a public speaker and founder of the book, blog and movement Free-Range Kids ([freerangekids.com](http://freerangekids.com)).

## YES

WHEN YOU GO online or turn on your TV it looks like kids need a security detail every time they leave the house. Scary. Parents have responded by “helicoptering.” To see this in action, check out the morning drop-off line at many schools. Even kids who live close enough to walk are often driven, just to be “safe.” But those same kids are missing the exercise, independence and problem-solving skills (how do they get past the big dog?) that used to be a formative part of childhood.

We all know that childhood obesity and diabetes are on the rise. Depression, too. There’s even evidence that kids are showing up at college more thin-skinned and easily upset. A major report in Canada just declared that “parents who are over-protective of their child’s play, or keep them indoors because it’s perceived to be safer, are actually hurting their child’s long-term health.”

And now, even parents who want their kids to play outside are worried about being investigated for negligence. That’s what happened to a family in suburban Maryland—twice—when they let their kids, 10 and 6, walk home from the local park on their own.

This, despite a recent *Washington Post* headline declaring, “There’s never been a safer time to be a kid in America.” We are back to the crime rate we had before color TV. And yet, only about 13 percent of kids walk to school. Even fewer play outside unsupervised. Why can’t we let them hop on their bikes and come home when the streetlights come on?

Surprise—we can! In response to the uproar (or so it seems), Maryland just changed its Child Protective Services guidelines to state: “Children playing outside or walking unsupervised does not meet the criteria for a CPS response.”

Some people think free-range parenting means neglecting children or being heedless of possible danger. It doesn’t. My stay-at-home-mom knew we don’t live in a perfect world, but she was able to keep the danger in perspective and prepare me.

She taught me to cross the street safely, never get into a car with anyone and ask adults for help if I needed it. She also taught me to tell time. These are the age-old instructions parents always gave their kids before sending them out into the world. And then—because she trusted her kid, her community and her own parenting—she let me out.

Childhood is a terrible thing to waste. Go free range! 🐕



**Karen Ruskin** is an author, psychotherapist and marriage/family counselor ([drkarenruskin.com](http://drkarenruskin.com)).

## NO

AS A COUNSELING professional for over 20 years, I’m extremely concerned about the assertions of the “free range” movement. I believe those who subscribe to them are putting children in harm’s way. Here’s why.

Free-range parenting is not a legitimate parenting style. Rather, it is a buzz phrase based upon one personal opinion that became popular reading. There is no proof that free-range wandering has any benefit. The free-range philosophy says the only way to teach independence and resilience is for children—including 5- to 10-year-olds—to be unsupervised. This goes against everything known and researched in early childhood development. Children between 5 and 10 years old simply do not have the risk-assessment skills to navigate and avoid many dangers. Even older children need supervision, depending on the situation and environment.

The free-range movement has the earmarks of a cult. With cults, members are encouraged to avoid listening to other views, especially professional views. Some proponents of free range have explicitly told people not to listen to experts. Cults also manipulate facts and headlines to support their arguments and use sham-

ing techniques to ensure compliance from members. For example, free-range leaders label any parent who believes in child supervision an overprotective “helicopter” parent. Who wants this negative label? No one. So parents begin to question their own common sense, which is exactly what a cult wants you to do.

Decades of legitimate research into parenting styles have shown the most effective one to be “authoritative.” Authoritative parents are warm but firm. They encourage their children to be independent while maintaining limits and controls on their actions. Authoritative parents understand their child’s need to play and engage with the world while also being mindful of their obligation to protect their child from danger.

For me, it all comes down to “mindful systemic parenting.” Being mindful of the age and stage of development your child is in, mindful of the choices you are making as a parent: Are you doing something for your child’s benefit or your own? Thinking systemic means looking around you at the entire system surrounding your home and family. What’s your neighborhood like? The traffic? You get the idea.

Don’t gamble with your child’s well-being because of something you read online or watched on TV. There are many great ways to develop confident, self-reliant, resilient and independent kids that include adult oversight. 🐕



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**57% NO**

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