

Should Parents Stop Helping Their Kids So Much with Homework?

A child is capable of completing a homework assignment without his parents' help. Astonishing, right?

According to a recent [New York Times](#) piece by KJ Dell'Antonia on her own parenting experience, it would seem to be. But, Dell'Antonia's experience is not unique in our culture that expects "good" parents to be hyper-involved.

Dell'Antonia relates that her two fourth-grade children were assigned what she and they deemed an impossible task. Fully intending to handhold through the process, Dell'Antonia was called away with work travel. Remarkably (to her), both children completed the project alone and did just fine, leaving her to question her parenting:

"It would have been so easy, so justifiable, to involve myself more, and under different circumstances, I would have. After my unintentional hands-off approach, I am questioning my own judgment on when my help is really necessary, and when it's only in the service of smoothing a path that should stay a little rough."

Experts agree with her revelation:

"'Take an interest,' she [Julie Lythcott-Haims, a former dean of freshmen at Stanford University and the author of [How to Raise an Adult: Break Free of the Overparenting Trap and Prepare Your Kid for Success](#)] said, when they ask for help. 'You can help them interpret instructions, you can help them procure materials, but when they're turning to you and saying, 'I can't, I don't know,' you have to say, 'Yes you

can. This is the homework assigned, your teacher thinks you can do it, and I do too.'"

And yet, this is incredibly difficult to do when every pressure in our culture is saying your kids will fail if you do not help them.

In Jim Gaffigan's book [*Dad Is Fat*](#), Gaffigan astutely and humorously observes that fathers of his dad's generation were quite hands-off in their parenting and they did not feel bad about:

"The amazing thing is not that they didn't do any of these things, it's that they didn't feel guilty about it at all. I have my own baby sling and I still feel guilty all the time."

It's this overabundance of guilt and fear that seems to dictate how modern parents approach raising their children. Therefore, it is not surprising that Dell'Antonia felt the need to apologize profusely throughout her children's project process for NOT doing THEIR homework for them.

Is it time to stop letting parental fear and guilt cripple our children?