

Whatever Happened to 'Go Outside and Play'?

CNN recently ran [an article](#) in which a number of older, more experienced mothers weighed in on the difference between raising children today and raising them 30 to 50 years ago. Each of the mothers contributed interesting insight, but veteran mother Judy Wallace hit upon one of the big elephants looming in the realm of parenting today:

“The biggest difference is that I feel like you’re all so concerned with keeping the kids busy, taking them everywhere and having to take up all their time with activities, where in the ’60s, that wasn’t the case,” she said.

‘When you were little, you would go out and play with your friends. You kind of entertained yourself more than the parents nowadays, who are constantly trying to entertain the kids.’”

Ms. Wallace is certainly correct. Never, it seems, has there been more supervision, pre-planned play-dates, or micromanaged decisions for children than there are today.

But then, what harm does such supervision bring? Doesn’t it seem that oversight would more carefully guide children into the role they will fill as adults?

Not necessarily. In fact, [according to](#) early twentieth century British educator Charlotte Mason, too much oversight of children can actually have the opposite effect and lead to crippling them:

“Boys and girls must have time to invent episodes, carry on adventures, live heroic lives, lay sieges and carry forts, even if the fortress be an old armchair; and in these affairs

the elders must neither meddle nor make. ... There is an idea afloat that children require to be taught to play—to play at being little fishes and lambs and butterflies. No doubt they enjoy these games which are made for them, but there is a serious danger. In this matter the child who goes too much on crutches never learns to walk; he who is most played with by his elders has little power of inventing plays for himself; and so he misses that education which comes to him when allowed to go his own way and act,

*'As if his whole vocation
Were endless imitation.'*"

Could it be that the trend to entertain and micromanage every move children make is now resulting in young adults who have no clue how to [responsibly think and act for themselves?](#)

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