Helicopter Parents

 At 12:03 A.M. on a weeknight, I slowly crept my Honda Accord back into the driveway. I was hoping that maybe my parents had fallen asleep and wouldn’t notice what time I had come back home. Unfortunately, not all wishes come true; there was my mom, standing on the front porch with her arms tightly crossed over her polka dot patterned pajama top. As I slunk up the driveway to the front door, a million thoughts of what my mother was going to do ran through my head at the speed of light. The only thing I knew for sure was that I was definitely in trouble.

With a heavy heart, I reached the front door. All my Mom had to say was,

“Give me your keys.”

I tried providing the excuse, “Mom, I’m sorry for being late it’s just…”

But she abruptly interrupted me with, “Valerie, I stayed up all night worrying about you, just hand over your car keys and go to bed. You’re grounded.”

At first, I was furious at my mom, she knew that my car was one of my lifelines, right after my phone, so how in the world could she punish me for being just a couple minutes late past curfew? I stomped up the stairs, each step sounded like a roar of thunder and I knew that I was waking up everyone else in the house, however I did not care. As I flung my body down onto my bed I could taste the salty tears running down my cheeks that would soon leave mascara stains on my pale, yellow pillowcase. The next morning, with red, puffy eyes from the crying I had done the night before, I had a discussion with my mom about why I

was being grounded. Her famous words, “I am doing this because I love you and want you to be successful” popped up expectedly in the conversation. I tried to convince her to take it back,

“Mom I was only a couple minutes late, why can’t you just cut me some slack this one time?”

But she firmly stuck her ground and explained that, “No, if you tried to tell your boss one day that you were only a couple minutes late then I can assure you that you would no longer have a job. The same thing applies with something like an interview; even a couple minutes can make the difference in whether or not you are considered for the job”.

After we talked I realized that she was only being hard on me because she cares about me and wants me to do well in life. I eventually apologized and have not been even a second late since that day. Little instances such as this one makes me grateful that I have what can be described as somewhat strict parents.

One of my childhood friends, Kenzie, was in the car with me that night as well. She lived on the opposite side of town in a large house with a sports car as well as an expensive BMW in the driveway. Kenzie had perfectly straight, light brown hair, with lots of blonde highlights that her mom had most likely paid for her to get. Her skin would have been a beautiful tan color, but she’d gotten spray tan after spray tan, so it now had an artificial orange tint. Her eyes were naturally a pretty gray, but she chose to buy all sorts of different

colored contacts to put in instead, her favorite being a blue that was the color of Listerine, clearly fake, but she liked to tell people they were her natural eye color. While visiting at her

house, it was evident to me even back then that Kenzie’s parents let her do whatever she wanted. This fact is so ironic because the whole reason I was late that night is because I was dropping Kenzie back off at her house, although she had no curfew and her parents could have cared less if she walked in at 3 A.M.

For some people a dream or a vision exists of a tremendously long red ladder with endless old, rusty rungs that go up forever into the clouds with no clear endpoint or finish line. Children with overly strict parents tend to have this perception because their parents have unlimited expectations that unfortunately can never be achieved. Feelings of never being good enough and the constant desire to feel accomplished can manifest themselves into a dangerous level. According to Newportacademy.com, a series of evidence-based healing

centers, “studies show that helicopter parenting has long-lasting repercussions on children, which can follow them into adolescence and adulthood. In particular, when a parent is overly

controlling, children have a harder time learning to manage their emotions and behavior”. This information proves that children with this type of parent can grow up to ultimately become mentally unstable because that their parents are always controlling and managing everything for them, including emotions and behavior.

 In my teen years, I had another friend named Emily that lived across the street in a rather small house. She lived in a one-story with faded green paint and a yard that was just

big enough that you didn’t need a riding lawn mower for. She had wild, untamable golden curls that glinted in the sun, her eyes the color of the ocean, and her skin was a ghostly white, as if she spent more time in a room with no windows then walking outside in the fresh air.

Emily’s mother was a widow who rarely let Emily go out of the house or do anything on her own. She was what can only be described as a helicopter parent. Yes, that term is exactly what it sounds like, they hover and constantly watch over every aspect of their child’s life. For Emily’s sake, this was quite problematic. One year, Emily and I were supposed to try out for our high school’s soccer team in the spring, but her mom wouldn’t let her because she thought that it was dangerous, and that Emily could get hurt. I realized later in life that Emily did not get to experience most of the things that other kids had the opportunity to because her mom was so strict with her. One of the best lessons in life is learning from your mistakes whether it be from not studying for an exam which results in a bad grade or forgetting about a sports practice and not being able to play in the next game. These types of instances where

you can easily recover from your errors are chances to better yourself, however, when people like Emily are unable to get the option to do so, then it can have a more pronounced effect in later years. From this, I witnessed that she could not handle things that went wrong.

 At the time I was utterly jealous that unlike Emily and I, Kenzie got so much freedom and got whatever her heart desired. However, eventually I witnessed how harmful that was for when Kenzie grew up. There is specifically one instance that sticks out to me where Kenzie had totaled not one, not two, but three cars including her mom’s expensive sports car.

Each time she wrecked a car, her parents chose to buy her a shiny new one that smelled as though it had just been brought out of the factory; which was nothing compared to the fake “new car” air freshener aroma. By continuing to supply her with new cars, her parents made Kenzie had no remorse for what she did and definitely in no way did it teach her a lesson

about being more careful and not making such immense mistakes. Growing up, Kenzie always got everything she wanted and was able to go out whenever and with whoever. She now has gotten caught and charged with underaged drinking and is currently living with her boyfriend in her mother’s basement, unemployed and pregnant at the age of 19.

Kenzie taught me an important message. Although I was envious at the time, that is no longer the case, because I realized that even though she got everything she wanted, it did not help her to become a better person or even have a desire to be successful. Kenzie’s experiences taught me an important lesson that I will always keep in the back of my mind.

 Even though I complained all the time and considered my parents to be strict, they were nowhere near a detrimental level. In fact, after I grew up and went to college I then

realized that they just had my best interest in mind. For example, when I was younger I was unable to spend the night at anyone’s house until both my parents had met my friend’s parents. I was always so frustrated with this rule because I saw other people, such as Kenzie, who were able to just go wherever and whenever they pleased. Looking back, I should have realized that it was actually for my own personal safety. The world is turning into quite a

dangerous place; my parents just wanted to know that they could trust who I was spending time with and that I would be perfectly safe staying there.

Grades were one area in specific that my parents always kept an eye on me with. Right from the start they could tell that I was “one smart cookie” and that if I just pushed myself a little bit then I could do really well in school. As early as middle school, I can remember my parents either being really proud of me or very disappointed based on the grades I brought home. Whenever I got a bad grade I would have to show it to my mom and we would talk about what happened and try for a better score next time. My parents were never the type to constantly do my work for me or email my teachers to blame them for my mistakes. From a young age I knew that my grades were my responsibility and that I had to work for them. By monitoring how I was doing in school in a regular basis without being excessive, my parents taught me how to gain work ethic which has helped throughout the rest of my life so far.

By implementing just the basic and most essential rules, my parents were able to ensure that I would always be safe and turn out to be a productive member of society. Although I perceived them as being overly strict parents, they were just doing what was best for my well-being. Even though I had to deal with consequences when I messed up, I am

thankful because they taught me important life lessons that I will remember for years to come. The gap between being too strict and simply disciplining is a fine line, however, my parents managed to successfully discover this balance.

Work Cited

Monroe, Jamison. “The Effects of Helicopter Parenting.” *Newport Academy*, Newport Academy, 10 Jan. 2019, www.newportacademy.com/resources/restoring-families/the-effects-of-helicopter-parenting/.