

# Parents, Relax, You Don't Need to Smother

I think parents put vastly more on themselves than makes sense. I believe this occurs for 2 main reasons.

1. Our media/culture has shifted since the early 20th century. We used to see depictions of families revolving around the preferences and desires of the parents. Now, we see them revolving the preferences of the children. Ergo, we believe children need an abundance of parental attention, affection and focus for proper development.

2. Children no longer go out and play like they used to. Kids don't initiate and fulfill their own desires by negotiation with other kids, but rather by nagging their parents. This changes the focus from other children to their parents. Children don't need parental attention and play as much as they just need general attention and play.

I believe the role of parent is supposed to be a cultural/structural leader, protector, provider, and sage. Today, our culture teaches that the main roles are friend, peer, partner, therapist, and advocate. I don't have a problem with having a friendly and cooperative relationship with your kids, in fact, I think it is ideal. I just believe that the incentives are being misaligned. We are misreading a child's general desire for play and social interaction with peers as a desire for parental attention and validation.

Playing with your kids is great. Fostering a friendly and respectful relationship is fantastic. I just don't think kids need parental attention nearly as much as our culture does. We are observing the results of their culturally induced isolation from other children, and neurotically seeing these messages as being about us. It isn't. They are just supposed to be playing spontaneously with people (mainly other kids) vastly more than our culture is enabling.