

# Too Safe For Their Own Good - Are We Overprotecting Our Children?



As parents, our primary instinct is to protect our children from harm. We strive to create a safe and nurturing environment where they can thrive and grow.

However, there is growing concern that our well-intentioned efforts to keep our children safe may be hindering their development and independence. Are we becoming too safe for their own good?

Today, children are brought up in a world where the fear of accidents, injuries, and danger is prevalent. From being wrapped in bubble wrap to being constantly supervised during play, our children are shielded from the uncertainties of life. But at what cost?

**Too Safe for Their Own Good: How Risk and Responsibility Help Teens Thrive**



by Michael Ungar (Paperback – February 13, 2007)

★★★★☆ 4 out of 5



## Overprotection and Its Consequences

While ensuring our children's safety is crucial, overprotection can lead to adverse consequences. By constantly shielding our children from any form of risk or failure, we deprive them of valuable learning experiences. Children are naturally curious, resilient, and adaptable. They need to explore and push boundaries to develop essential life skills and foster their independence.

Overprotective parenting can result in children growing up fearful, anxious, and lacking in confidence. They may struggle to make decisions, face challenges, and overcome obstacles. By removing the opportunity for our children to learn from their own mistakes, we stunt their growth and hinder their ability to become resilient and self-reliant individuals.

## The Importance of Risk-Taking and Resilience

Risk-taking plays a crucial role in child development. By allowing children to take calculated risks, we empower them to assess and manage challenges independently. It helps them develop problem-solving skills, decision-making abilities, and emotional resilience. Whether it's climbing a tree, riding a bike, or

making new friends, these experiences provide opportunities for growth and learning.

Resilience is another key trait that children develop through facing challenges and overcoming obstacles. It is the ability to bounce back from adversity, and it helps them navigate life's ups and downs. By allowing our children to encounter and handle setbacks, we equip them with the tools they need to cope with life's uncertainties, teaching them valuable life lessons along the way.

## **Finding the Right Balance**

While it is important to ensure the safety of our children, finding the right balance between protection and independence is crucial. Parents need to foster an environment that encourages exploration, independence, and learning from experiences. Here are some tips to strike the right balance:

- Gradually introduce age-appropriate risks and challenges.
- Encourage outdoor play and exploration.
- Teach problem-solving and decision-making skills.
- Allow children to make mistakes and learn from them.
- Promote open communication and trust.
- Be a guiding presence without constantly intervening.

By providing our children with the tools to navigate risks, make decisions, and develop resilience, we equip them to face life's challenges with confidence and adaptability.

While our intent to protect our children is well-meaning, we must be cautious not to create a world that is too safe for their own good. Allowing children to take

risks, make mistakes, and learn from their experiences fosters independence, resilience, and valuable life skills. By finding the balance between safety and independence, we can raise confident and self-reliant individuals who are prepared to thrive in the real world.



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Canadian children are safer now than at any other time in history. So why are we so fearful for them? When they're young, we drive them to playdates, fill up their time with organized activity, and cocoon them from every imaginable peril. We think we are doing what's best for them. But as they grow into young adults and we continue to manage their lives, running interference with teachers and coaches, we are, in fact, unwittingly stunting them.

Internationally respected social worker and family therapist Michael Ungar tells us why our mania to keep our kids safe is causing us to do the opposite: put them in harm's way. By continuing to protect them from failure and disappointment, many of our kids are missing out on the "risk-taker's advantage," the benefits that come from experiencing manageable amounts of danger. In *Too Safe for Their Own Good*, Ungar inspires parents to recall their own childhoods and the lessons they learned from being risk-takers and responsibility-seekers, much to the annoyance

of their own parents. He offers the support parents need in setting appropriate limits and provides concrete suggestions for allowing children the opportunity to experience the rites of passage that will help them become competent, happy, thriving adults.

In many communities, we are failing miserably doing much more than keeping our children vacuum-safe. They are not getting the experiences they need to grow up well. An entire generation of children from middle class homes, in downtown row houses, apartment blocks, and copycat suburbs, whose good fortune it is to have sidewalks and neighbourhood watch programs, crossing guards, and playground monitors, are not being provided with the opportunities they need to learn how to navigate their way through life's challenges. We don't intend any harm. Quite the contrary. In our mania to provide emotional life jackets around our kids, helmets and seatbelts, approved playground equipment, after-school supervision, an endless stream of evening programming, and no place to hang out but the tiled flooring of our local mall, we parents are accidentally creating a generation of youth who are not ready for life. Our children are too safe for their own good.

—From Too Safe for Their Own Good



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