

The Dirty Dozen Pitfalls

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COMMON PITFALL	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE(S)
CAUTIONING	Continuously telling kids to be careful or to watch out for dangers, thereby over-cueing and heightening a child's safety radar	"Be careful using X" "Grease is bad for you"
HELICOPTERING	Limiting kid independence and being overprotective	"Let me do it for you" "I'm going to go with you, just in case"
OVEREXTENDING	Scheduling kids for too many activities, which limits play and downtime—play and boredom are important	Enrolling in extracurriculars and play dates without any downtime
DEFERRING	Providing too many choices or handing over decisions to kids	"Would you like to do it yourself or do you want me to ask her for you?" "What would you like for dinner?"
DISMISSING	Denying or downplaying a child's anxious feelings	"That's not scary at all"
HESITATING	Lacking confidence in setting expectations, plans, or directions which communicates parent anxiety and cues children to feel unsure	"I'm not sure if you're ready for X" "Hmmm, well, do you think you could maybe do it by yourself?"
MODELING	Demonstrating excessive anxiety (without modeling coping) in actions or comments, which children hear, see, and learn	Parents are visibly anxious around children. NOTE. This is different than labeling emotion and modeling positive coping, which is "I feel nervous about X. I'm going to take a break and calm down"
REASSURING	Providing excessive reassuring feedback, which ultimately creates	"You'll be okay. I will be with you." "Nothing bad is going to happen"

	dependency and reinforced anxious avoidance	"Everything will be okay"
OVERCOMPLIMENTING	Giving <u>too much</u> “superficial” positive feedback that is focused on perfection or only on performance, which creates dependency in children to look for validation	"That looks perfect." "You didn't even make one mistake"
MISINTERPRETING	Thinking or believing that any distress or anxiety is bad -or- seeing only the problem behavior but not the anxiety under the surface	"This is fun - why are you having such a bad attitude?"
AVOIDING	Not talking about or doing things that make children feel some discomfort	Family members are not allowed to talk about needles/injections.
ACCOMMODATING	Purposefully or unintentionally censoring or navigating around triggers that provoke discomfort in children, thereby leading to avoidance and a small comfort zone	Walking into school with a child who has trouble separating from their parents (at a developmentally inappropriate age). Repeatedly answering the child's anxious questions about what they will eat for dinner. Speaking for a child when the child is greeted by their teacher. Parents modify their schedules because child might feel nervous about going to a childcare or afterschool program.