

Intrusive parents make kids self-critical, anxious and depressed

By Cassandra Morgan



"We need to support the system to better respond to children and not place them at further risk." Photo: John Donegan

Children with intrusive parents are self-critical, anxious and, in some cases, depressed, according to a study by the National University of Singapore.

The findings were backed by Australian academics, including Mark Dadd, director of the Child Behaviour Research Clinic at the University of Sydney, who said children with intrusive parents were at the same risk in Australia.

The study was conducted from 2010 to 2014, and assessed 263 seven-year-olds from 10 schools.

To find out if parents were intrusive, researchers gave each child a puzzle to complete within a time limit and told their parents they could help at any time.

Parents who regularly interfered with their children's problem-solving attempts were further assessed for controlling behaviours.

Analysis showed that 60 per cent of the children were increasingly self-critical as a result, and 78 per cent were high in socially prescribed perfectionism, a rejection of personal flaws based on the expectations of society.

Children who demonstrated these traits had increased risk of developing symptoms of anxiety, depression and even suicide.

They became afraid of making mistakes and often put blame on themselves for not being good enough.

Professor Dadd said this finding had been demonstrated a number of times in Australia.

"This is not a new finding, this is something we've known for many years," he said.

Professor Dadd said Australian parents needed to hang back and let their children be independent problem solvers so they could thrive into adulthood.

"The study speaks to the importance of parents being able to pull back and help the child problem solve themselves rather than just jumping in," he said.

Professor Dadd said that it was vital information warning parents of the risks of controlling behaviour was made freely available.

"It's about helping parents, not in a coercive or blaming way, but empowering parents to have the skills to facilitate their children's ability to independently problem solve," he said.

"It's important that we make this good education available online and in parenting programs, to point out the importance of encouraging independent problem solving in children."

Source: <http://www.theage.com.au/lifestyle/health-and-wellbeing/wellbeing/intrusive-parents-make-kids-selfcritical-anxious-and-depressed-20160701-gpwdh6.html#ixzz4DUALX3n0>