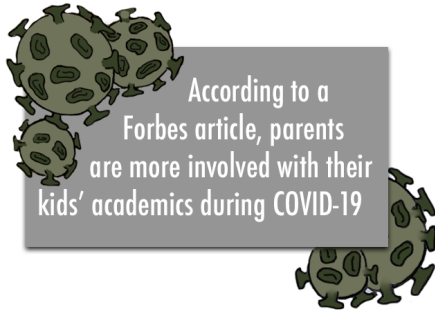
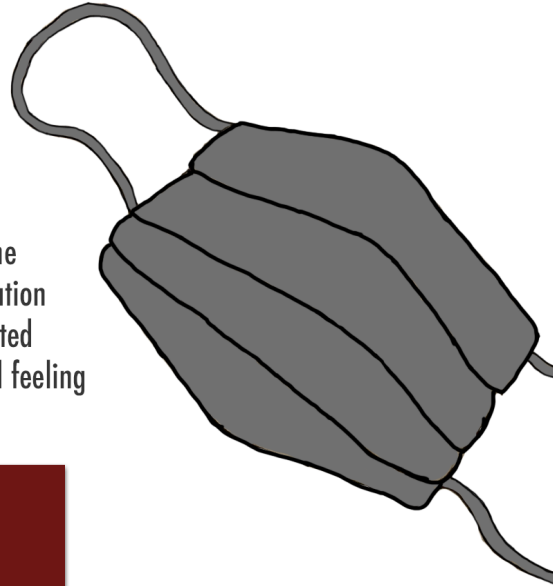


# Parents struggle to support during distance learning



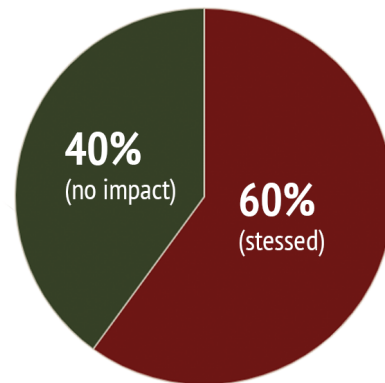
According to a Forbes article, parents are more involved with their kids' academics during COVID-19

Several large-scale studies published by the National Center for Biotechnology Information found that 43.7% of children 12–18 reported depressive symptoms and 37.4% reported feeling more anxious during quarantine



## THE IMPACT

A survey of 200 local students found that 120 of them felt that their parents were making distance learning more stressful rather than creating a supportive environment.



Parents who are too overbearing or too authoritative and strict can unintentionally...

cause their kids to have higher rates of depression

make their kids feel isolated from them

leave kids with the inability to solve problems



ELLE HORST

# TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT

## PARENTS AND THE PANDEMIC

ELLE HORST

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With parents and children in close quarters due to quarantine, families struggle to separate their home life from school life.

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The Bay Area is dominated by academically-obsessed parents, many of whom are fixated on paving the best path for their children's success.

In some cases, eager parents take on students' classwork, place immense academic pressure on their children, and attempt other similar methods to ensure a triumphant future for them.

Despite these parents' best intentions, these tactics often have detrimental impacts on their children, causing issues with problem-solving, stress levels, and self-esteem. And it's only getting worse with the pandemic.

Distance guidelines implemented due to COVID-19 have caused many children and adults to attend school and work from their homes. The close proximity between parents and children resulting from these measures allows for more opportunities for parents to get overly involved in their child's academics. Because of this, they can become a hindrance to the wellbeing of children, teachers, and ultimately themselves.

When talking about the changes due to distance learning, one of the biggest challenges and sources of stress for Julia White\* is her parents. This source's name has been changed to protect her from possible retribution in accordance with Carlmont Media's anonymous sourcing policy.

"They've definitely been a bit more uptight during distance learning, and a lot of that is just because of the closeness of all of us in the house. I mean, they're right there, which can be stressful," White, a Carlmont junior, said.

White's parents often check up on her during the school day and have taken an increased role in her schooling. But despite their best intentions to be supportive, White feels

more stressed and uncomfortable about school than ever.

"They're always right outside, so they check in on me during the breaks between classes and when I'm doing all my work because they have more time too. And now they want to quiz me before my tests so they know I'm prepared, which is absolutely the most horrible and stressful part of all of this for me," White said.

Numerous other students have felt that their parents are a source of stress during distance learning rather than support. A survey taken of 200 local students found that about 60% of the students who responded find their parents to be a stressful part of distance learning.

Despite their efforts to help their children, parents have been a significant source of anxiety for many during distance learning. This then begs the question, what is the best way to parent kids during this time?

Amy Chua, a professor at Yale Law School, promoted a style of parenting that emphasized academic achievement over everything else, often using heavy discipline to motivate her daughters. Her daughters did very well in life, each attending top universities and becoming successful.

Chua's parenting took the world by storm, and many parents wondered if the strict style of parenting was the ticket to success for their children. Many became convinced it was the way to maximize performance out of their kids.

However, this isn't the case. Numerous studies have found that this type of parenting can be detrimental to children's mental well-being. According to a study conducted by Su Yeong Kim, an associate professor at the University of Texas, children with these kinds of parents report higher rates of depressive symptoms, feelings of high academic pressure, and a sense of alienation from their parents, as seen in White's experiences during distance learning.

In response, some parents have turned to other methods to try to increase student performance. "Lawnmower parents," who try to mow down all obstacles in their children's path in an attempt to make their lives easier, and "helicopter parents," who hover over their kids, have become common styles of parenting as well. These parents tend to be overly attentive to every aspect of their child's lives and try to solve all their problems for them.

Large amounts of research have shown that these parenting styles can also be detrimental to their children's overall well-being. Because they are constantly fixing their kids' troubles for them, many grow up without knowing how to solve problems, deal with adversity, or learn from failure. According to Jeff Gant, the director of Undergraduate Admissions at Montclair State University, he has received numerous applications for admission that were written by parents rather than students.

This style of parenting has grown increasingly popular during distance learning, especially with elementary school students. It's common for a teacher to log onto their elementary school Zoom class and see parents sitting next to their kids and attending class with them.

For Suzanne Hawkins\*, an elementary school teacher, she finds it's good for parents of younger kids to support their kids more during school, especially with the technological challeng-

es it can bring. However, she feels parents can sometimes discourage kids from being proactive in asking for help. Hawkins's name has been changed to protect her professional standing at her school.

"I have one little girl where English is her second language, and her parents are always sitting with her. I've tried to encourage them to let her ask me for help and let me try to do my job, but they won't," Hawkins said. "Similarly, I have one boy who will walk away from his screen, and I emailed his mom, and she told me he was asking her for help. And as much as I appreciate that she wants to help him, I want to teach kids that they need to realize their parents are working and they should ask me instead."

Parents may think that helping their kids with all of their classes and that fixing their mistakes is helpful. However, it can prevent kids from learning to be proactive and ask for help on their own, can make teachers uncomfortable, and even stresses out the parent themselves as they take on their student's work on top of their own.

"Initially, the parents stressed me out, because I felt like they were just sitting there listening to everything, but I've gotten used to it. But I do often wonder in the back of my mind that [they] may interpret it wrong and get upset," Hawkins said.

It's hard to find the right way to parent in a way that encourages success in their children without adding to their stress. According to Ralph Crame, Carlmont High School's principal, there's no one way to do this.

"It's going to vary, I think, from student to student," Crame said. "Work ethics can vary, and for some students, you might need to be a bit more proactive. Ultimately, it's important to maintain a good relationship. If you keep nagging and nagging and nagging them, then they are going to be a little resentful, and it's going to turn into a combative relationship rather than a supportive one."

Age is also a factor when considering the best way to parent during distance learning. Hawkins believes it's important for parents to be more involved in the education of their younger children, but stresses they have to create an environment that reminds them they're still in school.

"I still want parents to ask about their work. Because of their age, I want them to still be involved. But there still needs to be the message that you're in school, so you need to behave like you're in school," Hawkins said.

Distance learning is stressful, and can cause children to feel isolated, anxious, and sometimes depressed.

"Keeping an eye on the social-emotional piece in addition to academics is extremely important," Crame said. "Making sure they're not stressed out and feeling isolated is imperative to students' success. If there are any signs of depression or any signs of isolation or anything, just reach out and ask for help, and make sure that the students are reaching out for support as well."