

## **Daily Doga Inspirations for you and your dog**

Helicopter Dog Parents – Oh for the Love of Dogs!

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### *Can our love for our dogs turn us into helicopter dog parents?*

While in Psyche school I studied family systems (conditioning, alliances, enmeshment, triangles, coalitions, homeostasis) essentially all the ways families live with beliefs, values, comforts and complacencies. It was an awakening to remember my family of origin and how long it took me to change unhealthy patterns. My single parent didn't hover because Mom had to work full time, so she hired my Grandmother to hover for her until a 6 year old philosophically explained how embarrassing it was to be the only one being walked to and from school. I lost, still being walked, but my grandmother would stop at the church, 50 yards away, so I could trek to school alone. It was a good compromise.

Homeostasis is that familiar feeling of comfort in a family, that keeps situations structured and under control. There is nothing wrong as long as it is healthy, and family members are given age appropriate freedom to be individuals. After 30 – 40 years, people can still feel the triggers, like PTSD (post traumatic stress syndrome), where a car backfires. Intellectually we know no-one is shooting at us, BUT our body's reflexes say "Hit the deck, take cover, run for your life." Being too overbearing can create this in children and dogs too, preventing them from taking on challenges / opportunities.

Helicopter parenting (child-HP or dog-HDP) is a parent who pays *extremely* close attention to a child's or dog's experiences, problems and illnesses, particularly in formative years, hovering too closely, too often. No-one knows better (teacher, doctor, counselor, guru, God or Buddha). HDP's are leash tuggers, carriers or defenders (it wasn't my dog).

After 30–40 years, people talk about still feeling triggers (fear, anxiety), like PTSD (post traumatic stress syndrome), where a car backfires. Intellectually we know no-one is shooting at us, BUT, our body's reflexes say "Hit the deck, take cover, run for your life." We know we can make a decision, but where's my grandmother – will I hurt her feelings or make a mistake?

Dogs have triggers too, especially those who haven't had an opportunity to socialize with other dogs, off leash, and slowly be introduced to real world sights, sounds and smells. Viewing the world from someone's arms is very different than viewing it from the ground level. Interacting with others from the end of a tight leash can create an adult dog that lacks confidence in unpredictable situations. They get stressed out if a twig drops. For the human, stubbing a toe becomes a major event. A life transition can send them into a tail spin. For a dog, taking a walk with a stressed human can create anxiety and fear, but whose anxiety and fear is it – the dogs or are we transferring onto them?

With the internet, social media and experts on everything, parents of any species are frazzled to the bone, trying to make the "right" decisions for their children and dogs. In [Awareness Centered Training – ACT](#), I suggest striving for balance and moderation. Trust in your decisions without sweating the small stuff. Just because my dogs bark doesn't mean a bear is attacking them in the backyard. Will I check - sure ... but calmly. If I have to spring into action I will.

Whether children or dogs, creating a balance, while giving them the reins to become confident individuals makes us good enough parents! We can watch, sideways, while breathing in nose-to-navel. We will always be protective. We love them, but knowing the difference between hovering and caring from a distance gives them wings to fly.

*Let dogs be dogs once in awhile, they deserve it.*

*Enjoy the Journey ... breathing in ... nose-to-navel, ah-ha!*