

What's Your MOM STYLE?

A light-hearted look at the different parenting styles of Katy moms

Written by Katrina Katsarelis and Tonya Ellis

Loving Katy mothers come in all shapes and sizes, all with their own unique parenting styles. Some have elements from a few styles mixed together, while others are strictly one style. From the vigilant helicopter mom to the achievement-oriented tiger mom from the kid-friendly laid-back mom to the free-range mom, each have their pros and cons. Read on and discover your mom style.



The Helicopter Mom

Definition: A hovering and controlling, but well-meaning, parent who sometimes gets way too involved in her child's life to the point of excess.

You are a very loving and well-intentioned mom but a bit too immersed in every aspect of your child's world. From preschool to college, you're the mom who is in the know on just about everything at school because you make sure of it. You not only know all your daughter's friends, you also know who likes whom and who dislikes whom. You have your teen's social media passwords memorized, watch her Instagram, and even know what she ate for lunch. When your daughter laughs, you're in on the joke. When she has friends over, you're right there dishing with the girls. If she forgets her homework, you scurry to the school to drop it off. If she gets in trouble, you call the school to defend her. Sound familiar?

Red Flags

Mom is always present so her child may take longer to spread her wings and learn how to navigate life's problems on her own. "It creates a dependent human being who has few chances to fail, practice problem-solving, think creatively, and learn to trust their own thoughts and feelings," explains Janet Mueller, M.A., L.P.C., a private therapist with the Houston Center for Christian Counseling. Experts say that allowing kids to fall once in a while or handle that tricky situation with their teacher makes them a more confident and independent human being.

Finding Your Balance

Take a step back so your child will step up. Allowing her to handle her own difficulties and make her own decisions will help build your child's confidence and self-esteem. If she forgets her homework, oh well. Let her face the consequences of a zero. This teaches her that ultimately she is responsible for herself, not you. Give her some space and privacy appropriate for her maturity and age to show her that you believe she can resolve problems and make great decisions. After all, you raised her so she's going to be marvelous!



The Laid-Back Mom

Definition: A “go with the flow” kind of parent who has forfeited some of their parenting roles due to physical and mental exhaustion. Structure and rules have become lax, often leaving the home in disarray.

On most days, your house is a mess, the laundry is piling up, and homework is always behind. You're the mom who doesn't mind serving an occasional kid-friendly peanut butter sandwich for dinner. You let your daughter do messy art projects, jump in mud puddles, and express herself creatively, even if it means there's going to be a clutter that nobody will clean up. Sigh. Does this sound familiar?

Red Flags

Sometimes you get overwhelmed with how much there is to do and really just give up. The laid-back mom isn't always consistent with discipline or setting expectations, which can lead to behavioral issues in children. Experts say that children thrive where there is structure and consistency in their environment, where rules are consistent and they can know exactly what to expect.

Finding Your Balance

Start small, add structure and order into your family's life in little doses at first. Maybe it's a consistent bedtime, a set of rules, or homework routine. For the laid-back mom, it's much easier to just let it go and worry about it later, but don't give up. It takes more energy in the short-term to enforce consequences and follow through, but in the long-run your child will blossom from learning structure, routine, and self-discipline.



The Tiger Mom

Definition: A mother who is overly strict with her child in order to foster an academically competitive spirit intended to direct a child toward a financially successful career.

Your daughter usually gets straight A's and is in the pre-AP or AP classes. She may also be in the gifted and talented program and plays the flute like a dream. She participates in numerous clubs and volunteers regularly. She has to turn down invitations to slumber parties or outings with friends at times because she's really just too busy with school work and activities.

“Order, structure, focus, and tight control are characteristics of the tiger mom,” says Mueller.

Amanda Host, Katy mom of three boys, Cole, 4, Levi, 3, and Jase, 13 months, is starting to recognize a likeness. “I'm kind of a perfectionist when it comes to stuff,” she shares. “I'm always thinking that if I don't do it, either no one else will, or it won't be good enough.” Amanda is not alone. There are many tiger moms in Katy, and it has nothing to do with the Katy Tigers.

Red Flags

Be careful, tiger moms, because your cubs may feel like they will never live up to your mega high expectations, and this affects their self-worth. “Children can miss a core sense of worth in themselves, as valued and loved intrinsically,” explains Mueller. Things can also go wrong with this parenting style if children aren't given enough downtime between scheduled activities. Mueller cautions, “This may lead to children who have social deficits or bitterness about missing social events and interactions with friends.” After being so controlled for years, many tiger cubs have been known to go into full-on rebellion after leaving for college.

Finding Your Balance

Demonstrate through words and actions that you love them unconditionally, even when they don't make the basketball team or completely blow a test. Experts recommend taking some of the pressure off and allowing a little downtime just for having fun. Most importantly, schedule some one-on-one time with them and really listen to their dreams, fears, and goals. Chances are, you are pushing them into something you want for them instead of what they actually want. Having regular heart-to-heart conversations with them will connect you both on a deeper level.

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The Free-Range Mom

Definition: A mom who believes that children should be given the freedom to explore their world and learn from natural consequences. Her ultimate goal is to make her children independent.

The free-range mom encourages her child to explore the world on her own terms, and rarely dictates her steps. Your child is fiercely independent and likes to make her own decisions, so you let her. You don't interfere with what she wears, eats, or reads. You encourage her to make her own decisions and handle her own problems.

Red Flags

This parenting style came to light after a self-proclaimed free-range mom and New York columnist, Lenore Skenazy allowed her 9-year-old son to ride the subway alone. Clearly, the biggest drawback to this parenting style is a child's safety. No matter how independent they are, children and teens won't always have the life experience needed to find their way around certain areas, fend off possible predators on the streets or online, or monitor their own media use responsibly.

Finding Your Balance

A wise person once said, "Never do for a child what they can do for themselves," and that's great advice for teaching independence to children. Just be careful to make sure free-range kids are safe and are making wise decisions. Free-range parenting should never be confused for neglect. So stay connected, celebrate their victories, discuss the areas they need help in, and most importantly let them know you love them. Studies show that kids who are given responsibility at a young age often grow up to be accomplished, independent adults. **KM**

KATRINA KATSARELIS is the editor-in-chief of Katy Magazine, and her children claim she's a tiger/helicopter mom blend, although she was raised by free-range divorced parents.

TONYA ELLIS is a freelance writer and considers herself part tiger mom.

EDITOR'S NOTE: We used 'she' to refer to a child in this parenting article for consistency only.

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Circle all that apply to you

ABOUT HOMEWORK

- A Last time my child forgot her homework, I dropped it off for her.
- B More than a few times, I have helped my child get a good grade on homework.
- C I usually let my child do her own homework from start to completion.
- D I'm not exactly sure what the homework was last night.

WHEN IT COMES TO FRIENDSHIPS

- A My child's friends are over a lot, and I know them and their families.
- B My child doesn't have a lot of friends over because she has so little time to play.
- C I let my child hang out with her friends whenever she feels like it.
- D I don't monitor my child's whereabouts too much when it comes to friends.

TROUBLE IN CLASS

- A If my child gets a reprimand, I want to know everything about it and I contact the teacher.
- B My child wouldn't dare get in trouble at school.
- C I'm not overly concerned if my child occasionally misbehaves.
- D She will handle it if she gets in trouble at school.

YOUR THOUGHTS ON HIGH SCHOOL

- A I'm staying super involved in everything, even though she's in high school now.
- B It's very important to me that my child graduates in the top 10% or 20% of her class.
- C High school is for having fun, making friends, and enjoying life.
- D My child will be fine in high school. I'm not worried.

Mostly... A's - Helicopter mom B's - Tiger mom C's - Laid-back mom D's - Free-range mom
If you got a mix of letters, it means you have attributes in each of these areas and are likely a well-balanced mom.

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