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Best practices when parents advocate for their students

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Parents play a pivotal role in supporting, encouraging and advocating for their sons and daughters as they navigate through their school experience. The parenting style and approaches used become particularly important when children experience problems, challenges or difficulties. Let's look at a few parenting styles or approaches that might not be optimal or effective:

- **Lawnmower or Snowplow Parent** - This style entails parents who "mow" down or clear obstacles their children could face. They go to extreme lengths to ensure their children avoid disappointment and only experience success.
- **Helicopter Parent** - This is a "hovering" and overprotective parent who is involved in every aspect of their child's life, including after-school interests and academics.
- **Tiger Parent** - This is an authoritarian style parent who demands high achievement from their child in school, sports, music and other extracurricular activities. They view leisure as a waste of time.
- **Jellyfish Parent** - This is a permissive parent who provides few rules, boundaries or expectations for their children.

Just what is the best parenting practice that ensures a balance between control and child autonomy? In mid-November, the Glenbard Parent Series hosted author and New York University adolescent psychiatrist Jess Shatkin, MD, who advocates for an authoritative style of parenting. This "just right" approach to child-rearing (to be distinguished from permissive and authoritarian parenting) is high on both empathy and demanding, combining warmth with setting limits. It aims to inspire cooperation by teaching children the reasons for rules, avoiding threats or punishments and using positive reinforcement when expectations are met. Its goals are autonomy, self-discipline, independence and respect for others. Parents offering concrete advice and emotional support are key to young people achieving these goals.

Regardless of one's parenting style, fostering self-agency provides an excellent opportunity for teens to grow and mature. When teens know themselves, know what they need and then take the action themselves, they will build self-advocacy skills.

As children approach adolescence, parents need to shift from the role of "manager" to that of "consultant." This requires leaning on your wisdom and showing restraint. Offer advice when asked. As you position your child with more responsibility and control, they will become more mature, independent and resilient.

For a Take Five five-minute video with Shatkin and other Glenbard Parent Series speakers, visit the GPS YouTube channel [here](#). Check out upcoming Glenbard Parent Series events at glenbardgps.org.