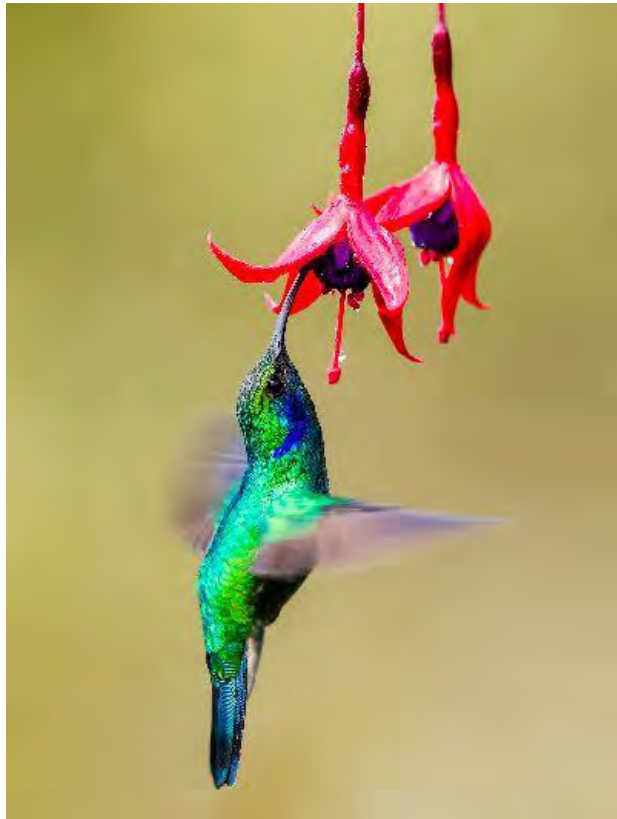


Hummingbird Parenting - Excerpt from 7 Gifts to Give Your Child - Parenting That Will Touch Their Future

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7 Gifts to Give Your Child - Parenting That Will Touch Their Future - Chapter 6, The Gift of Experiences - available on Amazon in August 2021



During their childhood, the Adventure Playground in Berkeley, California was one of my sons' favorite places to visit. Based on the ideas of Danish architect Carl Theodor Sørensen, who had made use of scrap junkyards for playgrounds when Copenhagen was under occupation during World War II, the playground was a place to explore, hammer, saw, paint and create. By being able to go on the zipline and land in the haybales or use real tools to make something out of wood scraps, it gave them the opportunity to try something that is somewhat risky in a safe environment.

As parents, we can find ourselves saying "No" many times a day. "No, don't throw that rock." "No, you cannot climb that high in the tree." "No, don't do that!" By preventing our child from participating in risky play, we may also be preventing them from learning how to navigate risk, a skill that they will need as teenagers and young adults when we aren't around to monitor them.

I recently heard a new parenting term, "Hummingbird Parent." Instead of hovering and

micro-managing like the helicopter parent, the hummingbird parent sits nearby, zooms in when necessary and zooms out again. As children grow in age, the parents can step back further to allow more freedom while still being available when needed. I really like this as a parenting model.

In reality, this model was challenging for me to practice. I wanted my active boys to be safe and make it to adulthood! But I realized that I had to let them explore, climb trees, throw rocks into fast-flowing rivers and try things that made me nervous. Sometimes, I had to bite my tongue and even look away for a moment to overcome my instinct to jump in and overprotect them.