

The Overprotected Kid

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A preoccupation with safety has stripped childhood of independence, risk taking, and discoveryâ€”without making it safer. A new kind of playground points to a better solution. Hanna Rosin March 19, 2014

Lady Marjory Allen of Hurtwood, a landscape architect and childrenâ€™s advocate. Allen was disappointed by what she described in a documentary as â€œasphalt squareâ€• playgrounds with â€œa few pieces of mechanical equipment.â€• She wanted to design playgrounds with loose parts that kids could move around and manipulate, to create their own makeshift structures. But more important, she wanted to encourage a â€œfree and permissive atmosphereâ€• with as little adult supervision as possible. The idea was that kids should face what to them seem like â€œreally dangerous risksâ€• and then conquer them alone. That, she said, is what builds self-confidence and courage.