

5 Keys to Survive Raising Teenagers

Midlife teen years are no fun. *This is the moment when you want to take back every mean thought you ever had toward your mom during your teen years.*

Seriously, I didn't like the teen years the first time around, and I'm not liking them any better today as a parent.

To add to the complexity, I get to share this midlife experience with a house full of teens. We've all agreed that I'm just occasionally nuts, and I overheard my teens discussing the "stages" of my transition. Thankfully, we are a family that easily laughs at ourselves—when we aren't sniping at one another.

So, at this unique point in history (not yesterday and not tomorrow) I bring you my current list of how to survive the midlife-teen years:

1. **Exercise.** I know—they say that all the time, but it turns out that if you don't use your body, it starts to break down. Also, exercise (like walking, running, etc.) keeps blood flowing to all the parts of the brain so you can more easily handle the stresses of life. Also, it releases serotonin, which is a serious need for women over 40, according to the kindle book *Happy Hormones, Slim Belly*. I am currently enjoying the Sisterhood of the Skinny Jeans monthly fitness calendar challenge to add variety to my workout.

2. **Pray.** Don't give God your list. If He doesn't already know it, you are in trouble. Instead, crawl up in God's lap and listen to His heartbeat. As things come to mind, hold them up to Him and listen for His perspective. If you must make a list, then recite all the things that God is doing. Train your brain to see the positive.

3. **Laugh.** Recently, in a five-minute time period, I was overwhelmingly anxious, felt God's deep peace wash over me, and was moved to tears by beauty. If you can't laugh at those crazy transitions, you will be tempted to ride the roller coaster, believing that each state is something you have to pay attention to.

4. **Give.** Your family will drain every last drop from you, and you won't feel replenished—but if you find opportunities to give on purpose, send encouragement to a friend, rally support for a need – these are God-given opportunities to get outside yourself and let Him work through you. For the rare individual who is able to give endlessly to her children and feel fulfilled, please ignore this one – you are already up for sainthood.

5. **Wait.** I am tempted almost daily to apply for five new jobs, establish my next priority, make a life plan for the next 15 years. Seriously not a good idea. Do numbers 1 through 4 during transition times. The process of transition is: 1-knowing what you are letting go of, and letting go of it; 2-re-establish who you are without what you lost; 3-new direction.

The teen years, both the first ones and the mid-life ones as a parent, are about the second part of transition—re-establishing who you are. #3 comes out of #2. If you try to skip to #3, you are riding a bicycle in soft sand—spinning your wheels and making a mess.

Some transitions are more painful than others, but experience shows us that if we try to skip over the painful parts, we will get stuck. Instead, actively wait. Do the hard work of exercise, listening, prayer, honest assessment and community building. Your new direction will come soon, and you will be great at it.

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