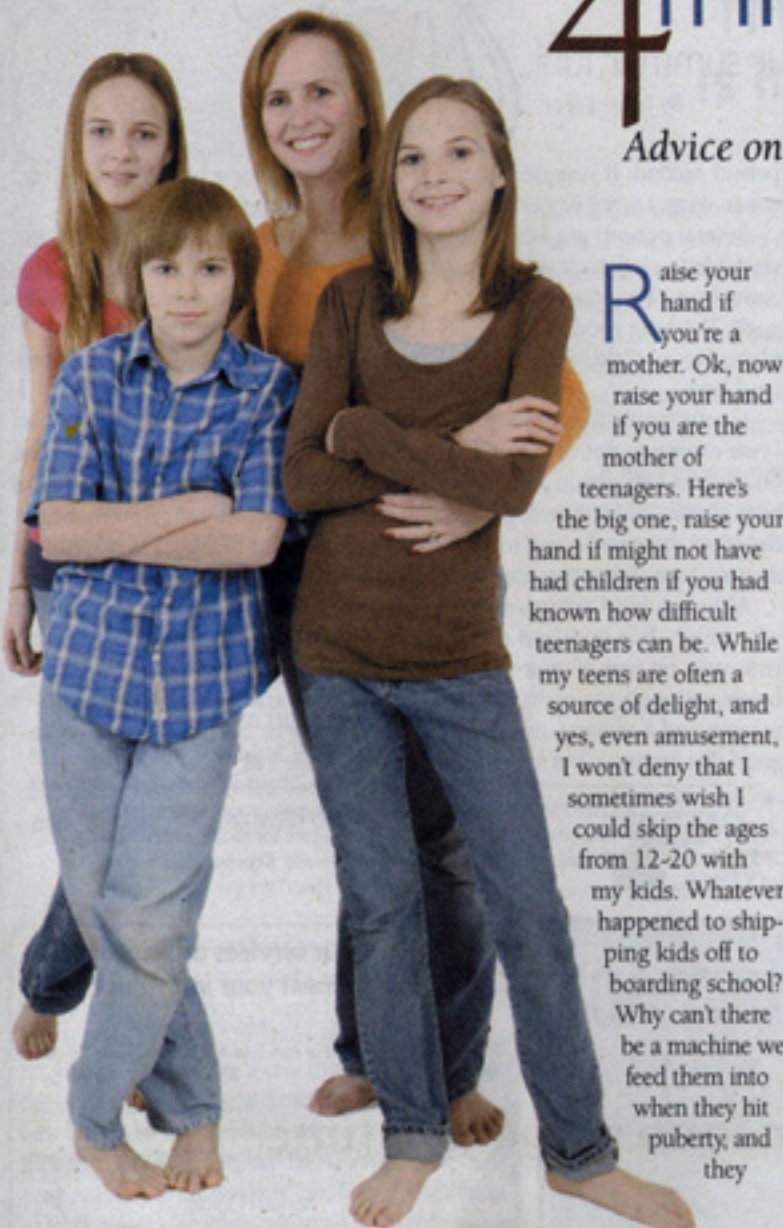


4 things i learned to let go of

Advice on surviving the teen years



Raise your hand if you're a mother. Ok, now raise your hand if you are the mother of teenagers. Here's the big one, raise your hand if might not have had children if you had known how difficult teenagers can be. While my teens are often a source of delight, and yes, even amusement, I won't deny that I sometimes wish I could skip the ages from 12-20 with my kids. Whatever happened to shipping kids off to boarding school? Why can't there be a machine we feed them into when they hit puberty, and they

come out as sweet, mature, self-sufficient adults?

Many of you are now either shaking your heads at my fantasy world, or nodding your heads in agreement. Since I do have to live with my kids during these topsy-turvy years, I thought I'd share a few things I had to let go of in order to go through this time with some shred of sanity.

1 My kids will get mad at me and probably will not like me.

Truly, I got over this one when they were in elementary school, but it does seem the older they get, the more you will sense these feelings from them. I used to (and sometimes still do) tell my kids that if they never get mad at me, then I'm probably doing something wrong. The teen years have such potential for their personal growth and emergence from that egocentric cocoon in which they seem to be wrapped. The more I can teach them that they are not the center of the universe, the more they seem to be understanding. The way I phrase things tends to make a big difference in this area.

2 Their bedrooms will be messy and their beds unmade.

When my kids were small, I was kind of a freak about the cleanliness of their bedrooms. Clothes were never allowed to be left on the floor, and beds were made every day. I don't know what finally broke me of my con-

cern in this area. Honestly, it was probably the fact that the older they got, the earlier school started. Whatever the reason, I eventually reasoned that if my son has all his dirty and clean clothes scattered about the room on his floor, I am really just preparing him (and myself) for life in a dorm room.

3 Their bad moods usually have nothing to do with me.

Close your eyes and take a step back in time to your teen years. Remember all the things you felt, good and bad, and try to recall how many of them actually had to do with your parents. Typically, my kids are in a bad mood because of friends, lack of friends, overwhelming homework or lack of sleep. Oh, and we can't forget hormones. Yes, they do get in a bad mood sometimes because of a disagreement with me, but I have learned not to take their moodiness personally.

4 One day, sooner rather than later, they're going to be gone.

Each year, on the first day of school, there is this mental ticker in my head. Only six more first days of school. Only two more first days of school. In my son's early teen years, I would often catch myself saying to him "grow up!" Then I realized that all too soon he will be grown up, and many of the teaching opportunities I might have with him will have passed. So, while parts of me are sometimes desperate to have them grown and gone, I know without a doubt, that I need to treasure each moment they are here.

The shopping for homecoming dresses, the last-minute "Mom can I stay the night at so-and-so's house?", the gut-wrenching thoughts of "Are they really where they said they were going and doing what they said they will be doing?" will soon be distant memories. ■

Independence mom Valerie Owings enjoys the joys and challenges life bring with her two teens and 6-year old.

Getting to Calm: Cool-headed Strategies for Parenting Teens & Tweens

By Laura Kastner and Jenny Wyatt



Getting to Calm is a practical, realistic and ultimately reassuring guide to navigating one of the most challenging aspects of parenting today: staying calm and clear-headed during some of the most common hot-button situations that arise during the teen years, such as:

When your teen is rude and sarcastic

When your smart teen does something really dumb

When your teen is acting like a spoiled brat

With humor, wisdom and a deep understanding of the teenaged brain, Drs. Kastner and Wyatt provide clear and useful tools for parents, giving them effective new ways to manage their own emotions in the heat of the moment with their teen while maintaining—and even gaining—closeness. \$19.95. ParentMap.com/books