



SURVIVING THE TEENS

A MOTHER'S GUIDE TO LOOKING
HER BEST WHILE RAISING TEENAGERS

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I know it sounds a little crass, and perhaps unusual, but any fearless, broken mother of teenagers will understand my predicament. After all, if you have raised a few (teenagers) you will understand that there is some point when sanity is questioned (yours not theirs) and the ability to throw in the towel

is not an option. I am lost, a mother of six with four hormonal teenagers – that in itself, even spouting out the words is enough to drive anyone to a liquored stupor, in fact the only thing stopping me from the pursuit of alcohol is that any bottles that have not gone astray have mysteriously been filled

with some non-alcoholic concoction of water and syrup.

I did, however, have hope that the next round (of offspring) may provide glue and stability for our expanding family. You would think that having two adorable little ones at home would drive the teens to become role models, learn to

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baby-sit and take a genuine interest in how others view the world. Instead, like a mean, cruel twist of fate, I have a four year old hair-gel junky that pops me five in the morning and recently requested Head and Shoulders to replace his Johnson and Johnson's. And...I can't even touch on my five year old daughter's fascination with piercings, the fact that she beheads all of her Barbies and her endless begging for Bob Marley and the opportunity to Google Youtube. All of this morphing the six of them together into a comedy routine that makes the cast of "Love and Marriage" look normal.

It is not that we are not normal, it is that we are so absolutely the epitome of what has happened to the typical North American family unit. We are tech dependent, over-achieving, over-processed shadows of what our ancestors envisioned, and the sad thing is that we are creating more of these mutant beings by allowing them to "be themselves" while they are still trying to find themselves and expecting a dream child to emerge "if only they can survive their teens". Don't believe me,

just say "Sixteen Year Old Daughter", pour a glass of wine, plop down a box of Kleenex and hire an exorcist – any surviving parent will seek reprieve and hope with that cure and without question.

SURVIVAL TECHNIQUES (FOR YOU, NOT THEM)

But I am not here to tell you what you already know or what you fear, I want to share my survival skills, how I manage to now keep myself together, or appear to, following years of abuse and torture. I hope that some good comes out of all that I have endured.

I found the answer overnight...maybe I just snapped, or possibly the sense of defeat enabled a dormant gene, like a loose cannon shooting demons, was ignited. I am not sure when it happened, but at some point I lost my sense of humour and calculating mischievous solutions started to enter my mind, I started to think of myself, not just my kids, and decided to get a life. I simply got smart. (Perhaps dragging teenagers out of



bed was not how I wanted to spend the morning, especially when I began to notice that some of them were not my own).

You see, I had become a dictator, a barker, I dreamed of hiring someone to come in and nag. I actually debated purchasing a dog from the airport that sniffs for drugs, anything that would give me a sense of relief, especially a counterpart masked as a family pet. I even enquired about installing condom machines in the boys bathroom and the possibility of obtaining small chips that I could insert under my older daughter's skin (try coming home late now, dear). The sad part was the seriousness of it all, I was desperate, I needed to get my mojo (whatever that is) back. I needed to get real.

GET YOUR MOJO BACK

So I quit. I lightened up. I bought them each an alarm clock, stopped signing their excuses at school (at least I know where they are when they are in detention) and started to re-administer their clothing and technology budget toward more practical

purchases, like Prada and Gucci. And I started to look after me.

No, I was no longer going to look like the exhausted, defeated person that I had become, I was going to turn heads (at least my husband's). I started to jog (The Running Room is great), cut my hair (bangs can take years off) and instead of getting up to nag, I now wake up to a hot shower. Surprisingly, I do have the time (lost that excuse) and I feel better for it.

Time has passed since the new me emerged. The teens have not changed, but I have. I now see them as they are, but more importantly, they see me as I am. Don't get me wrong, I am still a "nerd" in their eyes, but they see me as happy with who I am, they see me as taking care of myself. I don't nag as much, I feel better, more fit and, given that I now lock the liquor cabinet, I can actually relax at night with a glass of wine. I now realize they will never be me, but thank goodness, I at least can show them that I am happy with who I am, but more importantly, with who they are.