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I learned about seasons almost forty years ago when I was in pre-school. How summer heat turns into autumn leaves. Autumn leaves turn into winter's snow and winter's snow melts into spring flowers. Parenting has seasons too. When you only have one child it is easier to distinguish the stages of parenting.

Parenting expert Barbara Unell and co-author Jerry Wyckoff, PhD, wrote about transitions in parenting in their book The Eight Seasons of Parenthood (Random House, New York, 2000).

Here is a list of the authors' eight seasons, and a child's approximate age for each season:

• Celebrity (pregnancy) The self-absorption of impending parenthood.

• Sponge (birth to 1 year old) Surrendering your former identity to the essentials of caring for a baby.

• Family Manager (ages 1-5) Organizing and juggling the business of life with toddlers and preschoolers.

• Travel Agent (ages 6-12) Stepping back - and stepping up your role of activities manager - as

your children go through school.

• Volcano Dweller (ages 13-17) Exercising damage control in your own life with teenagers.

• Family Remodeler (ages 18-24+) Re-evaluating life as a parent of new adults.

• Plateau Parent (ages 25-49+) Reliving your childhood through grandchildren.

• Rebounder (50+) Accepting and embracing the parent/child

Since my child is now 17, I am about to crawl out of the volcano of her teen years. Next year I will turn into a DIY parent as I become a Family Remodeler. I like this. Parenting is a little easier to enjoy when you have some idea of what to expect.

In a recent conversation with celebrity dad Michael Jai White I asked one of the standard parental ice breaker questions "So how old are your children?" He raised both my eyebrows by saying that including step children and natural born, his offspring ranged from their mid twenties to three! Bless his heart. I couldn't help but think – he's going to be on the job for a long time. For him, parenting and grand parenting will definitely overlap.

But just like warm days can pop up in the middle of winter, a travel agent can find themselves in the middle of a volcano and plateau parents may find themselves on the rebound. As more seasons pass in my parenting career (which by the way is lifetime position) I realize I have found joy in every stage.

Both seasons and parenting are full of extremes. Summer has scorching heat and vacations at the beach. Along with winter's bitter cold comes snuggling by a cozy fire. My pregnancy came with a glow and labor pains. My sponge stage brought sleepless nights and first steps. As a family manager I endured potty training and enjoyed her first day of school. During my days as a travel agent I juggled Girl Scout cookie sales and the onset of puberty. The volcano erupted

as I went through my divorce when my daughter was 13. I have been amazed at how she is blossoming into a young woman as we near the end of this volcanic era. But I shouldn't be surprised.

Seasons change because the earth is spinning on its axis. We don't feel it but the changing weather is proof of its movement. Even when the movement is slow and steady there are still bursts of color or spikes in temperature that remind us that change is just over around the bend. Just remember to find joy every step of the way.