

Parenting Solo: The Second Talk

Written by Michelle Greenlee Harris
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My daughter and I are living parallel lives – twenty five years apart. I guess it has always been that way. When she made her debut, she was discovering how to be a baby just as I was figuring out the mom thing. On her first day of school, I learned a lesson on how to let go (a little).

Now she is diving into puberty, as I am wading into menopause. Well truthfully, she's been splashing in the puberty pool for a while and I'm swimming laps in perimenopause. Either way hormones are backfiring around our house like the muffler on an old Buick.

That must be why I was so drawn to the Poise feminine products TV campaign that proclaims the need for a second "big talk" in a woman's life. The first conversation involves the beginning of our periods and the second talk involves the end. The creators of the ads stumbled upon a scientific phenomenon that many scientists actually believe in – a parallel universe. Now I don't really believe there are multiple me's running around on other earthlike planets. But I can swallow the theory that the mini me that shares my address is running on the inside lane of the same track I am on.

In a nanosecond my child will be embarking on a new phase of life in college. That will propel me into being an empty nester. Here I am trying to give my daughter a verbal map of campus life. Who is going to chat me up about where I'm headed?

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I think I need a menopause mentor. You know someone who can sound the alarm when my body is about to erupt in a gush of perspiration from a hot flash. Maybe a first responder who can tend to any casualties I slay verbally during a mood swing.

Both adolescents and over the hillers are dealing with changes in our bodies. The same parts that sprouted in puberty are drooping in middle age. Our skin is changing – my daughter's getting acne while I'm getting wrinkles. It's confusing really. I'm much more confident about where I've been than where I'm going.

A recent chat with friends about a post forty pregnancy made me laugh at more similarities between my peers and my daughter. Stop and think about it. A seventeen year old and a forty seven year old would have just about the same reaction to an unplanned pregnancy – sheer, blinding terror. I have friends who have vowed suicide if the stick ever turned blue. I think I would live through it but I would surely have to go straight from the delivery room to the rubber room.

The other thing we talked about is our life plan. You know, where you feel like you should be in life or what you feel like you should have accomplished. I think this is where the old and young part ways. Sure a certain portion of both groups have a plan (we hope). The difference is that the younger set actually thinks there is a straight line to where they are trying to go. What a joke!!! Goals are often a moving target. Either the goal moves around or we do. Sometimes we just abandon it all together and find something new to pursue. Hmmm. A new goal may be just what the doctor ordered.

I don't mind having things in common with my daughter. The waistline of a seventeen year old would be nice. A childlike enthusiasm is not necessarily a bad thing either. What I'm willing to forgo for either of those things is wisdom you gain in your journey "over the hill". That's worth more than a twenty four inch waist. Now on to more important things – anybody have a cure for hot flashes?