

Sara Villanueva, PhD

# THE *ANGST* OF ADOLESCENCE

HOW TO PARENT YOUR TEEN

*(and live to laugh about it)*



**"With its encouraging tone, this friendly primer will help parents learn to appreciate, enjoy, and accept their teens." —Publishers Weekly**

## Praise for *The Angst of Adolescence* and Sara Villanueva, PhD

“Villanueva, a developmental psychologist, uses an informal, conversational style in this helpful parenting book, sharing anecdotes from her own experiences as a mother of four who is currently raising two teens, as well as up-to-date information on brain development. Villanueva reminds readers that risky behaviors by teens reflect the fact that their brains are not yet fully developed. She also warns against ‘drawing a line in the sand’ as teens are likely to respond to ‘forbidden fruits’ with rebellion. With its encouraging tone, Villanueva’s friendly primer will help parents learn to appreciate, enjoy, and accept their teens as they are, while patiently negotiating the challenges and changes inherent in adolescence.”

—*Publishers Weekly*

“With humor and great warmth, Sara Villanueva tackles issues that can seem unsettling or bewildering to most parents. Her voice is reassuring, and by the end of the book you know you’re not only up for the challenge of parenting a teen, but that you’re not in it alone.”

—Ami Albernaz, contributor to the *Boston Globe*

“While reading *The Angst of Adolescence*, I loved Sara’s conversational voice, assurance, examples, information, and humor. I can’t imagine any parent of a teen who wouldn’t enjoy and profit from this mix of professional and personal insight.”

—Carl Pickhardt, PhD, author of the blog and book,  
*Surviving Your Child’s Adolescence*

“Sara Villanueva does a masterful job of balancing the sound advice of an experienced parent with the scientific literature of adolescent development and parenting. She strikes a tone that is both authoritative and completely conversational. I feel better equipped to tackle my son’s upcoming transition into adolescence and wish this kind of parenting *instruction manual* were available sooner.”

—Russell Frohardt, professor of psychology and behavioral neuroscience, St. Edward’s University

“Sara Villanueva brings to light what so many parents of teens are feeling. By providing humorous anecdotes mixed with sound, research-based advice, all delivered in a relaxed and relatable style, she informs and reassures parents of the wonderful world of adolescence and how they can learn to laugh about it.”

—Vicki Hoefle, author of *The Straight Talk on Parenting* and the best-selling *Duct Tape Parenting*

“*The Angst of Adolescence* will help every parent understand how to go through this difficult stage without losing their mind. According to Sara Villanueva, you could even have some fun along the way!”

—Jennifer Kerzil, PhD, associate professor of psychology, Université Catholique de l’Ouest, Angers, France

“Such a remarkable and much needed book! Dr. Villanueva’s voice and personal stories, combined with her professional expertise, set the tone and made me laugh out loud! As a dean of students at a liberal arts university, and as a parent of a sixteen-year-old, the wisdom shared in this book is ‘just in time’ and speaks to the tumultuous times of transition that our teens experience and that we, as parents, encounter too. Her insight is smart, authentic, and extremely hopeful!”

—Lisa L. Kirkpatrick, PhD, associate vice president  
for student affairs/dean of students,  
St. Edward’s University

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*To the people who fill my days with absolute madness  
and insanity, set my hair on fire, and worry me incessantly,  
yet always fill me with immense joy, pride, the greatest  
sense of inspiration and purpose. . . my children.*

*For Susan, Thomas, Sophia, & Gabriel*

*I am truly blessed to be your Mother.*

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# INTRODUCTION

Ah, the teen years: the time when your child *always* has to have the last word; when you observe that she is in constant angst, and, of course, when you regularly get the classic eye rolling with major attitude. You love your child more than anything, I know. But something's different, right? Parents often wonder, "What happened to my sweet little boy who loved to snuggle?" or, "What happened to my affectionate little girl who let me brush her hair and asked to brush mine?"

Around the time your child begins the second decade of life, things start to change in a fairly dramatic way. She is entering the developmental period that has been referred to with terms like "Storm and Stress" and "the Terrible Teens." Adolescence is a time of important transition for both child and parents. Some telltale signs that your child is transitioning from childhood to adulthood include: pubertal development, demonstrated by obvious physical and biological changes; cognitive development, shown by teens starting to think differently and beginning to challenge the way others think and act; and social development, demonstrated by teens' desire to make decisions about who they spend their time with and how they want to define themselves. My goal in writing this book is to help parents navigate some of the issues that come up during this exciting and sometimes difficult time. Parenting is hard, and parenting teens is even harder.

So, why not band together and share information that helps us all stay informed and maybe even helps each of us find some relief in knowing there are others out there experiencing fallout from the infamous teenage angst. Here are some of the questions I'll provide answers for in the chapters of this book:

- Why do my teen and I argue so much? How do I lessen the conflict, and how do we stay close? Does she even like me anymore?
- Why does my teen want to be with his friends all the time? Does he not love us anymore?
- My daughter *thinks* she's in love. How does she even know what love is?
- The "S" word: I'm not sure, but I think my son is having SEX. This scares me to death. What if he gets an STD? Or worse, what if he makes me a grandparent? How can I deal with this?
- I know it's normal to be curious about alcohol and drugs, but how do I manage this without pushing too far?
- Letting go: my son is going off to college and I'm feeling so sad. I don't want to be one of those overreacting moms, but I'm an emotional mess!

Please note that, although I am a developmental psychologist by training and have extensive experience in researching, teaching, and writing about adolescent development and parenting, much of the writing in this book comes from my perspective as a *parent*. Although I interject information based on current research, my goal is to relate to other parents of teens and shed some light on issues we all struggle with. In reading *The Angst of Adolescence*, I hope you can relate, learn, and enjoy!

# 1

## Oh, How the Mighty May Fall

### Understanding the Massive Changes Occurring in Your Family

**W**hen my daughter Sophia was a little girl, she used to look up at me with those big, beautiful blue eyes and say, “Mommy, you are *sooooo* smart...you know everything!” And I would smile and agree. She used to follow me around constantly, asking question after question about anything, about everything. All her questions began exactly the same way: “...And Mom, why can fish breathe under water and we can’t?”; “...and Mom, how does candy make your teeth fall out?”; “...and Mom, why does Thomas have a penis and I don’t?” I would take each question as an opportunity to impart my lifelong wisdom to my daughter, to both satisfy the human-sponge tendencies in her and to make sure that I did my part in creating the well-informed, responsible, thinking individual she would become. This, I felt, was my contribution to the future, to society, to the world.

Sophia didn’t care about pedigrees or how many years I had gone to college. She never considered that I had numerous years

of life experience and had made many (and I do mean many) mistakes in my life. All she knew at that time was that I had answers to her multitude of questions, which she launched like the steady pelt of shooting stars in the Leonids. I felt like Wonder Woman, with indestructible, bulletproof bracelets that absorbed the impact of incoming questions and shot back answers that were wise beyond even my years. Secret confession: there were times when parenting my young children was pretty darn good for my ego. My child was right: I *am* soooo smart, and I *do* know everything! There were other times, however, when I would say to Sophia and her three siblings, “Alright, no one is allowed to say the word ‘Mom’ again for at least one hour!” These were times that, as fellow parents, I’m sure you can relate to. At these times I felt overwhelmed, uncertain, and on more than one occasion, felt as though I was at the end of my rapidly fraying rope.

No matter what the age of your child, being a parent can be a tough job. In fact, I have found the parenting experience to be a conundrum of sorts. One minute you may feel as though you are on top of the parenting universe, responsibly and brilliantly creating a person you think will be the next Nobel Peace Prize winner. And the very next minute, you may feel a tsunami-sized wave of doubt and insecurity after taking a moment to assess your child-rearing abilities and the potential disaster you could cause with one parental misstep. So . . . much . . . pressure!

Nowhere in the instruction manual (yeah, right) did it say that parenting would be easy. It is a tireless job that often fills you with self-doubt and angst about whether you’re doing a good enough job at the monumental task of raising another human being. As my mother says, “Parenting is not for cowards,” and she’s absolutely right. After all, it would be easier to let the kid sit in front

of the TV for a few hours when we're so exhausted we can barely get out of bed. And rather than putting forth the effort involved in dutiful and conscientious parenting, it would be loads easier to simply let our teens do whatever it is they want, with no supervision and no worries! But, I get the feeling that I'm preaching to the choir here, because if you are reading this book, then you are invested; you care; you're willing to do the work. But the point is that when my children were young, I was on a colossal, golden pedestal. I was, in fact, *the* smartest, *the* coolest, *the* most beautiful woman on the planet, and that felt damn good.

What I didn't anticipate is just how far I would fall if that pedestal ever toppled over. And it did, of course. As my daughter got older, and certainly as she entered into the abyss we call adolescence, she started seeking answers elsewhere: her friends, her phone, Google, Twitter. It reminds me of the famous Mark Twain quote: "When I was a boy of fourteen, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be twenty-one, I was astonished at how much the old man had learned in seven years." In what seemed to me to be no time at all, I went from being the smartest mom in the history of motherhood to regularly hearing comments like, "Uh! Mom, you just don't get it..." and, "Mom, don't worry about it... you won't understand." Both, of course, accompanied by the classic and always appreciated rolling of the eyes that teens seem to have perfected over the years.

At the risk of making a huge understatement, let me say that parenting during the teen years is not at all great for your ego. Even with a bachelors, masters, and PhD in psychology, I, like Twain's old man, apparently lost some serious IQ points along my children's developmental path. What gives? I'm still the same person.

Still the same woman who works hard at being a well-respected academic, is committed to her family, and adores her children. If anything, I've become even smarter, with more life experiences under my belt. But the truth is, as children reach their teen years, their perspectives change and it's not in our favor . . . sorry, parents! In the eyes of my teenage daughter, I, a live, breathing, human being with an actual brain, have been replaced by a smartphone. Yes, that's it. A smart *person* has been replaced by a *smartphone*. This, my fellow parents, is a sad but true statement. So long to being the smartest person alive . . . for now.

When I say that I've been replaced by a phone, I don't necessarily mean the technology itself, although phones these days *can* be pretty darn entertaining. I, myself, have guilty pleasures like games and social networking sites that I check on a fairly regular basis. I'm talking about the way teens communicate using them: they text, they tweet, they Snapchat, they Instagram, they "talk" *at* people, not *with* them. At the risk of sounding a hundred years old, I'd say that teens today would essentially never look up from their screen were it not for life-sustaining necessities like eating and sleeping. I mean, really, who needs to have a face-to-face conversation with a person in front of you, especially your mother, when you've got five other conversations happening on your phone? (All of which are monumentally more interesting and relevant to you when you are fifteen.)

Back to the sad reality that I'm not the genius mom I used to be to my daughter. There are actual, scientifically proven reasons for this seismic relational shift between parents and their teenage children. In addition to the technological wrench that's thrown into the communication mix when children have smartphones, teenagers begin to experience some major changes within

themselves. In fact, it is these shifts that are at the core of what it *is* to be a teen. The developmental period of adolescence is all about major transitions, and these transitions happen in three distinct domains: biological (puberty!), cognitive (attitude!), and social (friends!).

## The Shifting Teen Landscape

You may have noticed some of these transformations in your own children, as they morph before your very eyes. First, the child goes through puberty, and this not only creates major fluctuations in hormonal levels (which has been shown to impact mood . . . shocker, right?), it also does something that parents have been dreading since the first time their little girl put on that cute, size 2T polka-dot bikini when she was a toddler. You remember taking those pictures of her with the chunky little thighs that rubbed together and the belly that just wouldn't quit. Now, your postpubertal baby girl looks like a total hottie, in a bikini that's not much bigger than the one she wore when she was two! She is now looking older, acting older, and wants to be treated like she's older. I'll talk more about puberty and all the wondrous and amazingly scary stuff that comes with it in chapter 4.

Second, children's thinking gets better and more refined as they reach adolescence. Remember, this is a good thing. I'm not talking about their brains getting bigger, because we know that by the time your child is six, his brain is already 95 percent of its adult size. What I mean is that teens' actual *thinking* is much more mature, and the processes involved in thought are significantly more efficient by the time kids go through adolescence. Our teens begin to think about their own thinking processes (called

metacognition) as well as *your* thinking process (called defiance). This is where it gets dangerous. No longer does your teen accept your answers as undeniable fact. You fell from that pedestal a while ago, you recall. Now, she questions everything. Everything. This is a major cognitive developmental accomplishment for teens, but for you as a parent, it means a time of constant doubt, speculation, and bickering because your child now challenges everything that comes out of your mouth. These are the times that you resort to phrases you swore you would never say: “Because I *said so*, that’s why!” or “Because I’m *your mother*, that’s why!” or “Because I’m *the adult*, that’s why!” These are also the times you ask yourself, what happened to the days when my sweet little girl used to think I was *soooo* smart? Sigh. Because I know that many of you, as parents of teens, are desperately seeking answers to these questions, I will go into much more detail about the changes in your child’s cognition in chapter 2 and address parent–adolescent conflict in chapter 3.

And, of course, we dare not forget about your teen’s social world. It shouldn’t come as much of a surprise when, instead of wanting to spend time with her parents or her family, your teen would now much rather spend time with friends, or even alone. This is typical of adolescents. You remember the feeling, don’t you? Sitting through a dreaded, obligatory family dinner, or even worse, the torturous “quality time” with parents and their friends *and* their friends’ kids (with whom you were supposed to all-of-a-sudden be best friends). All we could do, as teens, was count the seconds until it would all be over and we could go hang out with real people—our friends. The teenage years are when we all begin our quest for freedom. Teens’ social interactions—hanging out with friends, noticing cute boys or girls, and yes, even spending

obscene amounts of time on the latest popular social networking sites—become numero uno when it comes to social priorities.

This shift in social needs is not an indication that your child no longer loves you or the family (despite clear evidence to the contrary), because teens really do love and appreciate their parents in their own way. But spending time with friends, doing whatever it is that goes on in that underground, Illuminati-type society that adults are not privy to, is what they need to do right now. “Need?” you ask? Yes, need. This is where psychosocial development occurs. They begin to figure out who they are, who they want to be, how they want to be seen by others, who likes them and who doesn’t, and who accepts them and who doesn’t, all in the context of their own social arena. This is where they also learn about social roles (that is, how to be a good friend or a good romantic partner) as well as social rules and norms (what’s allowed and what’s not). Chapters 5, 6, and 7 all tackle different parts of the teenage social world, including social groups in school, peer pressure, friendships, romantic relationships and love, and (take a deep breath) the “S” word . . . adolescent sexuality. Despite the cringe factor inherent in some of these topics, we, as parents of teens, can benefit from open discussions on these issues, so we can make sense of the monumental changes occurring in our teens’ lives.

## **Transformations at Home**

Just as teens navigate a series of difficult changes and transitions, so does the family. As I mention the word “family,” many different images may come to mind. In today’s world, families come in all shapes, sizes, and varieties, and this is a beautiful thing. So,

when I talk about the changes that families go through during the turbulent teen years, I'm referring not only to what many people think of as the "traditional family"—mom, dad, two-point-three kids, a dog, and a mortgage, although this family is certainly included—I'm also thinking of single parents, gay and lesbian couples, grandparents raising grandchildren, and many other variations on the family theme. The one common denominator these families share: they all experience the perilous joys of raising a teen. Of course, in addition to the various joys and challenges involved with so-called "nontraditional" settings, families may also differ in cultural and/or religious attitudes and belief systems, which presents yet another layer of depth to already multifaceted family dynamics. But those discussions are for another time. For now, we'll consider the overall experiences that many families, in various contexts, share when it comes to having a teen at home.

If you have a newly minted teenager in your house, you have likely come to the realization that things are just not the same. You can't quite put your finger on it (well, maybe you can), but something has changed. There has been some strange shift and everything and *everyone* in your home seems just a little *off*. If you are the parent of an older teen, you are already well versed in this uneasy feeling but still may not be able to explain it, so I ask you to read on. As our children reach adolescence, relationships within the family undergo serious transformations.

Particularly as we reflect on the parent-child relationship, we see that as adolescents get older, they begin to play a more forceful role in the family. Typically, we notice a shift away from the asymmetrical relationship that kids had with parents, whereby little Johnny would do exactly what Mommy or Daddy said to do;

instead, there is movement toward a more equal relationship with parents, where teens voice their opinions and concerns and play an active role in making decisions. Because we have been accustomed to being the “grown-ups” who, by necessity, make daily decisions for the family (big and small), often without consulting our children, the fact that our teens want to chime in on everything from what we eat for dinner to what car we buy to where we go on vacation throws the entire family system out of balance. Whether we like it or not, because of their own cognitive development, teens come to recognize that they have a voice, one based on their *own* thoughts and opinions; they also realize that, in the interest of fairness and relational justice (again, with the cognitive development!), this voice should be heard and counted within the family. Because these changes in the family dynamic are happening so quickly, at least from our perspective, they seem to catch parents off guard, and our deer-in-the-headlights reaction is often an exasperated and sometimes frustrated, “What is happening?!”

In addition to suddenly becoming extremely vocal and free with his opinion, our teen has also become somewhat distant or aloof, a stark comparison to the warm, loving, snuggly kid who, just yesterday (okay, it *seems* like just yesterday), loved to give us hundreds of kisses and begged us to read one more story. Another hallmark of adolescence is physical and emotional distancing; at least on the surface, the closeness you once shared with your child seems like a faint memory. In reality, of course, the feelings of love and commitment are still there, they’re just hidden under the new exterior that cognitive and physical maturity bring. This physical and emotional distancing, along with the fact that your teen is looking and sounding older (notice I did not say *mature*) can

lead to increased daily conflict in your household . . . another dramatic shift. What all of this means is that, because your child's role within the family is changing, yours must too. Many parents see this as a loss of power, and the resulting family dynamic becomes centered around parents' power struggles with their teen. But I propose that we take a different perspective. Consider that, by becoming a bit distant both emotionally and physically, by (continually) interjecting her thoughts and opinions in family matters, and by questioning every decision or judgment you make as a parent, your teen is simply doing her job. To be clear, I am not suggesting that teens should be allowed *carte blanche* behavior, where they are allowed to overextend their new freedoms at the cost of others; of course, there must still be rules, boundaries, and common courtesy and respect. But we parents should understand that these shifts, both within the child and within the family as a whole, are part of the normal developmental process.

Because I am in the midst of raising teens myself, I am well aware of the fact that it is not easy to take the perspective that kids' constant questioning is positive. In fact, despite all the formal training that led to my position as an "adolescence expert" and despite the knowledge and proficiency that comes with the experience of raising two teens, I still struggle with the disruptions that my family goes through as my teens grow and develop every day. I struggle because it's hard to stand firm on a constantly shifting platform. But we've learned as a family to adjust and to appreciate that the very fact that my teens are able to argue and question, and that they expect their voices to be heard, reflects development; and that forward movement makes my family better and stronger.

## And Then There Is Sleep

Another major shift that occurs as our children reach adolescence concerns their sleep patterns. Sleep schedules and wake-up calls may not seem significant enough to deserve their own section in a book, but let me tell you that they are. When you consider the sheer horror involved in waking a teen—the subsequent delays in school, work, meetings, and, of course, the stress involved in starting the day already late for everything, while simultaneously bickering with your teen—you’ll see that changing sleep patterns are important all right, and you should know about them!

Do you remember the last time you “slept in”? What does that even mean, anyway . . . sleeping in? My younger brother points out that the inability to sleep past nine in the morning as an adult is a surefire sign that people are getting old. You’re *really* old if you can’t sleep past seven! By those standards, I’m in my nineties. I normally scoff at this type of youth-centered drivel, but you know what? My little brother just may be onto something.

Think back to when you were a teenager and could sleep the whole day. I remember being able to sleep until one or two in the afternoon and waking up completely refreshed—and later that same afternoon, taking a nap on the couch. My bed really *did* feel so much more comfy in the mornings when I was a teenager. Of course, this only happened if my parents weren’t home—for some reason I still can’t figure out, my mom and dad truly believed that a teenage kid sleeping past eight in the morning was the most insultingly disrespectful thing to do to adults who can’t sleep. They would dish out heaping doses of judgment about time and my misuse of it: “You know the whole day is gone and wasted;

you can't get that time back . . .” This was offered with a steaming side of guilt as they inevitably brought up all the impoverished yet dedicated teens out there working right alongside their parents at manual labor jobs that start at five in the morning—working for pennies, all while your lazy ass was lying there in bed sleeping the day away. Sigh . . . those were the days. Now, the only way I make it to 8 a.m. without any type of sleep interruption is by way of a medically induced coma (read, Tylenol PM or Benadryl). Even then, I'm lucky if I make it to eight o'clock. Just one of the many perks of getting older, I guess. Thanks for the insight, bro.

The teens in my house, by contrast, seem to sleep for days on end. And, unlike my parents, I really don't mind. I am aware that as they transition through adolescence and into adulthood (where, of course, their ability to sleep will dwindle), their sleep schedule has shifted, and even after getting nine, ten, or twelve hours of sleep on any given weekend, they are still operating on serious sleep deficits. You may have noticed as your child hit the teen years that your effort to set a curfew regarding anything happening late into the evening—getting home, getting off the cell phone, or ending computer use by a certain hour—was met with major disagreement and rebuttals such as, “Mom, the party doesn't even start until eleven!” or, “Ugh, I'm *so* not tired at midnight and can't sleep, so what am I supposed to do, just sit there and be bored?”

Teens are usually wide awake at one in the morning and are ready, of course, to socialize with their friends, who are also awake at that time. For various reasons, their sleep patterns have shifted. Where are we, the parents? Sawing logs in the other room, pretending to wait up for them so that we can follow through with our deadlines and rules. Because they don't get to sleep in during

regular school days, and because they are likely still texting when they are supposed to be sleeping at 1 a.m., waking them up on school days is not a pleasant job. Another understatement, I know. If you have a teen in your house who has to get up for school, you know exactly what I'm talking about. When I have to go in to wake my nineteen-year-old son at the ungodly hour of 9 a.m., it's like walking into a bear's den right in the middle of his hibernation. And no matter how gently or gradually I try to wake him, he will, with 99.9 percent certainty, be cranky as hell. So, I have decided that this situation, like many others with my teens in this rapidly changing landscape, is not as big a deal as I make it out to be. Simply put, as my children have morphed into teens, I have decided that I need to "roll with it."

There are so many other things that you must do and worry about as a parent that you need to put this behavior in perspective. Here are some tips to help make that adjustment: (1) remember how you felt as a teen and accept/respect that your teen is right there, right now; (2) try not to take your teen's growls and grunts personally when you have to face the cranky bear; and (3) get him an alarm clock and let him know that if he is late to school, work, or whatever, then *he* will have to pay the natural consequences. Natural consequences include: too many tardies may turn into absences, and too many absences could mean summer school... yuck! Or, too many late arrivals at work means no more job, and no more job means no more money to spend on going out. Adolescence is a perfect time for our children to start being responsible for their own actions, or inactions, as the case may be. When you let consequences take their course, your teen learns to be responsible and you, my friend, no longer have to fear being eaten by the bear every morning.

## Light at the End of the Tunnel

By now, your cortisol levels may be sky high and you might be feeling a little on edge about this whole *parenting teens* thing—and I don't blame you. I know exactly how you feel; three of my four children have either gone through or are smack dab in the middle of this insanely chaotic and sometimes turbulent period we call adolescence. But I am here to tell you this: have faith, for there is good news. And I know this not only because I have experienced it myself, but also because it has been studied and proven by researchers around the globe. Are you ready for this? The good news is: *things get better and more settled, and everything is going to be okay*. Really. The fact is that the vast majority of people with teenagers get through this crazy developmental period just fine, with no severe or long-term detrimental effects to the family or to the relationship. The relationship between parents and their child not only remains intact, but, more importantly, it gets even better! It is really up to us, as the ones with the fully functioning frontal lobes, to not miss this opportunity to appreciate the small, positive things in life, as our teens transition into fully functioning adults.

We are often busy and overwhelmed by the breakneck speed at which life moves (and it seems to move even faster when you have teens), but perhaps we can use those mature frontal lobes of ours to be purposeful and thoughtful; to slow down just a bit, and take in what is going on around us. As your child goes through some monumental developmental shifts, you can begin to appreciate a new level of maturity in your love for one another that only serves to strengthen your future relationship.

Case in point: my daughter Suzie is in her twenties. She has

graduated from college, is working on her career, and is living on her own. She has developed into a strong, intelligent, beautiful, independent woman, and I couldn't be prouder. Yet during her teen years, much like her sister Sophia and countless other adolescents, Suzie probably likened me to Mark Twain's intellectually deficient father. Oh yes, I remember like it was yesterday, just how she used to roll her eyes and mumble under her breath while storming off in a huff. Now, however, at least once a week we go out for margaritas and chat. Yes, I said chat . . . as in, a meaningful conversation, face to face, like real, grown-up people. She asks for my opinion on things and I ask for hers. She confides in me, and I in her. We are much more than just mother and daughter now—we are good friends. And the relationship we have now, although we had to go through the ups and downs of adolescence, was well worth the time, energy, and effort. I wouldn't trade it for anything, and I'm about to do it all over again with Sophia. So, buckle your seatbelts, parents, because although the ride may be a little bumpy at times, the best is yet to come . . . I promise.