



I've Had It Up to Here with Teenagers

Melinda Rainey Thompson

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"For years and years of relatively smooth-sailing childhood, my kids followed my directives," writes Melinda Rainey Thompson. "If I said, 'Let's go swimming!' they fled down the hall to pull on their swimsuits, shedding their clothes along the way. If I said, 'So sorry, the mall is closed today,' they didn't doubt my pronouncement for a moment--even if the parking lot was crammed."

And now that her kids are mostly grown?

"I was good with babies. Teenagers--not so much," Thompson admits. "I don't get many hugs anymore. Any I do get are inevitably instigated by me while they stand there like martyrs tied to a stake. Recently, when I was the rare recipient of a spontaneous hug from my seventeen-year-old, I got so excited I dropped the basket of chocolate-chip muffins in my hands. I was anxious to hug back while it was still on offer. It was totally worth the muffin loss."

Thompson's three teenagers bury her under an Everest of laundry. They send her for groceries so often that she once heard a store employee cry, "Incoming!" They leave such a quantity of half-eaten sandwiches around their rooms as to provide a buffet for roaches. They complain for hours about 10-minute chores. They spend their parents' money like it magically regenerates and hoard their own like it's the last dose of the elixir of life.

To put it another way, they're typical teens.

In her inimitable style, Thompson makes *I've Had It Up to Here with Teenagers* both a humorous rant against teens and a celebration of seeing them rise from the ashes of battle to become well-adjusted, responsible humans. "Parental love is fierce and illogical," she writes. "I think it is the strongest force on earth. It trumps everything, thank God: sleepless nights, hard stadium seats, endless recitals, broken hearts, losing seasons, throw-up viruses, bad grades, poor choices, and everything else life throws at teenagers and their parents."

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