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for this unique breed human being!

Breathe Deeply, This Too Shall Pass

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True Tales of Trials and Tribulations of Parenting Teens

by Kimberly Ripley

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Acknowledgements

To my husband, Roland H. Ripley—my forever love—thanks for believing I could do this, even when I wasn't sure I could!

To Scott, my firstborn—I know you'll grow to make me proud—and thanks for the stories!

To Judy, my beautiful ballerina and gifted musician, your day will come to shine!

To Jim, forever my baby, with a heart as broad as your shoulders—keep playing those guitars.

To Elizabeth Natalie—my monkey—you'll write books one day, too.

To Jonathan Roland—my little man—please don't grow up too fast.

To Colleen Emery, my trusted friend—I couldn't have done this without your help!

To my sister, Karen Laqualia—for all the proofreading—thank you!

Most of all, I thank the Lord, for gifts of family and friends, without whom my life would be void of stories.

About the Author



Kimberly Ripley is a writer from Portsmouth, New Hampshire. A wife to Roland and mother of five children, her expertise in the field of teen parenting comes from Scott, 20, Judy, 18, and Jim, 15. They have provided ample fodder for many of her stories.

Kim forms ideas from daily doses of parenting, adding her humorous point of view. The result is usually a fun piece to which most parents can relate. Several of these tales have been published in The Writing Parent print version, The Writing Parent online version, YouMarriedHim.com, and ParentingHumor.com.

Intrigued by folks from all walks of life, the author enjoys interviewing subjects for potential feature articles. A mother whose 16-year old son was shot and killed, a blind man whose life has been enhanced by a guide dog, and a woman whose adopted greyhounds serve as therapy dogs-all have provided intriguing insight for magazine and newspaper articles. They have been featured in The Fort Myers Beach Observer, Absolutely Florida, Gulf Coast Woman, New Colonist, and Celebrating Greyhounds.

One of Kim's short stories is featured in a recent issue of Whispers from Heaven. An article she wrote on the craft of writing is featured in an e-book called "Mark My Words: More Write Advice" by Angela Giles Klocke.

Other articles and stories written by Kimberly Ripley may be found or will be featured in upcoming issues of Blacklines in Architecture, Millennium Shift, and New2USA.com. She writes a monthly column for Food Writer.

She has recently received an Honorable Mention from Writer's Digest, A Honorable Mention in The Writer's Journal Travel Writing Contest, and an Honorable Mention in a Byline's essay competition. She was the 1st Runner-up in the NetAuthor's E2K short fiction contest.

Active in her church and an avid school volunteer, her passion is travel. She has written numerous pieces about Florida's Gulf Coast where she hopes to retire with her husband one day.

Currently however, she is busy gaining more humorous teen insight from her "teenagers in waiting" ... Elizabeth, 9, and Jonathan, 6.

Is Jim There?

A Teenager and His Attachment to the Phone

My fifteen-year old son Jim has grown a new body part. It is an extension of his ear, protruding from the side of his head like a large plastic growth. He treats it with the utmost of care and protection, and displays grave concern when other family members attempt to touch it. Jim has jumped into the throes of young love. A freshman in high school, he has definite limitations to carrying out this romance, but has learned to improvise via the telecommunications method. Jim has discovered the phone!

Don't misunderstand, I appreciate the phone. I use it several times every day. But to Jim, the phone is a lifeline. He and his sweetie begin talking as soon as he walks through the door at 2:40 every afternoon.

"Did anyone call for me?" he'll shout as he rustles up a snack.

"I'm fine, and how was your day?" I'll reply.

Before he has an opportunity to respond the phone rings. They reminisce about their day together (that ended twenty minutes prior to the call). They do a little homework. They hang up. Ten minutes go by. She calls back. And so it goes for the remainder of the day.

"Hi, is Jim there?"

"Well, gee, he was eight and a half minutes ago, but now he's in Tucson," I am tempted to say, but never have.

Like many families, ours has subscribed to the phone company's service of call waiting. A little beep on the line informs us that someone else is trying to get through. My husband and I initially thought this was a great idea in case someone needed to reach us in an emergency. We are now questioning that decision. I don't remember a conversation in recent months that hasn't been interrupted with a beep.

“Hi, is Jim there?”

I think we’ll change his name.

When our older daughter is in the house simultaneously she and Jim wage what we refer to as phone wars.

“Jim, I need the phone,” Judy will demand.

“Judy, I just got on,” is the standard reply.

Of course he’s been on for so long the receiver imprint on the side of his head has grown purple, but he won’t relinquish his prize body part without a fight!

“You just talked to her. Call her back!” Judy will yell.

“Fine!”

“Fine!”

Next there’ll be a slam, two men’s size twelve feet stomping down the metal spiral staircase and then a bang. With Jim safely downstairs encased in his room, Judy has free reign over the phone...for about five minutes.

Beep.

“Hi, is Jim there?”

Will it ever end? Of course it will. Soon he’ll be driving a car, checking out colleges, moving away from home. My handsome young man who has the heart of an angel and the gentleness of a lamb will grow up before I realize it. So I try not to wish this time away.

I look at this period in our lives as a character building exercise. I am learning tolerance. I am practicing an elite style of phone etiquette. I am basking in the warmth of my son’s deep rich voice...even though he’s not actually speaking to me. I have become accepting of his typical stance of receiver to ear, all other maneuvers achieved single handedly.

I look at free telephone time far beyond the availability of making calls, but rather as opportunities to disinfect the receiver.

Jim is third in the line of five children, so we've been through this phone mania twice before, and we'll experience it twice again. Should we set stricter rules and limit usage? Maybe. But we probably won't.

In the meantime we'll watch and wait, realizing all the while that as Jim grows his anomaly will shrink. As it does my husband and I will be granted that long lost privilege of uninterrupted time on the telephone. Permanently? No. Probably for about three years. Our fourth child, Elizabeth, is eight.

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