

Things my daughter told me

An e-mail arrived last night from my daughter. We typically communicate via cell phone, talking or texting, so the e-mail was worth opening immediately. Casey is in her last semester of four years of college out in Vermont. Four years where we had trouble seeing each other because the price of an airplane ticket jumped from \$250 when she graduated from high school to \$550 now. Four years where the sudden urge to come home and eat Mom's homemade lasagna or share a bowl of edamame beans just couldn't happen.

Four years where I took numerous photos and videos of our dog so she would stop asking me to send her to Vermont. Four years where illness was dealt with on her own, with friends fetching ibuprofen or chicken soup, not me. Four years when the phone might ring and the conversation would start, "Do you think I could have \$20 for ..." and then an explanation of the important event/food/eyeliner that needed to be purchased on her minimal budget. Four years of missing each other. Four years of great separation. And four years of growth. Casey grew in all those terrific and scary ways kids do when they're on their own.

Seeing her finish college makes me realize that it does turn out OK, though there surely have been days that I wondered if it would. There were days in middle school I wondered if she were making good decisions. And then days I knew that this wasn't necessarily true. There were days in high school that seemed never-ending for a daughter that wanted to be done with school. I got more than my share of "Get me out of here, please" text messages. There were plenty of days when the parenting seemed never-ending, when sleep started late at night with one eye open, and when self-doubt crept into my dreams.

And now this e-mail. It was an essay she'd written for a creative writing class, one of her last classes in college. It was titled, "Things My Mother Told Me." It contained a long list of "isms" of mine. As I read it, I could hear myself talking to her. I was astounded not only at what I have told her, but also, that she remembered. I was speechless



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mostly due to the burst of laughter that erupted midway through reading.

So here are a few things I apparently told my daughter:

"Your car is not your purse."

"Can you shower before we go?"

"That shirt is way too low."

"This is how to shovel a driveway."

"You do have to brush your hair."

"You don't need makeup to be beautiful."

"Drinking is not an activity."

"No, you can not get a tattoo with numbers on your forearm."

"Sometimes, the best you can do is just be positive."

"Things will work out."

"You are beautiful."

All those years of school behind us.

And a daughter coming home for lasagna.

Nothing better.

Jody Russell is an Eden Prairie web designer, photographer and writer. Her columns appear regularly in the Eden Prairie News.