



## Milestones and forgiveness

**O**ur family changes forever this month. Our oldest child has begun attending a five-week program offered by Washington University in St. Louis. Josh returns home near the end of July, and a few weeks later, he returns to Wash U. to begin his full-time college experience. Save for a few holiday breaks, he'll probably never call our house "home" again.

My wife, Marci, and I still have a teenage daughter at home, so we'll not be at a loss for our share of angst and turmoil — not to mention the nearly daily reminders about how little we know about ... well, everything.

For more than 16 years, we've guided Josh as best we could, instilled our values and managed his path to adulthood. But once he hit high school (and probably long before), many of the choices he makes are his alone. We've guided and cajoled, supported and commiserated, cheered and cried. Josh has done a wonderful job and — as far as we know — in general, he's made excellent choices. It's been as much a pleasure watching him mature as it's been a struggle waiting for it to happen.

And while he's still a work in progress (aren't we all), I'm confident he will continue to make good

choices. That's not to say he won't take missteps. I suspect there will be a number along the way — girlfriends, jobs, ill-conceived late nights. Our only hope is that they're temporary and short-lived mistakes, and most important, that he learns from them.

Josh, for the most part, seems not to repeat his mistakes. Samantha, our 15-year-old, is a repeat offender. To be fair it's not the mistakes I'm concerned about. I still make plenty of those myself. My issue is with my daughter's response to them. Josh has learned discretion is the better part of remorse. He says he's sorry and moves on with his life, trying not to repeat past missteps. Sammie rolls her eyes, sighs and immediately offers a dozen explanations of why it's not her fault. She contradicts every comment I make. My favorite line is her response to the comment, "Sammie, quit arguing with me." Her response: "I'm not arguing."

Please don't misunderstand; my daughter, my children, are extraordinary. I love them both — equally and unconditionally. And given what I hear some families are dealing with, we're lucky. It's just in our home (and nowhere else), Sammie whines, argues and complains.

I imagine having employees is a lot like raising children. You spend time and money teaching, training and supervising them, but in the end you must let them do their jobs. And most likely, somewhere along the way, they'll make mistakes.

How you deal with those mistakes — and equally important, how well they accept responsibility for their actions — says a lot about your character and theirs. How often have we heard celebrities "apologize" for their abysmal behavior with a line like, "I'm sorry if anyone was hurt"? It's not an apology if there's no acceptance of responsibility.

How refreshing it would be to hear, "It was my mistake, and I'll do my best to not let it happen again." I know that's something I'd love to hear more often from my daughter when she falls short.

And to my son, it's an extraordinary world. I envy the journey you're about to begin.

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