

MIDLIFE BRINGS CHALLENGES!

By Ellen Harris, LMHC, CEAP

Midlife brings many challenges - not the least of which is coming to terms with the actions of our pasts. For those of us who had the privilege of being parents, our role shifts as children move from adolescence to adulthood. It's not unusual to judge ourselves by the success of our adult children. In midlife, we may need to reevaluate our roles and understand that our self worth need not be dependent upon whether or not our adult children are living up to *our* dreams.

From the time our children take their first breaths we have hopes and dreams for them. But, as parents, it's important to be realistic and remember that each child is born with a unique set of gifts, talents, and challenges, and, there are certain things we cannot (and should not try to) change.

Coming to terms with this reality sometimes involves the grief process. We grieve over our perceived failure as parents and over the loss of our dreams for our children. We're often in *denial* as our children grow up – refusing to acknowledge that they don't fit the molds we imagined for them. We experience *pain and guilt* over the fact that we were not always perfect parents. We *bargain* and wonder what we "could'a, would'a, should'a" done differently or better. We may even become *angry or depressed*.

Ultimately, if we work through this process in a healthy manner, maintain a good relationship with our children, and let go of unrealistic expectations, we evolve to the *acceptance* stage in which we realize that although being a parent is a life long vocation, the time comes when we need to *let go*, allow our children to make their own decisions about life, and trust that the foundation we laid in their formative years will be solid enough to see them through.

If you have concerns about these or other issues, please remember you are not alone. Call for a consultation.