



## Life Actually

By Kari Kampakis

# Grounded girl, crazy world

Whenever someone learns that I have four daughters, the response is typically the same.

"Four weddings?!" Big gasp. "Oh, bless you!"

Granted, it's hard to think about raising girls without seeing dollar signs. While boys have their own expenses—especially in this age of sports trainers and such—the running tally usually isn't as high. Take clothes shopping, for instance. Whereas boys can be set for the year with a simple trip to Gap or Old Navy, girls require variety. Good luck meeting any of their needs with a simple trip anywhere.

But more intimidating to me than the expense and maintenance of girls is the challenge of keeping their heads on straight. Society wants them to grow up fast. They're encouraged to be divas, to obsess over their appearance, to bow down to fashion. And while shopping and dressing up are two great joys of being a woman, it's easy to cross the line. And once a girl starts focusing on the wrong things, trusting labels and trends over instincts and inner beauty, it's hard to keep her feet on the ground.

So my question is this: How do we keep our girls from losing themselves to superficial pressures? Is it possible to enjoy the thrills of this sisterhood without overdoing it?

I'm no expert on the subject, but I can say that girls have been a common theme in my life. Besides my daughters, I have three sisters, three sister-in-laws, eight nieces, and a wonderful mother and mother-in-law. I also have amazing friends I've met in various stages of life. By reflecting on some of these relationships, I've compiled a few lessons to share with my girls. Maybe they can spark dialogue between you and your daughter, too.

**Remember it's just stuff.** When my husband and I were dating, I dropped a crystal pitcher and started crying because it was expensive. He hugged me and said, "Don't cry over anything you can replace." Whatever material goods you're attached to—your house, an iPod, a favorite pair of jeans—remember it's just stuff. And in the grand scheme of things, stuff doesn't matter.

**Find the yin to your yang.** Friendships should be based on chemistry, not opportunity. You can't force them, and

trying to befriend the popular crowd when it's not a natural fit will only suppress the real you that's dying to get out. Seek instead friends who "get" your quirks and bring out the best in you. Above all, keep in mind that to have a good friend, you must be a good friend.

**See the good.** We live in a pessimistic world, and snarky is in. While it's easier to be an Eeyore than a Piglet, it'll inevitably drag you down. I once heard a priest say, "Happiness is holding a magnifying glass up to the good traits of others." Since then, I've found that treating someone based on their good qualities—rather than the annoying ones—brings out a different, more likeable person.

**Trust your gut.** You know the funny feeling that arises when something's not right? That's your gut talking. The more you listen, the louder it speaks. Maybe the crowd you're hanging with is sending up red flags. They're lots of fun, but not the best influence. Perhaps it's a crossroads triggering that voice, nudging you a certain way. Whatever the case, your gut looks out for you. It's a voice of reason you can tune out or tune into when there's a choice to be made.

**Trust your God.** God has a plan for you, and while you may not feel special compared to other girls, you're a masterpiece in His eyes. Use your God-given gifts now, and don't worry about whether you're good enough, or if you'll be a star one day. By shining a light on your corner of the universe, you make it better, inspiring those you know. As Henry Van Dyke once said, "Use what talents you possess: the woods would be very silent if no birds sang except those that sang best."

Finding gravity in the world of females isn't easy, but I wouldn't trade this world for anything. Dance parties, skits, pinkie promises and sleepovers—these are the perks of raising girls, silly joys that bond us forever. People can bless my heart all day long, but I know I'm lucky. My girls bring me the greatest joy on earth, and there's no putting a price tag on that.

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