

1st Place Winner,

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From Dawn to Dusk

Essay: 990 words

If there is one thing we learn too quickly on this journey, we call life, it is that it passes much too quickly. As we approach our twilight years, we find ourselves reflecting on the stages that have come and gone-what would we keep, what would we change and what lessons we have learned along the way. These stages can be summarized in songs that describe us as we travel down this road of life, in each stage we wish to “Live like you were dying” (McGraw) because we learn too early that life is not a guarantee. Here we will take-a-look at the various the stages of life, the good the bad and the ugly as we have come to see them...

Infancy, the “dawn of existence.” The good thing is that if you are lucky to have been born into a loving family. Infancy meant learning to love and trust, being safe and thriving in the warm embrace of loving parents. “You are my Sunshine” (Perri) comes to mind, as for like all new parents, you were a treasure, a doll. We ate, drank, rolled, crawled, learned to walk and talk, and learned to love and grow strong. We were lucky to be happy and loved because let us face it, the ugly are the spit ups, the endless nights of crying and of course those diapers!!

Childhood, the “age of wonder.” Testing limits, exploring new adventures, learning to survive and thrive without our parents at our side. Entering school years and making new friends! The good is of course we have no inhibitions, as the song goes, “Let it go” (Menzel) belt those lyrics out, express yourself there is no fear at this stage because the world is our oyster! The ugly? Well, the endless “Why?” questions, the tantrums, the snotty noses, the sneezes in your face and of course the bloody knees!

Adolescence, the “quest for identity.” Tricky teenage years. The good news is that if you can carefully maneuver these sensitive years, you can grow strong and independent. The bad news is you can get lost or mixed up with “the bad group.” These years remind me to stay strong, we are “beautiful” (Aguilera) just the way we are stage. This is when our parents hope all the morals and values they have tried to instill in us mean something to us!

Young adulthood, the “pursuit of passion” stage. The good thing is that this is when we go for our dreams. We set our goals and work to achieve them or the ugly when our goals are out of reach and we compromise our values and learn to survive not thrive. This is where we need our “fight song” (Platten) stay strong and overcome obstacles. If we can succeed in this stage, we can set ourselves up for life! Hard work and determination are key.

Adulthood, our “mantle of responsibility” stage. This is where the good and bad often collide! Ugh, “working nine to five, what a way to make a living! (Parton) but we have bills to pay, possibly children to raise and retirement to plan for. Do it right and all will be ok but fail to plan and we could be working long into our golden years. We can combine this stage with the “I am Woman, hear me roar,” (Reddy) song because independence and success are important. Work hard and expect to be rewarded, a “momma bear protecting her young” and the whole “a woman scorned” thing holds true now because we are “old enough to know better!”

Middle Age, the “season of reflection” stage. What is this! Guess this is where many of us fall now, somewhere between this stage and the next stage, the last stage. This is where we look at things differently, where we have caught ourselves saying, “boy if I only knew that 30 years ago!” What would we change? Life has hopefully been good and although mistakes made, we have hopefully learned from them and will change very little. This stage reminds me of Aretha’s song, “Respect” (Franklin). What can we pass on and teach the grandkids? We hope they feel free to come and ask us for anything, that they know our love is unconditional and abundant and that they listen and learn from our years of experience. The ugly? Well, we are not as strong as we used to be, we visit the doctor, the dentist and the hair salon more frequently trying to hold on to what was once taken for granted.

Old Age, “the twilight years.” I can tell you one thing- this stage comes too fast! Are any of us in this stage genuinely happy to be here? The best we can say is, “it’s better than the alternative!” We are rounding off our lives and hoping that somewhere we have left our mark in the world, a positive reminder that we were here and we mattered, we made a difference! This is my, “one moment in time” (Houston) era! The good is if we have been blessed to have made it this far surrounded by a loving family. Now we can take the time to “smell the roses” as they say, but not too much time because we still have lots more living to do! The ugly? Well, it is what it is, and we deal with the aches and the pains, and we would not trade our memories for anything!

There we have it - the stages of life from our dawn to dusk. No matter where we fall into these stages it is important to live each stage to the fullest, to remember that every stage in life lays the foundation for the next stage. We need to treasure each stage as we go through it for, we have been lucky just to have been a part of this “wonderful world!” (Armstrong)