



ERIN
HARREL

of Cape Coral
is the mother
of three children

All aboard the cuckoo train!

For some, the ride is **worth the stress**

“Mom, my green beans are cold,” Riley calls from the table.

“I know. We don’t have time to heat them up. Just eat. We have to leave.”

This may sound harsh to some people, but to those of us dedicated to having active children, cold green beans are the least of our worries.

I often feel like I’m on a fast train to nowhere. Always in a rush, but never getting anywhere fast or even on time. My friends and mother often say something has to give.

I gave it some thought. I ran through a typical day: up at 5 a.m. to pack lunches; at 7, drive kids to school; 8, head to work; 4 p.m., pick up kids from school and rush home; 5, make dinner; 6, finish homework not finished in the car; 6:30, head to lacrosse, Irish step dance, Girl Scouts or any meeting that results from having a full-time job and three kids; 8 p.m., arrive home; 8:30, showers for all; 9 p.m., do a load of laundry because there are no more socks and underwear for anyone...

While it sounded enticing to give up something — anything — I wasn’t sure what could feasibly be cut from my day. I could have swapped out the laundry for a trip to Target to buy new socks and underwear, but eventually I’d have to stop doing that. I could take the kids out of their activities, but that is sometimes the most enjoyable part of my day.

Jude, my 10-year-old, has tried



Photo special to SW FL Parent & Child

“I often feel like I’m on a fast train to nowhere.”

■ ERIN HARREL, ABOUT RAISING THREE ACTIVE KIDS

almost every sport, and last year, he followed in his father’s footsteps in lacrosse. Jude is passionate about it. This year, he attended his first lacrosse camp. World renowned player Matt Striebel not only taught the boys technique, but he explained the importance of good sportsmanship, saying, “The way other people play shouldn’t determine your actions. You play fair even if they don’t.” The camp was awesome, and Jude won the raffle for Matt’s stick. I think he slept with it for the first few weeks. He was beside himself with joy!

I suppose it’s this type of joy and discipline that makes us want to continue on that crazy train ride so many of us hop aboard each day. Allowing the kids to participate in activities helps keep them in line. They know their grades have to stay up and their behavior has to be on target, or they don’t play.

My friend Nancy Green of Alva recently told me these are the wonder years. She fondly looks back on the days of chaos with great pride and enjoyment as she ran her boys across town to their various activities. She assured me that even though the days seem hectic, they are some of the best days of our lives.

Somehow, I know she’s right. And so tomorrow, I shall rise and once again jump on the crazy train. 