



When You and Your Mother Can't Be Friends: Resolving the Most Complicated Relationship of Your Life

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This, the first book ever to say that mother is not always a girl's best friend, is based on a landmark study of the mother-daughter relationships. Secunda offers breakthrough advice on understanding, and improving, what could be a woman's most critical relationship.

When You and Your Mother Can't Be Friends: Resolving the Most Complicated Relationship of Your Life Details

Date : Published May 1st 1991 by Delta (first published 1990)

ISBN : 9780385304238

Author : Victoria Secunda

Format : Paperback 432 pages

Genre : Self Help, Nonfiction, Psychology, Relationships

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Jessica D Kaufman says

So so

This is very typical of today's self help movement. Maybe in another 20 years someone will have something to help me with my relationship with my mother. This didn't at all.

Jennifer says

After reading a few books that skim over real mother-daughter issues, it was a breath of fresh air to read one that felt as if the author knew me. This was probably because mothers & daughters have had stressed relationships since the beginning of time, and my experience is nothing new in relation to the bigger picture.

It felt good to know that what I went through isn't normal, that I shouldn't feel guilty for something that has been a generational problem, and that protecting my mental/psychological/mental health is actually NOT to be discouraged, even if it means limited interaction with my mother.

I checked this book out of the library, but am going to buy a copy for myself and highlight the hell out of it!

Tina says

I wish I hadn't stopped reading this book when I did. It just got too emotional for me. I'm so happy I picked it up again. I look forward to starting my own healing process.

Judy says

As always with this type of book, I think there is too much of putting people into little "boxes."

I also thought there were too many examples that didn't really fit the labels.

I did enjoy the chapters called "The Doormat" and "Truce". They were helpful.

page 82: Anita describes her Doormat mother this way: My mother is so sensitive, the smallest criticism reduces her to tears. So everything with her is sweetness and light. Any problems I ever had with her, if I tried to talk about them, she'd just kind of go out of focus--she would just space out or walk away. Once she said to me with complete seriousness, "I wish I were you." I didn't take it as approval. I took it as a warning that she wanted me to fill the emptiness of her life. It scared the hell out of me.

The Doormat is the least separated of all five maternal types described in this book...

page 83-84 [This section is an example of writing in this book that I find unhelpful]: Paula describes her mother as a "pathetic victim."...Willa would spend hours on the phone in the afternoon, talking to female friends. But she seemed to get no sustenance from those attachments.

"As soon as she would hang up, her face would go blank," Paula says. "It was as if a door slammed. Once they hung up, people didn't exist for her anymore." Paula has the feeling that she doesn't exist for her mother either, not because her mother doesn't adore her, but because she seems utterly worn out.

page 296 [helpful]: My relationship with my mother has improved immeasurably since I stopped expecting so much of her. When I started to recognize that there are times she can't come through for me because she isn't able to--and not because she doesn't love me--I stopped being so disappointed in her. I used to call her and discuss problems I knew she couldn't respond to. Now maybe I'll talk to a friend about them, and go to my mother only for what she can give me. I like her a whole lot more since I accepted her. --Sandra, thirty-two

page 327 [Truce]: She's not somebody I'd choose for a friend, but we're capable of having some good times together. --Hannah, forty...

The "silent treatment" was always Grace's way of expressing displeasure...It usually worked, at least with her children. Sulking caused her kids to jump to attention, especially Linda...But as Linda got older it began to dawn on her that her mother's happiness seemed to depend on her, and required the sacrifice of Linda's own feelings and needs.

Linda, now thirty-two, was tired of being her mother's savior... of feeling like a puppet. So...for the first time, she did not try to "save" her...Linda called a truce to the mother-daughter relationship as it had been. She began to establish healthy boundaries between herself and her mother, so that their ways of dealing with each other could get unstuck and be redirected toward something more equal, more real--even more affectionate... A truce is not true comradeship, but neither is it open combat--it is a broad territory somewhere between the two. A truce feels like a definite "maybe": it's a lot easier to either totally adore your mother or thoroughly hate her than it is to tolerate her mixed blessings and your mixed emotions...A truce can take one of three forms: righteous obligation; holding pattern; peaceful coexistence.

Righteous Obligation...You wouldn't dream of renouncing your relationship, but it doesn't give you any real pleasure except, perhaps...being a "good daughter." Indeed, such a relationship may give you a good deal of pain, as you listen to her many complaints...you both try to exert inappropriate control over each other...you allow her too great a role in your life. You are too influenced by her judgments...And you have too great a role in her life--letting her call you at work when her microwave conks out...This category is what Dr. Lucy Rose Fischer calls "Mutual Mothering." Mother and daughter are entwined in a web of commitments that do not lead to real friendship but that, rather, make them feel uneasily beholden to each other...

Holding Pattern...you've decided that you and your mother aren't friends, even though you've given her that impression through the years...Now you want to pull back from what has been a surfeit of devotion you don't really feel. You don't want to defect, but you realize that you've neglected too many of your own needs in order to win her approval and affection...

Peaceful coexistence. This category is the most stable and rewarding of the three forms of mother-daughter truce...doesn't necessarily mean a loving connection...means a relationship that is no longer mined with unresolved and unrealistic expectations...can be amicable...you want to improve your relationship, keeping the good in it and deflecting the bad. You appreciate the things you and your mother have in common, and that's enough to forge a connection that is cordial, if not really intimate...Acceptance that you and your mother will never be soul mates...is not achieved without some sadness. But by giving up the impossible dream that your mother will change, you allow the dust between you to settle so that you can really see each

other and, perhaps, find a middle ground of affable, realistic potential...

How do you get to peaceful coexistence?... Your relationship...may be far from ideal, but--assuming she is not altogether evil--it doesn't mean that your connection is worthless, or that it can't be made better...Reaching peaceful coexistence often requires a constructive limbo in which mother and daughter give each other the space to see each other as separate adults so the relationship can mature. Both...need to try to hang in during the transition from "mother-child" to an enriching connection between two adult women...the daughter must...understand that her own maturity is seriously jeopardized by her own continued and inappropriate dependence...Often this dependence takes the form of financial obligation--the daughter dare not strike out on her own because she literally "owes" her mother so much...the daughter needs to take financial responsibility for herself. This means she passes up her parents' offer of a hefty loan for a condo or a new car--she does without the money in order to profit from her separate identity. She may be cash poor for a while, but she'll be rich in an independence that allows her to find her boundaries.

This kind of independence is difficult for many Baby Boomers...By remaining emotionally or financially dependent, their separation, and their relationships with their parents, are stalled...

How Daughters Can Hang In...She says, I can't stand that look in her eye--a look that says, "Help me, help me, fill my needs, forget about you"--...Now when I visit her, I go through this process of centering myself. I say to myself, "When she looks at you like that, there's nothing you can do about it. That's her, not you. Take care of yourself..."

Breaking the Pattern...Setting Limits...Controlling your Reactions...

page 368: ...it would be different. I would be to her all the things that my mother had not been to me. Where I had felt humiliated and ridiculed, she would feel cherished. Where I had been neglected, she would be nurtured. Where I had been terrified, she would be utterly secure.

I did not realize...Jenny inherited not only my joy but all my convoluted history and curious emotional legacies, all the unfinished sentences of my childhood.

Jenny embarked on her life burdened by the highest expectation a mother can bequeath: You will make up for everything.

Florence Phillips says

This book changed my life. I'm not alone and there's a perfectly rational explanation for what's I'd been feeling.

No big theory or technical words, just a wealth of human experience.

If you want to understand your mother or your daughter better, read this book.

Ashley says

Definitely a great read for anyone struggling with their Mother. This book rang true for me in many areas, especially the parenting styles, and offered insight into my Mother's ongoing emotionally abusive behavior and controlling nature: and particularly those generational mistakes which I do not want to repeat with my own young daughter. I would recommend this book for anyone who has suffered greatly at the hands of their own Mother or just wants some insight in how to deal with a complicated Mother- Daughter relationship. It's all there from A to Z. There is a wealth of excellent, useful information, especially for those wanting to move forward with their Mothers and learn to forgive. It explains what happens to those who do not address their own emotional issues and also why siblings of these types of Mother's do not get along. It was painful at

times to read, as I saw so much of myself in this book, as it is written from the perspective of a daughter. I applaud the author for bringing this information to light, some of which I didn't even consider after many years of counseling. Thank you to Victoia Secunda for helping me to see the painful but liberating truth... I will be recommending this one to a friend or two, maybe even to my own (estranged) brother.

Acquafortis says

I would recommend this book to anyone who has ever had problems with their mother or simply need to understand mother-daughter dynamics. This interplay does not only effect the direct protagonists but it also has a profound effect on our choice of friends, partners and work. Understanding this relationship means starting the road to real maturity.

I myself being a person who is in therapy because of a dominating mother, found this book helpful. Reading about other women having problems with their own mother helped me feel less lonely and less of a freak. The book is divided in various sections amongst which the various types of dysfunctional mothers and the different types of dysfunctional daughter. One the result of the other in a series of cause and effect transmitted down through generations.

Reading it helped me understand more of what my therapists says and proud of having started a journey in not only discovering myself but also maybe of one day being able to accept my mother for who she is....a person with all its pros and cons, daughter and product of her generation and those of her forebears.

artu says

Neverovatno je da je autorica dala oglas da bi volela razgovarati sa osobama koje nisu u dobrim odnosima sa svojim majkama ili cercama i proputovala pola Amerike da bi intervjuisala sve one koje su se javile na oglas, a sve zarad studije koju je radila na tu temu i tako je nastala ova knjiga.

Veoma poucna i informativna studija o svim aspektima odnosa majki i cerki i njihov uticaj na zivot i licnost obeju, a i najblizih oko njih. Prvenstveno je namenjena osobama koje imaju 'nerazresenih racuna' i emocionalnih konflikata sa svojim majkama/cerkama, ali svakako sluzi i kao pomoc onima koji znaju takve osobe da ih bolje razumeju.

Nisam bas ljubitelj pukog kategorisanja ljudi i odnosa, a ovde se bas radi o stavljanju majki i cerki u 5 razlicitih kategorija. Po meni ima vise od toga, ali razumem da je autorica htela objasniti osnove losih odnosa izmedju majki i cerki i kako razliciti tipovi funkcionisu, razmisljaju, osecaju i kako se to odrazava na druge.

Knjiga stvarno sadrzi puno prica i primera iz zivota takvih osoba i nekome ce sigurno biti od pomoci procitati ih i naci sebe u nekima i jednostavno osetiti olaksanje da nisu jedini na svetu koji se osecaju tako kako se osecaju u vezi svojih majki ili cerki.

Ono sto knjizi malo fali je veci osvrt na samo resavanje takvih odnosa iako bi trebalo svima da je jasno da bez razumevanja i prihvatanja sebe i drugih onakvi kakvi smo, nema nacina da se stvori zdrav odnos izmedju bilo koje dve osobe, a kamoli izmedju majke i cerke.

A ono sto je meni najvise smetalo kod konkretno ovog izdanja knjige koju sam citala na srpskom jeziku je da su i prevodilac i lektor poprilično zakazali u svom poslu :-/, pa su mi za oko zapale sledece greske -

konfrontacisko, neprestalno, ne pokazivanje, 44. godine stara, Dzojel Stamberk (Joel Steinberg) itd.

Anne says

Yes, the eternal struggle of mother and daughter and the sometimes perceived luxury lived by the younger and all the hardships and frustrations lived by the elder to benefit the young. Sigh. You can try to seek to understand their level. Help them till the cows come home but if they are just so jaded then, well sometimes you have to just separate and take care of yourself. Very enlightening. Example stories or all sorts of mother-daughter relationships. Pray for an understanding father or extended family. If not that then make your own family. Or not.

Eva M. says

Purchased and read this book in 1990 when it was first published. Just returned to skim the areas I highlighted way back then, and found some new insights, in addition to reaffirming the author's clear-headed truths. This is a difficult but important book for any woman who has a challenging (or unresolved) adult relationship with her mother. Absolutely recommend.

Beverly says

I was surprised by how accurate the author's descriptions of the 5 different mothering styles and 5 daughter styles were. I learned a lot about myself, but not so much about how to improve my relationships with my mother or my daughters. Good book, but not much useful advice.

Jenny Duffy says

I'm just about half way through, but so far this book is excellent!

Veronica says

I read about 1/2 of this book before my mother died. It rang true in so many areas of my life. After my mom died, it was interesting to note that the things I had highlighted and found so relevant at the time didn't seem to matter to me anymore. I would recommend this book to anyone that struggled with a challenging mother/child relationship as it often felt like the author had been skulking outside my house watching me grow up.

Mindy says

I have had some problems with my Mom over the last couple of years and this book has brought so many insights into her behavior and what causes the behavior and how to handle it. It has been very helpful. I recommend it to anyone that may be having familial relationship issues. Although the book focuses on the mother/daughter relationship I think it is applicable for just about any familial relationship

Brigit Zelenak says

I bought this for obvious reasons. Being estranged from your mother can be a lonely, isolating thing. After all, how many people do you know who aren't close to their mother? Not in a "Grrr, she drives me crazy... let the answering machine pick up & I'll deal with her later" kind of way, but in a "I haven't spoken to my mother in years and it's better that way" way?

Personally I don't know of anyone other than, well, me. And in that sense this book is a tremendous help. Reading the first-hand tales of others in the same boat made me feel far less isolated and alone.

There were also profiles offered on the types of women who've fallen out with their mothers and then moved on (i.e. are you an overachiever? a troublemaker? a defector?). This part had me scoffing: "I'm not that easily pinned down," I huffed. Then I got to the chapter on defectors and my jaw hit the floor. I suppose that's about the best tribute to this book I can offer.

And while some fences can never be mended, the overall tone is a good one: reminding us that no mother starts out wanting to hurt her child. That maybe my mother was a victim of her circumstances as much as I've been a victim of mine, or you've been a victim of yours.

Forgiveness isn't always an option, but acceptance & understanding has to be something we strive for. Right? I'm starting there are vowing not to let history repeat itself.
