

The *mother-daughter* relationship factor



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Book Selector

Mothers play a very important role in their daughters' lives, so it is a relationship that should not be taken lightly. Mothers and daughters are both treasures from God and the love between the two is a blessing to be cherished. Mothers give their daughters a living definition of who a woman is and how they view their world. A daughter's relationship with her mother affects her life as girlfriend, friend, wife and mother. She needs her mother as a role model in all areas of her life and more especially her mother's unconditional approval, affirmation and support. Even though the relationship has changed from the traditional parent-child relationship between mother and daughter in any family today, it is as strong as it once was. There are a number of reasons for this, for example, single parenting, divorce, technology, working mothers, et cetera. But these factors have also contributed to the complexities that are being experienced by them.

The mother-daughter relationship is one of the most basic human relationships one can have and yet it is a complicated one – especially today where interests overlap and boundaries are not clearly defined. This relationship can be painful if the mother is critical, judgemental and disapproving. A mother's rejection and neglect can have devastating results on how the daughter views herself. But with a mother's support and acceptance the daughter's self-esteem and confidence improves. It is unlike any other; no-one can take a mother's place and the daughter will always need to connect with her to seek advice, encouragement and understanding.

The mother-daughter relationship has a strong lifetime bond and has a direct impact on how a girl is raised to be a woman. This relationship changes from childhood to teen and into the adult years, but one thing that does not change is the daughter's need for her mother's love and support. According to an article by ABC News (2006) and Christine Whelan (2009) mothers and daughters share a special bond with all its complex emotions, for example, anger, resentment, competitiveness and love. Sometimes a mother may be the last person a daughter will want to see but she is still the first person she will call for advice. All mothers would love to see confident, positive, strong daughters who are able to go out there

and make them proud. But, in order for this to take place there needs to be a solid foundation and the bond between them needs to be strong.

According to an article by S Mitchell, (2009) some of the major problems found in the mother-daughter relationship are that some mothers want to talk and walk just like their adult daughters and some daughters need their mothers' acceptance before they make any move. Secondly, mothers allow their daughters in all areas to second-guess them. Thirdly, the line between mother and daughter is more blurred than ever because there is a sense that mother and daughter are friends which most of the time tend to confuse the roles between them. Often both mother and daughter are single and dating, share the same taste in music or confide in one another in a new and more revealing manner. Many mothers see this as a way of keeping lines of communication open at all times so as to bridge the age gap. Some feel that they do not want to make the same mistakes their mothers made.

Mitchell identified four key points in the mother-daughter relationship. These are:

- ♥ appearance: for example, clothes, weight, hair, behaviour, et cetera. Women are judged by how they look and mothers are judged by how their daughters look
- ♥ control: mothers will always see their daughters as young children, regardless of how old they are
- ♥ motherly advice: every time mothers offer advice or suggestions for improvement, there's an implied criticism. Mothers often see this as caring while daughters see it as criticising
- ♥ secrets: daughters keep secrets from their mothers if they sense disapproval – also, withholding information is a daughter's way of gaining power over her mother.

Both Mitchell and Whelan identified basic principles of maintaining a good, healthy mother-daughter relationship. The authors believe that these principles will guide mothers in developing and maintaining a positive and rewarding relationship with their daughters:

- ♥ bite your tongue
- ♥ use humour; see it from her point of view
- ♥ use praise unstintingly
- ♥ be consistent with rules and be a mentor and a guide, not a BFF (Best Friend Forever)

- ♥ do your best to separate money and love early on. Instead of shopping events, bond over museums or sports, lunches or fun with friends
- ♥ don't make excuses for her or overindulge her
- ♥ make sure that you, 'the mom', are respected for your wisdom, experience and support
- ♥ make sure you know who you are as an individual and adult
- ♥ understand the bad mother-daughter examples around you; the materialistic pressures and bribes
- ♥ lastly, set your own goals for mothering that match your values.

LP Gordon and SM Shaffer (2009) agree with these two authors and also add the following advice/points:

- ♥ address your adult daughter in a manner that encourages effective communication and respectful interdependence
- ♥ be flexible
- ♥ be open to the choices your daughter makes
- ♥ make a decision based on the lessons you would like your daughter to learn, not on the results you may want.

To conclude, a mother-daughter relationship is both rewarding and difficult depending on the mother's nurturing role. All mothers and daughters want the same things: love, understanding, respect, and they want them from each other. The greatest gift that either woman can give to the relationship is honesty.

Sources

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Note: Some of these titles are still on order.

