

## **Giving Thanks to Our Mothers**

This year, Mother's Day in the UK falls on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> March, so I thought that this month might be the perfect time to talk about healing our relationship with our own mother.

Mothers in modern Western society are in a no-win situation. They get blamed if they are too soft and blamed if they are too harsh. Tiger Mums are too competitive, while single mothers parenting in poverty are blamed for not pushing their children to achieve more. Moreover, as individuals, we often hold grievances against our own mothers for the whole of our lives. We tell stories about how our mothers left us feeling stupid, inadequate, unloved, trapped, abandoned, betrayed - you name it, our mothers did it to us!

Now, in my early adulthood, I was as guilty as any of us of blaming my loving mother for all my neuroses. I held a strong grievance against my adoptive mother for being cold towards me, and even unloving towards me, only to discover decades later a letter she had written to me when I was 16 that clearly showed she loved me very much. Of course, I had had this letter all through my 20s. I just chose not to read it!

I was so unhappy in my early 20s that I went into therapy, where my therapist actually encouraged me to blame my 'crazy' mother for all my troubles. It took me many years of spiritual growth and deep, painful self-healing before I fully realised that my adoptive mother was a beautiful, self-sacrificing soul who had given me so many precious gifts for which I am now extremely grateful.

For example, my mother was a librarian and it was she who first instilled in me an exceptional reading habit, which later really helped me to become a good writer. When I was seven, I was already reading 3 three library books a week and complaining that it was unfair that children could not take out 5 books a week as adults could.

My mother also taught me good manners and insisted that I should think of others before myself. I am not claiming to be a particularly selfless person these days. But I am now so grateful that I learnt from a very early age that selfishly grabbing stuff for ourselves before looking after the needs of others was a wrong thing to do.

Whilst my mother undoubtedly taught me many incredibly useful life skills, she definitely had her own unhealed or unskilled behaviours. For example, I do not remember her ever cuddling me –even as a very small child - and I suspect that this is one reason why I still find accepting a warm hug from someone a bit of a challenge. However, looking back on my secure, but rather lonely and unhappy childhood with spiritual hindsight, I can see how even the most painful aspects of my mother's parenting were a spiritual gift to me.

For example, if I had not taken some quite heavy emotional baggage into my early adulthood, I would not have gone to see a psychotherapist and if I had not done that, I would not have met my first amazing meditation teacher. So in one sense, I have my adoptive mother's unskilled parenting to thank for the miraculous awakening journey I have been on for the last 30 years.

Can you see how all this works? Life Itself is always loving and kind to us, even if some of us absolutely refuse to see this for the whole of our lives. Life Itself is always pushing us to awake from the illusion of separation, conflict and fear into the oneness of universal love and light.

One major way in which we get pushed to awake spiritually is through pain and suffering. If the dream of normal human life was too comfortable or pleasurable, what incentive would we have to search for a deeper meaning to life? Why would we bother to search for a path back home to ultimate reality, if living in 'The Matrix' was too enjoyable?

So, in relation to our own loving mothers, can we now begin to see that even their most unskilled behaviours were a blessing in disguise? Can we acknowledge that the pain they accidentally caused us has been - or could become - a catalyst for us to seek for a lasting solution to all our suffering?

Can we also see that our childhood pain has probably enabled us to feel genuine compassion for other suffering souls? Indeed, in many cases, as we awakened from our own suffering, we found that we had a gift to share with those who were still suffering as we had done. For example, a dear friend of ours experienced extreme emotional pain as a child, caused at least in part by his mentally disturbed mother. This emotional pain pushed him into becoming a drug addict in his 20s. However, having bravely overcome his own addictive behaviour, he now assists other addicts to break free from their addiction – What a miracle!

Now it may well be that you may have had an exceptionally loving and pain free relationship with your own mother and so the idea that we all hold a lot of grievances against our mothers may not seem relevant to you. If so, please just send your amazing mother heartfelt thanks for her outstanding mothering skills and beautiful loving care of you. If on the other hand, your mother was not always perfect - as she tried her best in difficult circumstances to raise you - can you now find it in your heart to forgive her for not being Wonder Woman?

If you have become a mother yourself, can you now look back into your childhood with much greater understanding and compassion for all the emotional and physical hardships your own mother faced whilst raising you?

Then, if you feel ready to dig a bit deeper, can you gently focus on one aspect of your mother's behaviour towards you when you were a child that you believe caused you emotional pain at the time, or maybe even lasting emotional damage. Can you ask your intuitive heart, 'How has that emotional pain benefitted me in some way?'

Don't worry if no positive answer comes up for you. Sometimes, we are just not ready to change our mind about being the victim of someone else's 'bad' behaviour and that's fine too. Life itself always waits with infinite patience until we are ready to let go of all our grievances so that we can finally 'return home to love'.

When I was a depressed young woman, I just was not ready to do this. In fact, for many years in therapy, I wore my grievances against both of my adoptive parents like battle medals! But eventually, with the assistance of some amazingly compassionate, awakened individuals, I slowly and painfully let go of all these grievances, only to discover, to my utmost surprise, that both my mothers – my birth mother and my adoptive mother - had been the perfect mothers for me - or rather for my awakening soul – all along. Wow!

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