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Stories From Moms

May 6, 2021

Dear Mom, It's Me. Writing This Coz I Do Not Want To Become You

I love you as you are; I can't stop even if I wanted to. You are as much a part of me as I am of you. But there is only so much that I can do in the face of your constant rejection.



Nivedita Ramesh



TAGS: #BREAKTHECHAIN MOTHERS DAY

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Trigger Warning: This deals with childhood abuse, domestic violence, depression, and postpartum depression, and may be triggering for survivors.

My mother was only 20 when she had me. She got married at 19. My father is her first cousin. When I decided to get married (I was 28), I asked her about contraception, and she said she had never used any. So off we went to the gynaecologist, one she chose (and therefore was closer to her age than mine), but was reasonable enough to explain my options to me.

My mom, who until then was silent, talked over me while I was answering the doctor on whether I intended to have children immediately, to insist that I would very soon; I was 'already old'. We had a verbal joust right there, startling the poor lady doctor into silence. She eventually asked my mother to step out so that she and I could continue our conversation.

To say that my mother was displeased would be putting it mildly.

But it was only after I became a mother myself, at 32, that things came to a head. The gynaecologist whom I consulted through my pregnancy and subsequent delivery was a young woman a few years older than me, so we were friends first, and doctor-patient second.

Six months after my daughter was born, my baby and I were both alone in our new home, a larger place my husband and I had moved to, and closer to my parents, too.

I thought it was just PPD, but something deeper got uncovered

My husband's work had him travelling three to four days of a week. I would go days without seeing anyone other than my baby. Since I was new to the apartment complex, I didn't know anyone. I couldn't stop crying. I cried through days and nights. My gynec had warned me about the **signs of PPD (post partum depression)**, and told me

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So seven months after my delivery, I sought help for what I thought was severe PPD. My therapist, after a few sessions, had other views. She said I had an identity crisis, and possible emotional imbalance because of a bad childhood.

None of this made any sense to me – as a state topper in my 10th standard and with top tier engineering and MBA degrees in my resume, followed by an enviable, well-paying corporate career, I knew who I was. As to my childhood, I had thought it to be a particularly sheltered and comfortable one, considering those of my friends that I knew of. So what was the problem?

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I have never felt comfortable with labels, and once I quit work to be a full-time mom till my daughter was old enough to go to school, I abandoned them altogether. My infant didn't care about my Engineering CGPA or my last designation; if she didn't like the food I made, she spit it out. My **first year as a mother** was a recalibration of skills, self-worth and hormones, to name just a few of the shake-ups.

I did not want to become my mother!

Around a year of therapy later, my therapist suggested we try to work through the issues I had with my parents, which she felt was the root cause of all my problems. I agreed to start with a letter to my mom, in which I wrote about all the things that had bothered me till then but have been unable to voice.

I also consulted a psychiatrist for anti-anxiety medication. I have always been a poor drinker, and generally never liked any substance or smoke that messed with my thinking. Thanks to the prozac-equivalent that I voluntarily popped every morning, I belched all day like a pig, and also lived in brain fog for about a week, till my stubborn brain resigned itself to the medication.

Sometimes I would spend my entire hour of therapy crying, because this was so difficult – *changing*. I would try and articulate out loud, in a choking voice punctuated by gasps, *why* I was still doing it. I did not want to become my mother. I wanted to raise an empathetic, well-adjusted, happy child. I wanted to make our home the safe place for her to do whatever she wanted, to be her true self, to know that she was loved unconditionally.

A letter to my mother

Dear Mom, it's Me.

I know that you are upset about my having to correct the wrongs that supposedly happened when I was a child. Logically speaking, I don't think you did anything wrong deliberately. At 20, you were a child yourself, and you had the responsibility of another life, running a home, and dealing with in-laws who were more unreasonable than most simply because they had known you all their lives.

There are many things that I wish hadn't happened

I was a poor eater so you would force feed me, and you would beat me if I didn't finish everything on my plate. That was the norm those days. But today this is the reason I stress-eat.

You have multiple compulsions, from cleaning, to things having to be done in a particular way, with what I should wear and how I should talk and behave in public, but mostly, you crave control. I was exactly like this too, and now every day I try to let go of one thing that I would have otherwise itched to 'correct' just the way I want it.

The words you used to describe me, call me, still hurt, even at 36

From a head full of why-didn'ts, self-criticisms and anger about has-beens, I feel empty, or at best filled with dreams of letting life lead me, rather than the other way round.

To say that this is easier on me overall is a gross understatement. I would tell you to do the same, except that I know you would resort to calling me incompetent, useless and stupid, which are the adjectives I have had thrown at me through growing up.

At 36, and with achievements and a family of my own, they still hurt. God only knows why.

I know you had a hard life, being abused, marrying early, no support, but...

You were not incapable of emotion or love; you just don't know how to show it because no one showed it to you. I know now that this was because of your abusive father who didn't need a reason to beat you or my grandma. I love you as you are; I can't stop even if I wanted to. You are as much a part of me as I am of you. But there is only

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Your life hasn't been easy. I know that because you have told me your life stories, over and over and over. I only know the bad parts, maybe because that's all you remember. I know there would have been some good parts too. By spending every minute of your present agonising over and trying to run away from the forgettable parts of your past, you are paying for it today, fifty odd years later. You are angrier than ever, you feel more powerless than ever, and health wise, you are sicker than ever.

But I choose to #BreakTheChain and help myself, so that I can be a better mother myself

I want you to know that I have chosen to mend myself, and my relationship with you. I have chosen to live differently, to find my true self from somewhere inside.

Yes, this is a struggle, and yes, it would mean that I would fail multiple times before I even glimpse success. I know you don't approve of failure, and that you find any conversation about myself to be selfishness personified.

But none of this matters to me as much as making sure my daughter doesn't become the me-you I am pushing against, every minute, every day. If I have to spend the next twenty-odd years trying to #BreakTheChain, I will.

I want her to make different mistakes. I want her to know that **her mother is not a perfect embodiment** of everything that is feminine, but a flawed human being who hasn't lost hope. More than anything else in the world, I want my daughter to love herself, just as she is.

Lots of love and a hug I always want to give you but am unable to,

Your Daughter

Author's note: I would like to thank Women's Web for getting me to do something my therapist has been trying to make me do for the three years I have been seeing her – write about my mom.

**

Parenting is not easy, and while most of us try to parent our children mindfully, so many of us slide into default modes of parenting we have learnt from our parents while growing up. How do children perceive this parenting? Are we mindful of what they feel, what they think? Are we trying to #BreakTheChain of generational trauma?

We called for personal stories by moms where they have made this decision, or the personal stories of their mothers. To mother mindfully. Mothers and Daughters who say – #BreakTheChain.

***Nivedita Ramesh** is one of our winners.*

Image source: *a still from the short film Methi Ke Laddoo*

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#BreakTheChain **mothers day**

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Lakshmi Balu

I connect with this article so well. I subconsiously accepted by mother hates me and its okay. She has had h At her parents, the sons were the priority and daughters were second class citizens. The same attitude was me. i am so glad accepting her flaws has helped me overcome my depression.

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Aparna Palle

I could connect myself as a mother in this article. It helped me today to understand what my daughter says says the things she says at times so rudely...Thanks for the post.

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About the Author

Nivedita Ramesh

I asked so many questions that I stopped getting answers. Then I started writing. **read more...**

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Pop Culture

July 8, 2022

10 Knockout Moments In Koffee With Karan Season 7 Episode 1... Do You Agree?

Koffee With Karan Season 7 Episode 1 was Ranveer Singh all the way! A crackling episode that has all fans sit up and take notice.

Tina Sequeira

For me, the 'Koffee With Karan' was getting insufferably predictable, boring, and even borderline mean in the last few seasons. There were a few exceptional guests on the show though like Twinkle Khanna and Nargis Fakhri, who lend some originality and wit on it.

So, I had zero expectations when the latest season was out last night. In fact, I was prepared for the worst. I mean, it's Alia Bhatt in the introductory episode, who is intolerable to watch offscreen with her gross immaturity, and lack of intellect on the whole. I don't mind her emoting on-screen, though. She's an excellent actress, no doubt.

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Newsmakers

On Her 64th Birthday, 11 Neetu Singh Movies For Your Weekend Binge!

Neetu Singh movies. There was always a certain joy that Neetu Kapoor brought to her performances. Today, on her birthday, here's our list.

Kamakshi S

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"Fighting fyt" reads Neetu Kapoor's **instagram bio**, and rightly so for no other words can define this legendary actress better.

A bubbly performer, a dedicated loving wife and mother and a towering family woman, Neetu Kapoor has played many roles in her life with grace, dignity with that quintessential bright smile on her face.

A child actress who went on to become a charming leading lady, she was known throughout her career till she got married to Rishi, as Neetu Singh. Fans from that era still search for her movies as Neetu Singh movies.

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