

Mothers Are Human Too

By: Marla Lukofsky

Years ago, during a rough patch of communications between my mother and me, I had a conversation with Auntie Phyllis, my mom's beloved sister and partner-in-crime. I confessed to her that I thought my mother didn't love me. She paused for a moment, then broke her silence and said, "That's interesting Marla, because recently your mother told me that she doesn't think *you* love *her*." My auntie's news shocked and pained me. Up until then, I'd never thought that my mother might have the same vulnerabilities that I did. Parents are superhuman after all.

A similar realization occurred years later, when my mother came to Los Angeles to help take care of me during my cancer struggle. We had spent lots of quality time together doing errands like shopping, banking, walking and medical appointments—all the necessities of life and living. Most of the time we didn't talk much, which wasn't unusual for us. One day while at my apartment, we had an argument over something small but it caused an awkward rift between us.

Feeling uncomfortable with our discord, I went to my room, lay on my bed and contemplated our exchange. My mother remained in the living room sitting in the tanned vinyl chair near the window, reading the newspaper. Quietly, I telephoned my sister, disclosing the argument and tearfully admitted that I was afraid mom was mad at me. My sister said, "That's interesting Marla, because I just spoke to Mommy and she said the exact same thing, that she's afraid you're mad at her."

Once again it struck me, "Mommy is as vulnerable as I. She's not superhuman after all." I peeked out of my bedroom and saw my mother still sitting in the chair reading her newspaper. I sauntered over, kneeled down beside her and slowly placed my baldhead on her lap. Tenderly her beautiful slender hand reached out and caressed my head.

"I thought you were mad at me" I told her.

"I thought you were mad at me" she replied adding "I was so afraid of making you upset, making you sick when all I wanted to do was be here to be of help. I'm so sorry."

We grabbed each other and cried deep tears.

"I love you, Mommy."

“I love you, Marla.”

“And I’m sorry too. And I’m sorry that I’m sick. I feel like such a burden to you, to everyone,” I confessed.

“You’re not a burden at all, Marla. You’re never a burden and this too shall pass. This too shall pass,” she assured me.

We held each other for a while longer, rocking in each other’s arms.

Yes, my mother and I had our problems. Ours was not a perfect relationship. And as much as I thought we were very different, my father often reminded us that we were more alike than not. I still don’t know which similarities he was referring to. What I do know for certain is that she was a dutiful mother, a mother who cared deeply for her children and wanted everything to be fair and equal amongst my two older sisters and me. If we were ever in trouble emotionally, physically, or financially, she was there for us in a heartbeat.

What I needed from her (like more hugs, kisses and praise) was not often something she was comfortable giving. She’d say to me, “It’s just not my way, Marla.”

Later on in life, I decided not to stand on ceremony, waiting for her to initiate hugs to me. Instead, *I* initiated the hugs. At first she was taken aback but I never let go and she warmed into it, eventually breaking into a laugh.

Now she has passed away and I can’t take things back or make anything better. I hope she knew how deeply I loved her. I still struggle with the loss. Everyone needs a Mom after all, no matter what the age. One thing is for certain. Mothers are human too.