

Generational Mother Hunger

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“the ‘unmothered’ woman may seek mothers all her life” ~ Adrienne Rich

In her book *Mother Daughter Wisdom*, Dr. Christine Northrup explains that daughters inherit the unrealized dreams of their maternal ancestors. Thwarted hopes and goals that your mother and her mother experienced will color the way you see the world and the choices you have. Dr. Louann Brizendine, author *The Female Brain* calls this phenomenon “epigenetic imprinting” and explains how a daughter carries her mother’s nervous system in her own. The shared nervous system can transfer over generations.

For this reason, it’s helpful to examine your mother and grandmother’s life. If you did not grow up with either of them, this is a difficult task. You may feel like avoiding it completely. For avoidant-attached daughters, you may feel indifferent about your mother’s life. You may feel you know everything you need or want to know about your mother. For anxious-attached daughters, you may feel starved for maternal information and not know the best way to get it. Going toward your mother for this information may bring up fear of rejection or an emotional scene. Search for any unconscious expectations you may be harboring for a bonding moment with your mother.

Finding the answers to these questions does not mean you need to go directly to your mother or her mother. Reflect. Wonder. Explore with your therapist or trusted friend. You may be surprised how much you already know.

For each question, consider both your mother and her mother.

1. How did your biological mother feel about her body? (What kind of clothes did she wear? What kind of comments did she make about her body? Did she take care of herself with nutrition, exercise, and rest? Was she aware of her menstrual cycle? How did she discuss it?)

2. How did you mother feel about her free time? (Did she have fun? Did she have interests that she explored?)

3. How did you mother feel about her work? (If she worked outside the home, did she enjoy it? If she worked taking care of home and children, was she happy? How did she express satisfaction? How did she show frustration?)

4. How did you mother feel about important relationships in her life? (Did she have friends to talk to? Was she happy with romantic relationships? Did she enjoy a sexual relationship with a partner? Could her friends/and or partner trust her?)
