

MY MOTHER THROUGH THE YEARS

by
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[Assignment: Consider a person or place that you have known throughout your lifetime. What are your various memories of this person or place across time? How has he/she/it changed or stayed the same? How have your feelings for he/she/it changed or stayed the same? How has the way you've changed as a maturing human being affected your relationship with this person or place?]

I understand that we continue to change throughout our lives. We develop from babies, to toddlers, to young children, to adolescents, to young adults until we reach senior citizen status. It is my opinion that people not only change in the physical sense but also psychologically, through maturation. I believe we continue to change and grow spiritually and intellectually. It is through these opinions and beliefs that I view my mother.

Hers is the first face I saw after birth. No, I am not talking about the nurse, or the doctor for that matter, I am talking about my mother. From the day I was born and continuing through today, I see my mother changing. I remember vivid pictures of her from when I was a toddler, and I continue to put together a "mental scrapbook" today.

I cannot really say that I remember my mother changing my diapers, but I do remember her playing with me and feeding me. This is when I was a very young child, four and five years old. I always had to be with my mom, hers was the first face I saw in the morning and the last face I saw before I went to bed at night. The sight of her face made me feel safe, secure, and loved. As I reminisce, I recall a saying we used to have; each night after she read me my bedtime story, (usually *Jack and the Beanstalk*) she would shut off the light and we would both say "Goodnight. See you in the morning. I love you." This was the mother who read me stories just before I went to bed at night; the woman who knew exactly how to fix a scraped knee: clean it, put a Band-Aid on it, then kiss it. With one particular scraped knee, I fell off my bike and I thought I was going to bleed to death. A Band-Aid and a kiss did the trick—all better. At this stage my mother was pretty much my livelihood. Not only did she feed and clothe me, she was my best friend. Besides being my caretaker, throughout the day and evening she was my playmate.

As I grew older the ties began to sever. I went to kindergarten and then into grammar school. My mother was always a room mother and would therefore always go on trips with my class. One particular field trip that stands out in my mind is our trip to Second City in Chicago. We watched a play in which the people in the audience participated. My mother was chosen and had to pretend to be a banana. Besides being involved in my schooling, my mom did other things that also made me

happy. For example, when I began taking a bag lunch to school every day there would be a napkin on the bottom, then half a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, potato chips, and then a note, wishing my day well, and ending with an "I love you!"

Growing older, I began to look at my mother in different ways. When I was a young child, she was the world to me. I guess I never really noticed at that time, but she too was young. She was a young lady in the prime of her life, taking care of three children, holding down a job and being a wife. She and my father would still go out on dates, and she never had a hair out of place or a gray one to boot. This is how I viewed my mother as a child.

As time went by, I began to see subtle changes in her hair and noticed that my parents rarely went out anymore, at least not just the two of them. As I grew older, I recollect my parents going out for their anniversary. My mom would look absolutely stunning in a sleek black dress. They would leave and go out to dinner, usually a surprise planned by my dad, and not be back until early the next morning. Now, my parents spend their anniversary at the softball diamond and the choice of dress for my mother is shorts and a t-shirt. The surprise dinner would be a hot-dog and a coke from the concession stand. The only thing that remained unchanged was the fact that we would arrive home early the next morning. Their relationship changed in other ways also. Besides the anniversary, they stopped going out as much and they became middle-aged people who enjoyed family life rather than a night on the town.

Once I got into middle school, like every child, I went through a period of embarrassment with my mother. I wanted to be cool and spend more time with my friends and away from my mother. Then it became obvious that my friends were not as important to me as my family. My friends would turn on me, stab me in the back, and my mother would always be there to love me and console me. Soon I realized that I could not spend time away from her nor did I want to. Sure, she still dressed like we were in the eighties and yes, she was paranoid about what crowd I would go out with. I was seeing my mother in another stage of her life. She too was still growing; slowly but surely her baby was growing up and would eventually be leaving her. This meant she too needed to change; her role was no longer to fix a scraped knee, but instead, to mend a broken heart, a heart tormented by first love. He was a football player, wrestler, and a track star. He could have any girl he wanted and he wanted me, or so I thought. Instead, I discovered he was using me to make another girl jealous. At this point, I came to an understanding. My mother was not someone to be embarrassed about, but rather someone to lean on and share with.

Middle school was shortlived and eventually I landed in high school. Going to high school was like leaving the country and ending up somewhere where I knew no one and I could not speak the language. I remember waking up my first day of high school trembling with a cold sweat on my back. I was afraid that I would be lost when I arrived at the high school that morning, or worse yet, that the upperclassmen would embarrass me. My mom was right there to calm my fears and tell me there was nothing to worry about and that everyone else was in the same

boat. Once again I saw my mom in a different light. She was not only giving me advice for that day, but helping me to develop an outlook on life, a positive outlook. She taught me to live without fear, not to let people take advantage of me. She taught me to find the good in every situation, even the absolute worst situation. Throughout high school, I had many a broken heart, fights with my friends and tests that were failed. Each and every time my mother was there to put me back together and encourage me to go on, and I did.

Closer and closer my mother and I have grown. Recently I saw a new side of her I have never seen before. Both my mom and I fought hard so I would develop my talents and become a college softball player. Why do I say both my mom and I fought hard? When I say both my mom and I fought hard, I mean that every setback I endured, a broken ankle, a concussion, hundreds of bad games, an embarrassing situation with a coach, she was always right there to encourage me to "take the good with the bad." I will never forget the day I signed my letter of intent to play softball at the Division I level. We entered the Athletic Department of my high school and with the athletic director as a witness, on April 12, 1995, at 2:52 p.m., I signed my letter of intent. My mother's face was filled with pride and joy. I have never seen a brighter smile. I am so happy because I have made her so proud, and will strive to make her even more proud and happy.

Something new I have discovered about my mother recently, which has slightly altered my view of her, is that she seems to feel everything I do. Since arriving at college, I have called her many times crying, about how afraid and unhappy I was. She too cried. I have never seen my mother cry, until this year. This scared me a little, not so much because she was crying, but I realized that she too is a person and has feelings. I guess I never really saw her as having feelings before because she never cried in front of my sisters and me. She showed the emotions of anger and happiness, but never of sadness and disappointment. She is the strongest woman I know and at that moment I needed to give her support. This altered my view of her in the sense that my respect for her has grown; she showed me that it is okay to be strong, but it is also okay to show your true feelings. Each day my respect for her grows and grows.

My mother is a great woman, and like many other great women in history she has gone through changes. First, she was the woman with a baby and then a feisty toddler. As I grew up and changed she grew up too; she matured from a newly married very young woman, to a more mature parent and adult. Her roles also changed; she became a mender of both physical and emotional "cuts and bruises." Her hair and clothes have changed, and sure, she may be a little older, but she will always remain my mother and my best friend. That will never change.