

## **Mama & Daughter**

I still remember the flight I took with my mother to London when I was about 14 yrs. I chose to sit two rows behind her. Reason?? Because it seemed cool to be seen traveling alone. And I could not understand my mother's hurt and bewilderment that her daughter did not 'like' to sit with her. And I can still see the satin dress she chose for me and which I thought was atrocious. "At least try it on", she pleaded. I shrieked back, "That is so old fashioned. It is something you would wear. I won't be caught dead in it". I knew people were staring and my mother was embarrassed. Well, I couldn't care. I was embarrassed as well, and ashamed of myself for shopping with my mother. I vowed instantly that if I ever had daughters I would respect their views, never impose my judgments on them and allow them their independence.

And the promise came true- till my eldest daughter turned 12! We were shopping together one day for a skirt for her, and when I showed my preference for a particular one, she exploded, "You never allow me to buy things I like. Why don't you want me to look good?" That was the beginning of repeated tug-of-wars with both my girls. In a recent Reader's Digest article, psychologist Sherry Beaumont says, "the mother-daughter relationship has the most overt conflict of any parent-child relationship. But it's also the closest."

Mothers get into power struggles when they feel their daughters are rejecting them, and daughters' battle with moms when they need to demonstrate their independence and maturity. These conflicts also have an inherent power to damage the relationship if they become regular slinging matches.

Some damage control tips are:

- Mothers can take comfort from the fact that most conflicts are not about major issues-moral values, academics, etc. They are about shopping, bedtime, friends, chores, rules, etc, and therefore can be negotiated about or sometimes bent.
- If your daughter says she is 'embarrassed' by you/ your behavior, ask her to explain what she means-often teenagers' definitions are very different from ours. And usually the 'embarrassing' behavior is very trivial (in our eyes) and can be remedied.
- The trick is not to get emotional about the, "I hate you", "I am leaving home", "You are so mean", statements. They are merely expressions of frustration and explosive emotion and are best ignored.
- Mothers should not take their daughters' rejection to heart. It is part of her process of gaining independence and becoming an individual.

If mothers can hang in and be resilient for a few years, there's usually a 360° turn by late teens and the fruit of patience is the unparalleled closeness shared for life.

**BY Arshia Ahmed Ayub & Najma Sanai.**