

*Names are changed to honor client confidentiality.*

## **Banished from Her Mother's Heart**

Rejection can be a devastating experience, especially when it comes from someone vitally important to us, like a parent. But such a potent rejection is really a call for growth.

In a counseling session, 34-year-old Michelle expressed the pain of being alienated by her family. It began 15 years ago, when she chose a career path her parents didn't approve of.

"They turned their back on me," she lamented.

Now she feels banished from their hearts. Michelle's not excluded from family gatherings. But such occasions lack a welcoming bear-hugging-all-inclusive mentality of acceptance. She gave examples of judgmental attitudes and shunning behaviors, mostly from her mother.

Ironically, Michelle has proved herself to be poised, highly competent and successful in her career. In that arena she feels sure of herself. But all that confidence quickly evaporates the minute her attention switches to her mother's rejection.

"I notice when you talk about your mother, you go small," I observed.

Nodding, she replied, "Yes, when it comes to her, especially, I doubt myself."

She explained that her mother's rejecting and disapproving manner was something she's always had to contend with.

"How are her failings as a parent challenging you to grow stronger?" I asked.

Michelle didn't know. Clearly, Michelle is challenged to view herself—in all circumstances—as the shrewd and competent woman she has become.

"Your mother is good for you," I said. "Her disapproval is forcing you to become immune to disapproving attitudes. Unbeknownst to her, she's stretching you to become self-accepting and to believe in yourself."

I pointed out that her mother isn't an enemy; rather, the problem is an archaic impression Michelle has of her mother. In reality, her mother's not scary, just imperfect.

"Because you still view her through a child's eyes—looming larger than life—you're susceptible to her flawedness," I said. "Your mom has rejected you because you chose to follow the beat of

your own drum 15 years ago. How is she being challenged to grow?" I asked.

"To be accepting of differences," Michelle replied with strength.

© 2013 Salee Reese