

The **MOTHER-
DAUGHTER**
Relationship Makeover



4 Steps to
Bring Back
the Love

Leslie and Lindsey Glass

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Introduction

For all the exasperated, frustrated, raging, helpless, hopeless mothers/daughters out there, we have news for you. Whatever miseries you may be experiencing with your mother/daughter right now, the conflicts are not only about your daughter/mother. In fact, all mother-daughter conflicts originate from other people who have influenced you (and her). Wherever you are on your mother-daughter journey, your present conflicts develop from generational, familial, and cultural experiences that affect your every thought and reaction. Don't rule out other family members and the dynamic they bring to the table.

It may come as a big surprise that the things you say and do are likely the opinions and actions repeated by those who raised you and those who raised them. Traumas from generations ago such as migrations, wars, famine, persecution, genocide, economic depressions, mental illnesses, and unbearable tragedies that you have never even heard about may be ghosts of the past intruding on your relationships and feelings now. That's what we realized when we started exploring the evolution of our own conflicts and fights. How we recovered from overwhelming pain and anger is the story you will read here. Our relationship makeover became one of the greatest accomplishments of our life. We know mothers and daughters everywhere will want to share this book for aha moments that can change the way they view themselves and improve their lives. We will make you laugh and cry at our story of heartbreak and redemption.

We are going to show you how following the four steps in this book can shift negative feelings about your relationship forever. Now, it's normal to have a wide variety of mother-daughter conflicts that change over time, so we also want to make sure we're clear about what's normal fighting and the kind of behavior that crosses lines to toxic, abusive, and manipulative relationships for which you may need professional help to heal.

As we take you through the four steps of the relationship makeover, we will give you prompts along the way to think about your own mother, grandmother, and family members. The ways your loved ones influenced you will reveal the patterns that are being repeated now with your mom/daughter. How do you sound when you talk to each other? What is your tone, and what do you want to happen with your interactions and conversations? Can you listen, or do you interrupt to reinforce your point of view? With new insights you may

find better ways to communicate, to stop the cycle of conflict, and to finally find your happy ending, as we did. Take that last sentence with a grain of salt. Not all relationships can or should be mended. Family members can be unsupportive, toxic, or worse. But even if you can't and shouldn't get back together again, you can heal if you understand what happened.



STEP 1

Self-Discovery

You're about to embark on Step 1 of your relationship makeover journey. This section will be enlightening. Here are five chapters that explore who you and your mom/daughter really are. We begin this journey of self-discovery with writing. You're going to tell the story of your life through writing prompts. Why are we giving you writing prompts when you think you already know what happened and have a strong point of view? We know that writing your answers to our questions will inspire you to think about new possibilities, and this may open your mind and heart to finding peace in unexpected ways. It did for us.

Chapter 1 is about writing. Writing is the universal tool for sharing our histories, telling stories, educating, entertaining, and yes, healing. Writing is the tool that has helped us find understanding about ourselves and each other. Writing has been the outlet for saying what can't be said out loud, relieving ourselves of toxic secrets, finding self-awareness about our own behavior, and so much more. Writing is key in recovery for realizing what it was like, what happened, and how to move forward in healthier ways. In this first chapter we share what writing means to us and invite you to think about what writing has meant to you in the past and how it can help you now.

In Chapter 2 we explore our own background and stories, and we invite you to do the same. Who are you? Where do you come from? What is your history and the

history of the mothers and daughters who came before you in your family. What has your life been like, and what do you know about your mother? The past reveals how we're behaving in the present and can give us the insight to make changes when necessary.

In Chapter 3 we delve into personality, mood, and emotional styles. This will show how we're different and the same and may reveal why you get along or live in conflict. When it comes to your mother-daughter relationship, what are your personality and emotional styles, and how well do they mesh? We'll give some examples of personality styles, tell you about ours, and invite you to add this component to your life story. We'll talk about mood habits here, too. This chapter may also help you identify how you are with others and your characteristics that make relationships easy or difficult.

In Chapter 4 we'll move from personality styles to communication styles. Here we'll look at the way you communicate and how it is developed by your culture and family. What does comfort sound like? Culture plays a part. In Africa, for example, being called fat is a compliment. In other places, it's the opposite. Words destroy self-esteem or bolster it. Communication affects who you are and the ways your mom-daughter relationship may be supportive, or not so much. We'll give some examples of how you may speak to each other and ask you to think about words that changed your life that you'll never forget.

In Chapter 5 we will explore the secrets we keep and the lies we tell. You know when you hide the truth. You may be protecting someone else or yourself. Lying is something else. All teens lie to their moms. And plenty of moms we know do their share of shading or hiding the truth about so many things. We'll explore the impact lying and hiding has on the mother-daughter relationship and how it damages trust and confidence. We'll ask you to think about your own experiences with secrets and lies.



CHAPTER 1

For Leslie and Lindsey, Writing Can Cure Almost Anything

Many forms of self-expression can provide relief from emotional distress and pain, but none can create a portal to solutions, true healing, and the potential to restore relationships quite like writing. We live in a world of behavioral rules, family rules, cultural rules, and relationship rules. Each rule can profoundly hurt us in unexpected ways. Loyalty and fear can teach us never to speak our true minds or speak from the heart because telling can get us in trouble. There is political censorship, and there is censorship we learn from family experience. Self-censorship shuts us up and shuts us down, often before we have a chance to know who we really are. We develop verbal behavior habits that disguise our feelings or blast them out in ways that don't serve us well.

Blurting negative feelings out loud to those we love does terrible damage every day. We all have trauma around that. The words mothers and daughters let loose in anger and criticism can be deeply hurtful and destructive. Casual cruelty and outright verbal attacks are not easily forgotten or forgiven. Words and feelings written on the page, however, can transform and enlighten. Writing lets you say, *"I'm mad at Mom for holding me back. My aunt is an idiot who drinks too much. Granny doesn't know what she's talking about. You've been mean and hurt me."* You've said it, but not in a way that can come back to haunt you. It's okay to tell your journal or diary or notebook what you really think. A journal doesn't talk back or tell you that your feelings are stupid or wrong.

In fact, a journal can be the path to self-discovery, a way to see how wrong you've been about something. Angry words you write one day can seem ridiculous, or at least not so important, when you read them weeks or months later. Just letting the feelings loose on the page is enough for you to feel better in the moment. Your words don't have to strike a living target to serve their purpose. Writing also opens the door to positive memories and events that can bring back joy you may have forgotten or think you've lost forever. In writing this book I've recovered memories from the very first years of my life. Telling

yourself both the good and bad sides to your story can also create a more realistic truth that you can inhabit more comfortably.

For me, writing has always been a way to figure out what was going on, to translate the world whenever it made no sense. Writing something down can change a day, a mood, a relationship, indeed one's whole life for the better. Writing can be the kiss to the hurt that makes everything feel much better. The philosopher Descartes wrote in 1637, "I think, therefore I am." That one firm and absolute certainly became the basic center, the philosophical proof of our existence. Thinking may be the first step to being oneself. But sharing thoughts through words and images is the first step to being together. We don't need to ask Hallmark if it works.

Writing gave me a way to hear myself think and know that my thoughts had value. Working through a thousand issues on the page has been the magical tool that has kept me alive during all the ups and downs of life, and there have been many. My life has been messy but wonderful. No one, no matter how perfect someone's life may seem from the outside, is spared from pain and anguish. There have been many times in my life when writing felt like my only friend. When loss and defections of family members, death of much-loved animals, career struggles, discord, financial challenges, war and difficult years for my country and the people I love the most—when all these things seemed too much to bear, the simple act of writing it down gave my feelings meaning. It helped me find fresh air to breathe and a door in the wall that seemed to shut me in.

Of all the times writing has come to my rescue, it served the best when it became the tool my daughter Lindsey and I used to restore the precious relationship we had lost in the turbulent teen years. Like so many mothers and daughters, Lindsey and I unintentionally shut each other out and felt the anguish of not being heard or loved enough. After fifteen years of serial battling when it seemed nothing could restore the love and closeness we both wanted, writing gave us the gift of understanding, acceptance, and redemption.

So to mothers and daughters who feel the perfect love, mothers and teens who think things will never get better, mothers and daughters who cannot stay in the same room for very long or agree on much of anything, to everyone who is a mother or a daughter, I dedicate our story to you. With a sense of humor, a grain of salt, and an open heart, you, too, can feel better.



Lindsey Shares What Writing Means to Her

I used to hate writing, which is funny because now I love it. But I used to hate most things at first. Then when something was forced upon me, I realized I liked it. Auto-hate, I guess. Or contempt prior to investigation, as they say in recovery circles. Definitely one of

my character defects. Writing was what my mom did. That was her thing, and I didn't want to be like her. Yes, we laugh about that now that I have turned into a modified version of her. Writing was something I resented for taking my mom away from me, and I found it unpleasant as an activity. It takes a certain kind of focus that was too challenging for me back in the day. It was hard enough for me to sit still when I was young and in my early years of addiction recovery, but to sit still *and* focus my thoughts was asking a lot.

When I was a teen, I was not as into books as the other members of my family. They would sit around the dinner table discussing what they were reading, and I'd tune out remembering scenes from movies or reading a comic book. I'm more visual, and I had no patience when I was a teen and young adult. As a child, I loved reading, but the moment I graduated to TV and movies, I didn't look back for a while. In my free time I preferred physical activities, being outside, or going to the movies. My mom would do nothing but read a new book in a series over a three-day weekend while I had to exercise, shop, clean, and do a multitude of other activities.

As the years have passed, I've learned to be a reader and writer. Forced into book clubs, endless self-help, and research, I followed a path that led me back into reading. I couldn't be happier as I developed a whole new love of reading and books in recent years. Writing, on the other hand, now that's a different story. When my life hit an especially dark patch in my early twenties, something completely unexpected came to my rescue: writing. Suddenly a love and devotion to the craft that I never thought possible was ignited. Over the next twenty-four years writing has evolved into a passion and job. First, it slowly became a part of my recovery life and the tool to help mend my broken relationships with my mom and so many others. This activity that seemed extremely boring suddenly became a trusted resource. It gave me clarity and relief about what had happened in my life and the person I had become.

Writing gave me a new form of self-expression. Not everybody grows up able to identify and express their feelings in appropriate or healthy ways. What's going on? Why do I feel so bad? Am I crazy? These were questions for which I had no answers, no words to help me function well in my environment. In the old days, when life got tough, I would shut down because I didn't even know what feelings I was having. I knew I was uncomfortable and unhappy, and I acted out in various ways to relieve my misery. I didn't understand the core problems or how to fix them. Writing showed me who I wanted to be and how to reconnect with what I'd lost. It helped me learn to understand what I was feeling and ways to react appropriately. Writing gave me relief from the dysfunction in my head.

An even bigger surprise came when writing became my professional life, too. My greatest goal has been to tell stories on the screen, as my grandfather did. I'm still working on it, but I've certainly made a start. The other shock came when I started writing about recovery, and my articles on our website, Reach Out Recovery, reached millions of people all over the world. It turned out that my outlet of writing became a valuable voice in the recovery world, and I ended up doing the very thing I wanted to avoid.

Then, after years of painful conflict with my mom, including a bitter four-year separation in which we didn't see or speak to each other, writing helped repair our troubled relationship. Writing hasn't been easy for me, and I haven't reached all my goals. I often experience the same feelings of failure and worthlessness my mom experienced, but the recovery mission has given me purpose. The goal of my professional writing has been to help people, and that gives it meaning. When readers comment and let me know that I've connected with them, it makes the effort worthwhile.

I feel privileged to be able to share my experience, strength, and hope, and I enjoy receiving comments about articles. Hearing that someone didn't pick up a drink or drug because I shared a little slice of hope always makes my day. Writing can lighten dark moods, help manage relationships, and be the vessel for all those things we wish we could tell people but shouldn't ever say out loud. It has been a means for accessing everything for me. I hope writing opens those doors for you, too.