

"My Estrangement Makes Me Feel Like Such A Loser!"

Estrangement is not only hurtful to parents because of the loss of their child, but equally because of the loss of the opportunity to have a healthy, positive reflection of who they are as parents.

The great tragedy of family life is that you can be a poor or even bad parent, and still have loving, dedicated adult children, and you can be a loving, devoted parent who sacrificed everything for your child, and get treated like you're the scum of the earth.

Or you can be a parent, who made plenty of mistakes, but are willing to make amends and do whatever it takes to amend those mistakes, and still get treated terribly.

I spend a lot of time helping parents with strategies around reconciliation, but an equally important theme is maintaining one's pride, poise, and self-esteem in the face of such harsh treatment by one's child.

In some ways, the longer I do this work, the angrier I feel at some of these kids. The level of arrogance, contempt, and self-righteousness that I hear makes me feel like standing in front of these parents and saying to their kids, "Okay, stop right there! This is bullshit. I pray to God that you never have a kid do to you what you're doing to your parent. I suspect if you did, you might consider being a little more grateful for all that they gave you, and a little less self-righteous and entitled for whatever they didn't. Your parent didn't have half the opportunities that they gave you, and you didn't arrive into adulthood without a ton of help from them, so back the hell up."

So, while I'm a big fan of compassion and empathy, I think a lot of parents, Moms in particular, don't feel enough self-protective anger for being so maligned and mistreated. Not that they should be getting madder at their kids-that rarely works once estrangement has set in-but within their relationship with themselves.

There's a place for feeling like, "Well, screw you, you ungrateful little brat. I wasn't put on this planet to be shamed for loving you and sacrificing for you. Good luck with that attitude in the rest of your

relationships." Said to yourself, not to them.

In other words, you get to claim your own value as a parent. Your child can say whatever they want, and apparently they will, but you should value all of your years of love and sacrifice for what they were---precious