

DEW-ERS

MY MOTHER MY SELF - A JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY AND FULFILLMENT



By
Marianne Dryer & Lauren Rowan

Mothers play a variety of roles in their children's lives. I never would have guessed that "colleague" would be a role I would have with my daughter, Lauren Rowan RDH, BSDH. Both Lauren and I express how fortunate we are to have similar careers and professional interests. We are also keenly aware of the challenges this unique situation can bring. While we may be colleagues, we also recognize we will never be equals. Lauren and I have a relationship with a very specific history which sets us apart from our other colleagues. While this may seem elementary on the surface, the fact that we are mother and daughter cannot be ignored, even though we certainly try sometimes! Never being equals does not equate to one is better than the other; quite the opposite. I continually find myself learning from her, and this reverse nurturing is a very special phenomenon. Balance, mutual respect and practicing flexibility are some of the ways we have discovered to make this relationship work. The journey is only beginning on some level, and we hope you enjoy some insight into how it all started.

MOM'S JOURNEY:

I started out the journey of motherhood with an idealistic image of afternoons in the rocking chair, hours of peek-a-boo and walks in the park with my baby smiling at me from her stroller. As you may guess, things didn't necessarily roll out that way! This energetic, confident woman's world was suddenly upside down, and I was desperately trying to turn it right side up. I found myself dealing with fears I didn't know I had, and at the same time, I felt indescribable joy. What I wish I learned sooner than later was the art of being flexible. Not the kind on the yoga mat, but spiritual flexibility with the ability to bend, be open minded and teachable.

A healthy and flexible spirit is not something that has come easy to me and is something with which I still struggle. Raising a strong-willed child is challenging for the more inflexible in nature, and in fact, it can be utterly exhausting! It has been said that strong-willed children will become adults who change the world if we can hang on for the ride and resist the temptation to tame the spirit out of them. Looking back, I can see this beautiful, energetic, inquisitive little girl was the source of much emotional and spiritual growth for me.

Whenever anyone asks about my daughter Lauren, I generally reply with, "I wish I was more like her." She is 27 going on 47, and I affectionately refer to her as "Ethel" on occasion. She has an old soul, one that seeks wisdom and knowledge, but perhaps more noticeably, she seeks kindness. She possesses a genuine desire to help others and has the ability to see the bigger picture. From the very beginning Lauren had a sense of purpose, direction and a can-do attitude. I remember admiring her strength, even when she defied my directions and chose to do things her way. Letting go as they say is difficult for Type A individuals and even harder with your children. The intention or desire is to protect them from hardships and disappointment. However, that's what eventually defines and shapes their character. What I have come to understand is that your actions as a parent or teacher are so much more powerful than your words. As much as Lauren and I had our power struggles, she always wanted to be around me, part of what I was doing, and so often I wish I could go back in time and truly enjoy the journey.

My career has flourished in dentistry from clinical

practice to education and now to speaking to clinicians. I am grateful for the success and the support my family gave me through the years. The long hours, the weekends that were given up to dental events and the heavy load of furthering my degree often kept me away from my children. I knew they were proud of me at the same time, not through words, but through their actions. Lauren always wanted to come to the college as a young girl and help with the fundraisers and simply be in the dental clinic. Growing up surrounded by dentistry, children will either follow their parents' paths or go the total opposite way. I am deeply honored and grateful for her decision to pursue a career in dentistry. Words cannot express the pride I feel watching her develop and grow as a clinician, an educator and as my colleague.

My pride and joy truly stem from watching that tiny little girl with the will of a steam engine develop into an amazing, talented, skilled clinician, and her gifts to the profession are only just beginning. I have become a better teacher, speaker and perhaps even a better person by watching her grow in the profession. I am grateful that she followed in my footsteps. Her best is yet to come, and what an honor it is to watch that unfold!

LAUREN'S JOURNEY:

Growing up with parents in the dental field, I have always felt that dentistry has been a part of my life. My stepfather is a general dentist, and I always admired his dedication to his patients and his clinical expertise. I had aspirations of dental school and believed this would be the path I would travel. I also enjoyed visiting the college where my mom taught and was frequently a patient to help meet her students' requirements; willing or otherwise! I especially enjoyed when there were community events going on to help the underserved with dental needs or being part of the students' numerous projects.

I entered college as a pre-dental major but along the way recognized how much I really wanted to be a dental hygienist. My parents always encouraged me to pursue my dreams, but in all honesty, I was afraid to tell my stepdad of the change in plan. He was more than understanding and supportive, and I learned another lesson in self-acceptance and the power of unconditional love.

I truly felt I was in the right place at the UNC dental hygiene program, and although the curriculum was demanding, I fell in love with the patient communication aspect.

My passion for connecting with people undoubtedly came from my parents. I have always been in awe of my mom's ability to talk to anyone and everyone about anything. My mom exudes positive energy, and I always strive to communicate as effectively as she does.

The first time I saw my mom present at the NYU Dental School was pivotal for me. She was truly captivating and was able to take such heavy material and make it engaging and applicable. I realized that all her clinical experience, years in education and countless hours from her personal life had brought her to this place. At the end of the presentation, she came up to me and said, "How did I do?" Number one, why would she even ask that? And number two, she asked me! I remember it surprised me how much she prepared for the presentation, and looking back, I understand that no matter how much experience or how many accolades someone has, preparation and practice are keys to success. In that moment I knew what I wanted to do: become a teacher and become a very good one.

My mother is my best friend, mentor, colleague, inspiration and ultimate support system. I have a long road ahead in building my resume. I hope that I can be as effective in the dental hygiene community as I have seen my mother and other powerful women become. It is my goal to professionally collaborate with my mom, bringing hygienists from all experience levels together to learn. My mother and I have very different natures, and we are wired very differently. At the same time, we have a complimentary dynamic, and I am so excited to see where life takes us!

About the authors:

Marianne Dryer has over 30 years of experience in dentistry, and she is a dynamic national and international speaker, educator and corporate consultant in curriculum development. She is a graduate of Forsyth School for Dental Hygienists, Old Dominion University and received her master's degree in education from St. Joseph's College of Maine. She has been a faculty member at Cape Cod Community College since 2007. She is also a Periodontal Instrumentation Instructor for DH Methods of Education, Inc., an educational program for dental and dental hygiene faculty.

Lauren Rowan is an enthusiastic and dynamic clinical educator. She holds faculty positions at the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences and Cape Cod Community College Dental Hygiene Programs. Lauren received her Bachelor of Science degree in dental hygiene from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and is working on her master's degree at Saint Joseph's College of Maine. She currently practices as a clinical hygienist in general and pediatric practices. She facilitated instrumentation programs at UNC and NYU and has worked as a dental hygiene coach in various office locations.

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