

HOW STRONG IS THE INSTINCT TO LOVE A PARENT?

One did not have to be Sigmund Freud to grasp the answer. Just peruse the literature, art, and music of the great masters.

The ancient Greeks were aware. Sophocles wrote about King Oedipus, who loved his mother so much, he married her. (Oops!) Shakespeare's Hamlet did likewise. Okay, I hear the readers' astonishment: didn't these guys knock off their fathers so that they could have their mothers to themselves? Yes....but. Now comes Sigmund: he is, after all, credited with founding modern psychology and psychoanalysis for good cause. And his insight into resolving this dilemma exemplifies his brilliance. According to Sigmund, the male child's erotic love for his mother did not require the annihilation of his father after all. Instead, the father, according to Sigmund, does not become a competitor to the male child; he becomes, instead, an advocate and a role model whereby the boy identifies with his father in order to attract a mate who is EXACTLY LIKE HIS MOTHER. What an elegant solution! (When applied to the female child, her infatuation with her father is the Elektra complex, and the resolution to her dilemma follows the same family dynamic: she identifies with her mother in order to attract a mate EXACTLY LIKE HER FATHER.) Isn't someone always saying, "I married my mother" or "I married my father?"

But Shakespeare was not content to rely solely on Hamlet to epitomize the child's instinctual and profound love for a parent: King Lear was another example, and in this tragedy, Shakespeare punctuates this theme when Lear's blindness to the love of his daughter, Cordelia, causes his demise, and hers, unfortunately.

Travel to any art museum and study the paintings of parents and children. Perhaps the Renaissance section would be most apropos as these painters most realistically portrayed the human spirit and condition. Then again, we have our own Norman Rockwell, who was tireless in his depiction of loving, tender, humorous, and indispensable family life. His paintings exude the love that children have for their parents (and of course, the love that parents have for their children.)

And then there are those performers in the world of music, my personal favorite being Pavarotti. His rendition of "Mama" is absolutely spellbinding. Today I was once again mesmerized by the performance of Verdi's opera, *Il Trivatore*. If you want to be transfixed by the experience of a child coveting her mother's lost love and epitomizing loyalty to her mother, this would be the experience. No more committed was a child to sacrifice everything in order to redress her mother's unjust murder: "Madre, Madre, you are avenged."

The fact is that the attraction to our parents is so strong that human cultures worldwide inescapably had to develop the incest taboo. And so, it is: the eradication of a parent from a child's life is so anti-instinctual that it will inevitably destroy its young victim—one of the disastrous results being the development of the child's self-alienation through the repression of the instinct to love a parent.

Those of us who are concerned about the detrimental effects of parental alienation on children and on the alienated parent must become armed with the overwhelming indications from all aspects of our culture that confirm the child's instinctive love for both parents—a need and desire that became part of the instinct for survival due to our long dependency period. We cannot be deterred from lifting the blindness to the existence of parental alienation that a very few still assert based upon belief—although there is near universal consensus among the scientific community of the very real existence of the phenomenon of parental alienation no matter what label one puts on it. All aspects of our culture—from music to art to literature to psychology to study of the family—reveal that you have to be carefully taught to hate and fear (South Pacific)—especially a parent.