

Understanding, Forgiving, and Loving

Category: Regrets/No Regrets

written by Ronna L. Edelstein | June 1, 2024

The older I get, the more ridiculous I find regrets. Why waste even one moment on a past that I cannot change? Instead, I try to focus on the present by living a life that gives me no regrets—one of theatre, books, adult education classes and family.

Yet, I do have a major regret: the more I become like my mother, the more I regret how I mistreated her in life by choosing silence over communication.

Ma inspired me to be a teacher; she introduced me to books, and she praised my “roses are red” poems. Yet, she failed to show me how to be a friend—how to maintain a long-term relationship by being an empathetic, non-judgmental person. I regret that I blamed Ma for my isolation instead of standing in her shoes and seeing things from her perspective. How could a woman raised by immigrant parents who did not learn English or adapt to American culture be expected to raise a daughter with strong social skills? I wish I could have told Ma I understood her, but I chose to pull away from her and become Daddy’s Forever and Always Little Girl.

Once Ma got a job in a family-owned children’s store, she sold her soul to it. She went from working four days per week to seven, sacrificing time with her grandchildren, husband and me for her customers. How I resented her for that! Then, I did the same thing; I devoted more time to my students than to my son and daughter. I graded papers at my son’s basketball games, and I resented all the late-night pick-ups from basketball practice and, for my daughter, theater rehearsals. With perspective, I now understand why Ma took the path she did. At work, she was a queen; customers requested her help. At school, students and parents admired me; unlike my children, they did not judge my cooking skills, my tendency to invade their privacy, and my rules.

I regret not sitting with Ma and conversing with her, woman to woman, adult to adult, daughter to mother. I would apologize for hateful stares and dismissive words. I would let her know I saw her as a person, not just as a woman meant to be the perfect mother in a world that does not support perfection.

I would tell her I loved her, something I regret rarely doing.

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