



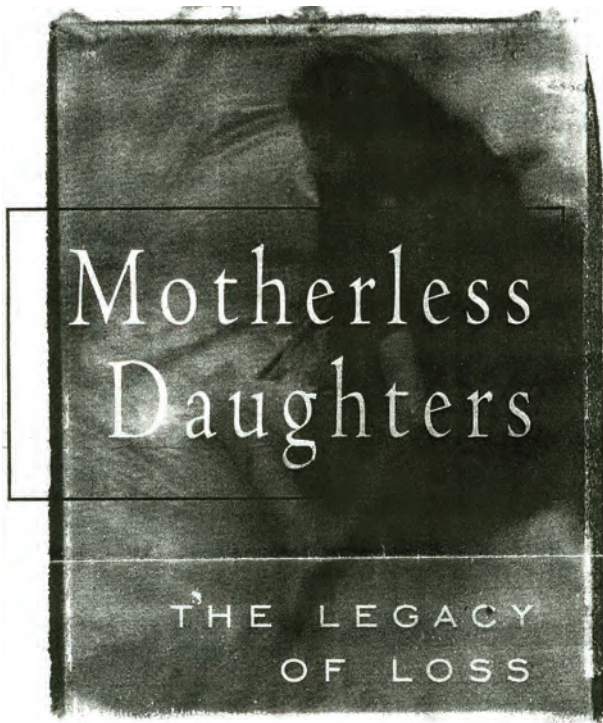
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FAMILY MATTERS

Your daily PANORAMA section. Inside, ENTERTAINMENT and ADVICE



By Patti Martin
Press Family Writer

A daughter's relationship with her mother—whether it is close and loving, fraught with animosity or barely existent—it is undeniably the most, intense and complex one she will ever have.

In forming her identity, making her choices, seeking acceptance, a daughter will look to her mother again and again. When a mother dies, her daughter is suddenly left to her own devices, always questioning who she is.

A new book, "Motherless Daughters: The Legacy of Loss," examines the issue for millions of women who have lost a mother either to death, divorce, abandonment or emotional loss.

In "Motherless Daughters" (Addison-Wesley, 1994)

Mothers are not supposed to die

in their prime.

When they do

their daughters feel

a special loss.

A new book

examines ,the effects

of mother-loss ,on

a woman's life.

author Hope Edelman weaves together the words of hundred's of motherless women across country, therapists and mother-loss specialists, along with her own personal story, to form a complete picture of the resounding effects mother loss has on a woman's life.

Featured in the book is the story and comments of Andrea Campbell, Ph.D., and a psychologist who heads the Family Counseling, Center of Beachwood.

Campbell, who frequently counsels motherless daughters, was 10 when her mother died of breast cancer and 12 when her father committed suicide. Children who have been traumatized by the death of a mother are robbed of death's beauty and mystery, according to Campbell. Death is more an abrupt disruption than a cycle of completion and rebirth to the daughter who sees it happen to her mother during

her childhood or teens, and she loses her psychic connection to the natural feminine cycle that gives structure to a woman's life.

"The female experience is one of being a co-creator and partaking in the mystery of life," Campbell said. "That also means partaking in the mystery of death and seeing it as a transition and a 'birth into another place. The young woman is the co-creator who brings forth life and the 'crone' is her initiator into death. And that passing of the wisdom should take place when a mother is in her crone hood, not in her 30s or 40s."

"Yet the loss, Campbell said, can be a strengthening, positive experience, and is a crucial part of a woman's identity."

"We develop a keen perception, an intuition, a self-reliance, sensitivity, courage, feelings of uniqueness, resilience, personal strength, compassion, responsibility, loyalty, strength," Campbell said.

For Campbell, the experience of mother-loss can be summed up by the final paragraph in Edelman's book:

"I am fooling only myself when I say my mother exists now only in a photograph on my bulletin board or in the outline of my hand or in the armful of memories I still hold tight. She lives on beneath everything I do. Her presence influences who I was, and her absence influences who I am. Our lives are shaped as much by those who leave us as they are by those who stay. Loss is our legacy. Insight is our gift. Memory is our guide."

"The loss of a mother is almost inconceivable," Campbell said. "Mothers are not supposed to die before their daughters are grown, but they do. And when they do, it irreversibly changes the daughter's life forever."

Unlike other types of losses, mother-loss is not supposed to happen early on, certainly not to a mother in the prime of her life.

"A mother is the primary caretaker, the first person you bond with," Campbell explained. "She's eternally there."

"Mothers are safety in the world," Campbell added, "... and when she's taken away it feels like, for a

woman, that the person who gave us life, who nurtured life, has left us alone in the world, even though a father may still be at home."

A daughter who loses her mother very early in life has no one to explain to her the mysteries of menstruation, to talk to, about kissing boys or to go shopping with for prom gowns. The safety, stability and security are gone.

In the book, Campbell explained that she never felt safe or secure enough as an adolescent to mourn. She married and gave birth while in her teens.

"I had a daughter, and that daughter was so precious to me," Campbell said. "Some how, I had my mother back by being a mother and by giving my daughter that love. But I was really trying to heal myself, and, when we. Unconsciously try to heal ourselves through another person; we instead inflict wounds on that person. So, even though I was a loving mother and I could give love because she had been well nurtured for my first 10 years, my deprivation still wounded my daughter."

After she mourned her mother as an adult, Campbell said, she was better able to see how she had viewed her daughter as a replacement figure and the two have worked together since to Change and heal their relationship.

While much has been written about parent-loss for older readers, Edelman's book focuses on loss from the earliest of ages and concentrate's, on how the loss of a mother profoundly changes a daughter's life forever;

By discovering what common traits results from their loss, motherless women, Edelman writes, wishing that they have not been alone in:

- Feeling they have lost a significant, yet indefinable, part of themselves.
- Feeling anxious about intimate relationships or avoiding them altogether.
- Noticing their strong sense of isolation from family members and other people in general
- Feeling they are tougher and more assertive than other women'

- Having a point of reference for their identity and femininity
- Both fearing and longing for motherhood
- Being afraid of dying at the same age their mothers did
- Having difficulty with transitional life events' and holidays
- Constantly fearing future losses.

In an ideal situation, according to Edelman, a daughter's emotional foundation begins with her family and then, as she matures, diversifies to include her partner, friends and self. The motherless daughter - especially one without an available and supportive parent - begins from a point one step back. She first has to establish or re-establish a secure emotional base.

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End