

Unconditional Mom

My mother had a great deal of trouble with me, but I think she enjoyed it.

Mark Twain

I was a rotten teenager. Not your average spoiled, know-it-all, not-going-to-clean-my-room, getting-an-attitude-because-I'm-15 teenager. No, I was a manipulative, lying, acid-tongued monster, who realized early on that I could make things go my way with just a few minor adjustments. The writers for today's hottest soap opera could not have created a worse "villainess." A few nasty comments here, a lie or two there, maybe an evil glare for a finishing touch, and things would be grand. Or so I thought.

For the most part, and on the outside, I was a good kid. A giggly, pug-nose tomboy who liked to play sports and who thrived on competition (a nice way of saying: somewhat pushy and demanding). Which is probably why most people allowed me to squeak by using what I now call "bulldozer behavior tactics," with no regard for anyone I felt to be of value. For a while, anyway.

Since I was perceptive enough to get some people to

bend my way, it amazes me how long it took to realize how I was hurting so many others. Not only did I succeed in pushing away many of my closest friends by trying to control them; I also managed to sabotage, time and time again, the most precious relationship in my life: my relationship with my mother.

Even today, almost 10 years since the birth of the new me, my former behavior astonishes me each time I reach into my memories. Hurtful comments that cut and stung the people I cared most about. Acts of confusion and anger that seemed to rule my every move—all to make sure that things went my way.

My mother, who gave birth to me at age 38 against her doctor's wishes, would cry to me, "I waited so long for you, please don't push me away. I want to help you!"

I would reply with my best face of stone, "I didn't ask for you! I never wanted you to care about me! Leave me alone and forget I ever lived!"

My mother began to believe I really meant it. My actions proved nothing less.

I was mean and manipulative, trying to get my way at any cost. Like many young girls in high school, the boys whom I knew were off limits were always the first ones I had to date. Sneaking out of the house at all hours of the night just to prove I could do it. Juggling complex lies that were always on the verge of blowing up in my face. Finding any way to draw attention to myself while simultaneously trying to be invisible.

Ironically, I wish I could say I had been heavy into drugs during that period of my life, swallowing mind-altering pills and smoking things that changed my personality, thus accounting for the terrible, razor-sharp words that came flying from my mouth. However, that was not the case. My only addiction was hatred; my only high was inflicting pain.