

Interview Questions

1. Explain what you mean by the “too good mother archetype”?

It is the perfect mother who has to get it all right. An ideal that many mothers strive for because they do want to be good mothers. But “too good” is beyond reasonable expectations and not healthy for anyone.

2. What is unique about your clinical approach to dismantling the preconceived notions that parents, especially mothers, have concerning being a “perfect parent”?

Great question. I believe that it is important to be relational with clients and help them feel empowered in their role as a mother. I bring in playfulness and humor, so that clients can lighten up a little on themselves. I also educate them about the old parenting pedagogies from the eighteenth century that influenced the shame-based parenting belief systems. Then I educate them on the research that shows we are carrying fourteen generations of trauma in our DNA, which is why change can be so difficult. Then I help them unpack the pieces little by little that will help them feel better about themselves. I also encourage somatic work to get the authentic truth to resonant at a cellular level. I offer mandalas, art therapy, dream work, mediation and other approaches as some methods that will help embody the material. In my group work I use ritual, movement, poetry, and other forms of creative expression.

3. How do your experiences as a parent influence the way you address the issues modern mothers face?

That is how this all got started. When I was going through a divorce I was in a book group studying the book *Women who Run with the Wolves*. That is where the term “too good mother’ comes from. I remember walking out of group the day that we read about it in her book, and I said to myself, “One day I am going to write a book titled ‘Living in the Shadow of the Too-Good Mother.’” I recognized then how I wanted to be such a good mom, and most of my peers at the time did as well. This was back in the 1980s when women were just returning to the workforce and the mommy wars were raging. It felt like an important topic that I wanted to unpack and share with other mothers one day.

4. Why are you passionate about this subject?

Because I believe if we are going to change the planet we have to start with the children. The only way we can truly meet our children’s needs is to heal the old wounds that we all carry from antiquated belief systems such as “Stop crying before I give you something g to cry about.”

5. As a therapist, people come to you all day for emotional support, how do you get your own emotional needs met?

Another good question. It is crucial to have support. We all need emotional support. I have good friends that are mostly all therapists. Also, I have a therapist/medical intuitive I work with once a month. I do a dance class three times a week and I meditate daily. Good self-care is crucial. I also had to learn to ask for help, and to receive help. Many women have a hard time receiving.

6. What part does shame play in the narrative of the too-good mother?

It is *all* about shame. Shame becomes our identity as a result of the old poisonous parenting pedagogies. When we are talked out of our feelings as children we start to believe we must be bad for having them. Thus, we then believe we are bad. Then we become parents and all the unconscious shame repeats itself in a vicious cycle.

7. Can you tell me about a time when you felt like you weren't a good enough mother, and conversely, a time when you did?

The most prominent time was when I made a decision to move across the country. My children were then ages eleven to eighteen. I had learned so much about how to be a good parent, and deep down I knew my children were going to be okay, but I knew others were judging me for my decision and I felt a lot of shame. A time when I felt good enough was when my daughter's friend sent me a Facebook message a few years ago telling me she had learned to be true to herself from me when she was little, and that she would always be grateful for that. I realized then how much my children, and even their friends, learned from my willingness to talk about feelings with them.

8. In your book, you talk about the "shadow" and the "light" attributes of the struggles laid out in each chapter. Can you expand on what that means?

Psychologist, Carl Jung labeled the parts of ourselves that remain hidden because we fear they are bad as shadow parts of self. Shame and not feeling good enough is in the shadow of the too good mother. The unconscious need to be perfect can often result in depression, anxiety and even addiction. When we face the shadow, we bring it into the light. The shadow never goes away, but rather loses it power when exposed to the light. Only when we face the shadow, which is what most of us avoid, can we begin the process of healing.

9. What are some of the ways you feel society is failing mothers? Supporting them?

First, the media images that make mothers look perfect. Another is the lack of real conversations. The movie *Bad Moms* is a good example. The movie splits the experience of good mother and bad mother by portraying the over-achieving moms as good and the party moms as bad. This is a total injustice to the reality of the experience of true healing that lies in the shadow. There is a

resistance to shadow work often because it requires honest inventory of self and the ability to face uncomfortable feelings. Society is a big cover-up and lie about all of it. What if we all cried and told the truth once and for all?

10. How are children affected when their mothers are “living in the shadow”?

The result is often over-achieving and highly anxious children, or the opposite—acting out and defiance. Again, the unconscious repetition will continue on in each generation until we bring these shadow aspects into the light.

11. What do you want to say to women out there who are struggling with high levels of stress and dissatisfaction in their lives due to chasing this unattainable “perfect parent” ideal?

First thing first is to take a deep breath and tell yourself you are doing a good job, even if you don't believe it. Start saying it anyway. You are doing the best you can. Then the real work begins; a commitment to love self and pay attention to needs. Most women have lost touch with their own needs as a result of trying to give their children all of the emotional healing they did not have. Most women neglect themselves. Helping women to stop and take care of themselves is a huge step in the recovery process.

12. What do you hope readers take away from your book?

More self-acceptance and love, and a better understanding of where the “not good enough” comes from, so that mothers don't feel so alone and responsible for the struggle.

13. Is there anything else you would like to tell your audience?

This work is hard and requires tenacity to stay with the process of substantial change. Loving ourselves will help the rest of the world, like a pebble in the pond. There is always a ripple effect.