

# Mother's Day, Mom's Way

By Pat Andrus, MS

I don't remember thinking much about the concept of celebrating my mother's life and commitment to her family. I naively believed all mothers performed the acts of love that my mother did.

As mothers in the 90s, my sister and I realize the number of times our mothers must have found herself, like us, "jumping through a hoop" to make everything come together for our families.

As a teenager, I began to center my mom as the focal point of Mother's Day, but I sometimes wondered why she deserved it. Now, having mothered several teenagers of my own, I recognize the naturalness of my youthful attitudes and selfishness. Thank goodness we humans have the opportunities to outgrow our "Me-ness" and become more giving! I am most grateful my mom lived long enough to see this happen with her own daughters. And it's profoundly touching to see myself experiencing this role rotation with my children, too!

My desire to be the celebrated mom began erupting with my first pregnancy, and even though I have certainly received cards and recognition each Mother's Day since 1973, my mothers retained the royal seat as our matriarch. This was confusing to me. After all, I was a mother now, too. Like going through a fire-hot initiation, I had officially made it! Right? So, why did our whole family still focus Mother's day around my child's grandmother instead of me? After all, my own mother's job was finished (or so I thought at age twenty-two). My silent resentment felt

strangely foreign, competing with my love for my mother.

I found myself caught in the transition of honoring my mother and being honored as a mother. Where did I learn to mother if not from my mother? Fortunately, she had been taught to mother well by her own mother! I have since decided that being a member of the "sandwich generation," slap dab in the middle of older parents and younger children, is difficult.

Today's celebrations of Mother's Day are very different. My Mother passes her throne to my sister and me with her death in 1989. We still celebrate the day together with our families. Our children are entering their twenties and anticipating being parents in began moving out, I thought my job as mother was being phased out, but oh, what a mistaken belief! I am only in mid-life, learning to live my midyears.

Generously sharing previous Mother's Day celebrations with my mother has diminished my guilt over ever feeling disloyal. Those past-shared days and my eventually being the centerpiece mother remind me there truly is a time for all things. I know this Mother's Day would not be nearly as anticipated or joyful if I could not enjoy my storehouse of good memories. I feel a deep sadness for other women who might not have such positive memories of their mothers.

There is a great paradox in my life now. How do I enjoy the celebration of me as the mother figure when my mother is no longer here to share the celebration? Being the

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mother while no longer being the daughter is a tough one. Even in the goodness of knowing my mother no longer suffers; I selfishly want her here to share our day.

As always, I want life to perfect.  
I WANT IT ALL! I WANT IT MY WAY!  
And, I want it NOW!

Here are some suggestions to help make Mother's Day more meaningful:

- Phone a friend whose mother has died or is gone.
- Mail a note to a mother whose child has moved or died.
- Bring a remembrance to those "special women" who have mothered you – maybe an aunt or neighbor who always wanted to but could never have a child of her own.
- Visit a nursing home. Older women love to have visitors.
- Brighten a mother's day with a compliment.
- Baby sit for an hour while the mother of an ill child takes a walk or goes shopping.
- Bring a casserole to the mother of several children.
- Offer to sit in the care with the children while a mom runs an errand.
- Make a donation to charities, shelters or agencies in your mother's (or any other special woman's) memory.
- Take a single mother out for coffee – especially if her children aren't with her.
- Talk with your daughter – or someone else's daughter – about your feelings.
- Listen to your daughter – or someone else's daughter – about her feelings.
- Pray for and encourage better communication between mothers and their families.