

## Reflection:

In previous years LegacyTips&Tools concentrated on various legacy strategies to make the May Hallmark holiday, **Mothers Day**, substantive and meaningful.

In May 2008 we celebrated our mothers with legacy **letters of appreciation**. In 2007 we reflected on **mothering as action**, something women do whether they have children or not. Women 'mother' children, aging parents, pets, gardens, trees, the whole earth. May 2006 was a memory bouquet. We gifted our mothers writing our **favorite stories** about them.

**As women, our mothers remain not just with us, but in us. Our connection with mothers is stronger than memory, a kind of permeation that goes beyond anything verbal.**  
- Edna O'Brien

This year, 2010, our topic for May comes from the Biblical commandment: **to honor and revere our mothers** (and fathers). The Bible neither defines the words 'honor' and 'revere' nor does it explain how we are to do it. So in 2010 each of us, with our unique and complicated relationships with our mothers, has the privilege and the obligation to articulate our honoring and revering in a legacy letter.

Because the mother-daughter relationship is complex, often fraught with conflict and struggle, we are challenged to **speak our truth** and simultaneously step

into the shoes of our mothers. **Experiencing compassion** is possible as we step out of our old story and reflect on the relationship from a fresh perspective, a perspective of honoring and revering. Healing the life-giving intergenerational relationship is possible even if our mothers are no longer with us physically.

This may be a **dry lecture**, though one we all agree about. It would be good to honor and revere our mothers, but we're all busy, have barely time in our busy schedules to pick up a Mother's Day card. We think ... I'll file this away until some magical day in the future when I'll have time for such an exercise.

May I share with you excerpts from **real letters** that honored and revered mothers in ways that freed and healed the writers? Here's one:

Dear Mom, I think one of the most horrific events a parent could experience is outliving their children, so if that happens, I want you to know what legacy you have handed down to me.... Perseverance is a trait that I witnessed as you trudged through an abusive marriage that was filled with violence, blatant disrespect, infidelity and fear.

As I fell into the depths of drug addiction, your unconditional love never wavered and you are still my biggest fan. You have given me hope that love can conquer all things and that change is possible in even the darkest of moments.... I am sharing this with you because I don't ever want to wake up and have you not know how much I appreciate your love and guidance.

## Other excerpts:

"Only when I became a mother myself did I understand how much you must have suffered in separating from me. Did you know you were dying?"

"When my little sister arrived [I was already a middle child] with health issues, I resented that most of your time and energy was given to her.... Even though we had differences, thank you for your gifts of love and freedom."

"An important thing I learned from you was that conforming was not essential....you planted a seed of independent thinking in me which waited quietly until it was safe to grow. I appreciate that you, the busiest mother, gave her daughter gifts for living."

"The past few years have been so emotional. I have often missed you and just wanted to pick up the phone and call you....I learned how important friends are by knowing all your friends who loved you. Thank you, thank you for being my Mom."

"I would like to go forward in our relationship more honestly. That means I need to allow you to be yourself, to have human weaknesses.... Perhaps we can continue to share our feminine wisdom and melt away the accumulated anger and resentment. Know that I love you today and always."

## Practice:

1. Reflect on your relationship with your mother. Make a list of her strengths and limitations as you experience her.
2. Take time to 'step into her shoes' and see life and your relationship from her perspective.
3. Set aside 15-30 minutes to write her a legacy letter that honors and reveres her, maintaining your integrity and honesty.
4. Celebrate Mothers' Day, May 9.

**May you deepen your integrity, honesty, and compassion as you honor and revere your mother.**

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