

When I meet people and they tell me, "Elisabetta, you are so strong, you have so much energy!" I smile to myself when I hear that. I am not that strong, or at least, I am not arrogant enough to think that my strength or energy comes from me and only me.

My Mother

I'm a descendant of other women before me. We all are! If I am strong - I received it by default. It's in my DNA. I am fortunate - no - I am blessed to have been raised by a strong and energetic woman, my mum, who struggled to allow me to have the education she never had, who did her best to discipline and motivate me first into high school, then university.

She had only 5 years of schooling before her father sent her to work at the age of 10. Because of that, she often felt limited and lacking. She was smart and very brilliant, but like many other children during her time (and some, today), she could not afford education. Her mum had the same destiny.

Despite the financial restrictions we had as a family, and despite being married to my father, a good but un-ambitious man, my mum, made sure that I had the best in life. Her desire and dream for me to have what she did not and craved for all her life - education. She made sure I got proper education, and made many personal sacrifices to ensure I had the education she never had. What could

have motivated her choice? I believe it was a special love: a mother's love. Because of that love, I had that future she never had.

My mother set me on the journey I am on today with her unique Mother's love filled with drive, focus and discipline.

Things were not always easy between my mum and I though. Since young, we faced many differences and disagreements - my relationship with her was harsh and full of challenges. When I stepped into my teen years, things worsened and we became more estranged and distant. We were often in conflict, and I thought of her competing and fighting me. For many years I didn't understand the reasons of her being that way.

I could feel the love she had for me, despite the unhappiness we had against each other. It was love, the unconditional love. It wasn't until I had a child of my own that I realized the sacrifices she had made. Like many others, I always said, "I'm not going to raise my child the way I was raised." How quickly we eat our words!

As Washington Irving once said:

"A mother is the truest friend we have, when trials heavy and sudden, fall upon us."

A Mother's

Love



My Daughter

When my daughter was a year old, I realized I started to behave and react to situations the way mum did. But because my mother ensured I was educated the right way, it helped that I had an open mind. I asked for help, looked for solutions, understood and chose to break the cycle of abuse and neglect.

I have since written a book of love and responsibility. I believe the ability to do so sprang from the understanding that my mum's love was great and unique. Though my mother was never one to express her love well, I well understood why she behaved the way she was - she was abandoned by her own mother, and was brought up by her father and paternal grandmother.

For many years I had focused on the 'dark side' of my mother, neglecting her love for me – the love that made her fight when she didn't have hope, the love that fuelled her strength when she was exhausted, the love that kept her motivating and disciplining me, the love that helped set necessary boundaries when

rigid discipline that showed me life had its challenges which needed endurance, determination and tenacity. Today, I recognize all these as wonderful 'gifts'. Yes, many a time she was not there for me – in the most important times of my life, she was not physically present with a smile and kindness, but I later discovered

a present, a book dedicated to me. She had written these powerful lines, "Mum I didn't know then, I know now... you have many flaws but all of them are what makes you perfect and to this day, you are a mother I will always be grateful for having. Without your imperfections, I wouldn't be the person I am today. More importantly, I

Strive to create awareness in your environment – share the importance of unconditional love, a love that accepts an individual for who he/ she is. Any mother, whether rich or poor, can afford this.

Suggested readings if you want to know more about this topic are:

❖ **Stella's Mum Gets Her Groove Back – A True Story**

(Visit amazon.com for more information. Available in Bookstores in Singapore)

❖ **Loving, Leaving, Learning – Leonardo Buscaglia**

necessary. Her firm love showed she cared about me! Only when I chose to look inside myself and build up a healthy relationship with my daughter that I was able to fully understand my mother's love for me. I realized I had to focus on the gift of love she equipped me with, and focus on how I could make use of them in my journey as a wife and mother.

A Mother's Love

First of all, my mum (and my dad) gave me the gift of life – something I should be thankful to her for the rest of my life. Then she passed on to me the courage to dream the dreams she never dared to live out, caught in fear.

With her example of strength and endurance, she taught me never to give up, even in face of obstacles. With her childlike curiosity, enthusiasm and passion for life, she inspired me to develop persistence every time I was stumbling from my mistakes.

Through my own journey of self-discovery I realized that my mother had learnt to show her love not through hugs and kisses or positive words of encouragement, but through tough,

she was with her mind and heart at distance. For long, I strongly judged her for her inability to overcome her pride or competitiveness but I never let go of my hope, as a daughter, to see her accepting me unconditionally.

Today, I am aware that if she had the education and self-awareness I have because of her strive, she would have been able to express her love to me, as I am able to do to my daughter.

My responsibility, therefore, is to focus on what she gave me and to inspire others like my readers, to remember that there is no greater love than the love of a mother, whether she is able to communicate it to you or not. The love of every mother is expressed differently, some through silence whilst others through tough discipline, because this is the way she was taught to love.

As my husband Leonardo, said in an article he wrote for Mother's Day some time ago: "Regardless of our age or how positively or negatively we perceive our mother has been in raising us, in educating and guiding us in order to be able to function in this life, we have a special connection, we also have the continuous desire to be accepted and loved by her: we have the desire to connect with Mother's love."

I was astonished, happy and touched last Christmas when Stella, my daughter who is now 18 years old, gave me as

wouldn't have the wisdom you shared with me. You loved me more than anyone will in the whole world and I need you to know I am aware of this. You will always be the greatest woman in the world to me."

Mothers, whichever way you choose to share your feelings, remember to do these each day: a daily hug, a kiss, a smile. Love can be expressed in many other ways too, including the discipline and responsibility we give our children. Eye contact and a simple touch on the shoulder or a love pat on the back mean so much yet cost so little. Try today to think of ways you can communicate your children, the uniqueness of a Mother's love.

Experts agree that if a child receives nurturing amongst family members, they are less inclined to look to outsiders that might have ulterior motives. Create a home where a mother's love is expressed unconditionally. Strive to create awareness in your environment – share the importance of unconditional love, a love that accepts an individual for who he/ she is. Any mother, whether rich or poor, can afford this.

These simple actions that don't cost anything can have a significant influence on your children's daily lives that will last for a lifetime. The cycle of unconditional love between you as a mother, and your child will be passed on to their own children in years to come. It is up to you to build that loving legacy. Start today! **ehb**

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