

Marry my Mother

Dear C and Dr. B:

This Thanksgiving, my husband and my mother got into an argument over the proper way to melt cheese on toast in order to make grilled cheese sandwiches. Listening to them, I had a sudden realization: OMG, I married my mother! They each had this same tone of underlying bitter sarcasm in their voices, the same flat-out "I am right!" attitude.

My daughter doesn't listen either, she's just as certain she's always right: I really wonder if it is genetic. I guess it is my lot. I am close with my mother, we speak almost every other day, but she can drive me a bit crazy. If I am honest I feel the same way about my husband. We are close but he can drive me a bit crazy.

Did I marry my mother?

- Daughter Deb

Dr. B says:

You can only know what you've been shown and since humans learn via role modeling, we are attracted to what feels familiar. Throughout our lives our relationships often mirror the relationships we were exposed to growing up.

The average American family is dysfunctionally stable at best. My question would be, do you find humor in their neurotic behavior, along with the frustration? Could you mention the incident to your husband in an ironic, funny way, tell him your thoughts, and laugh about it together?

If you are looking for ways to live in the relationship, there are a few YouTube teaching videos that would be really helpful here: [How to Ruin Your Relationship - Ultra Spiritual Life, episode 26](#); and

[Passive Aggressive Relationship Techniques - Ultra Spiritual Life, episode 57](#).

The videos are funny - they tell you to do exactly what you shouldn't do, but they are also right on target as to the communication skills most American couples have. It is a lot of the behavior you are describing as well.

C says:

Well of course you didn't marry your mother, Deb. Surely you must have noticed that she stayed at home with your dad when you got married and moved away. You are simply carrying on your family's relationship tradition. It's what we all do. It is, in fact, such a normal thing to do that Dr. B already had all sorts of advice and useful videos to recommend - they are already out there because so many people have this same problem.

But as to whether the behavior is genetic - probably not. If your daughter is a teen, her behavior is pretty much in keeping with typical adolescent angst. Of course, if she is six, then her attitude is just ridiculous. She's only six! Why are you even arguing with her? Anyway, as right as she is, I hope for her

own sake that your daughter *is* actually right all the time, but I doubt it. Few of us are when we're young.

You seem to be a forgiving and understanding person, and that's fine in the case of your mom and husband. They are both adults who are firmly set in their ways; ruined already, if you will. But do you really want your daughter to grow up believing that bitter sarcasm is normal, acceptable behavior? While you may be used to it, people who were raised in more affectionate households might just see your daughter as a bitch. Bad behavior is bad behavior. It isn't funny if there isn't a history of love and understanding to soften the bite.

Kids always test their parents as they grow. OK, your daughter dismisses you with sarcasm. That's what teens do. But letting her get away with it? That is you flunking the test.

- Cathren Housley

You can visit Dr. B's blog at drbrilliantcliche.wordpress.com