MOTHER HUNGER

How Adult Daughters Can Understand and Heal from Lost Nurturance, Protection, and Guidance

KELLY McDANIEL
Hunger Questionnaire

As a child, were you encouraged to eat when you weren’t hungry? Were you forced to eat food that was disgusting to you?

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

As a child, were you deprived of food when you were hungry? Were favorite foods withheld from you?

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

How were mealtimes in your family? Who cooked? Did you eat together or alone?

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

As a child or adolescent, did you ever sneak food? Binge? Restrict?

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

How do you know when you’re hungry? What sensations emerge?

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________
What is your favorite food? Why?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Use three words to describe how you feel about food.
• _______________________________________________________________________
• _______________________________________________________________________
• _______________________________________________________________________

Use three words to describe how you feel about sexual intimacy.
• _______________________________________________________________________
• _______________________________________________________________________
• _______________________________________________________________________

Now, look at the words you listed for food and for sexual intimacy. Are they the same? Are they different? Why?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Copyright © 2017 Kelly McDaniel Therapy
Finding Guidance

• What is good about being a woman?
• What is difficult about being a woman?
• When did another woman stand up for me? How did it feel?
• When did I last stand up for or support another woman?
• What are women really like?
• Did you admire your mother?
• Did your mother have friendships with other women? Were they happy relationships?
• What did you learn about sex from your mother and other caregivers?
• Is there a woman you admire, who you can trust, in your life?

Based on the answers to the questions above, you can identify where you need guidance. Guidance requires a role model. Who in your life seems to have solved the issue you’re facing? How does she treat her friends? Do other women like her?

When you find a role model, spend time with this woman. If she is someone on TV or in a movie, imagine what she might do. Replacing maternal guidance is your chance to choose women you admire and learn from them.
Reclaiming Damaged Dreams and Goals

This is a fun and fruitful way to identify your desires and dreams. To start, let’s prime your brain.

Think of four of your significant achievements to date. What are you most proud of accomplishing? (For example, abstaining from alcohol or completing an academic program or moving to a new town are all significant achievements.)

•
•
•

What are four ways you express creativity? (Planning meals, entertaining friends and family, or creating music and art are just a few ideas.)

•
•
•

What gives your life meaning? List four things that get you out of bed in the morning. (Try to think of things that make you smile, like your pet, yoga class, or cup of coffee.)

•
•
•
Now your brain is ready for the next part.

Think of seven words to describe yourself, such as funny, pretty, resilient, creative. (This is the “self” that feels most like you, not the “self” that worries about what others think.)

•
•
•
•
•
•
•

Think of seven things that you like to do and that give you a sense of purpose and meaning. (Go back to the first three lists if you need ideas.)

•
•
•
•
•
•
•
When you have all fourteen, pick your top three descriptive words. (For example, words to describe yourself might include strong, pretty, persistent, funny, quiet, and intelligent. But now you pick your favorite three, such as (1) funny, (2) persistent, (3) pretty.)

- 
- 
- 

Now pick your favorite three activities. (For example, (1) reading, (2) cooking, (3) knitting.)

- 
- 
- 

Now it’s time for the finale: let’s operationalize what you have put together. Taking your top three from each category, make a sentence. (For example, I am funny, persistent, and pretty so that I can read, cook, and knit.)

When you have your sentence, think of this as your internal compass for life. This can provide guidance for your choices and decisions.

How much of your day-to-day reflects this statement? 10 percent? 30 percent? 60 percent?

What can you do to increase the percentage?

The more your life reflects who you really are, the less you need to fill the emptiness with unhealthy behaviors or people.
Many women earn security with help from a therapist. Some build an inner sense of security with the support of good friends, partners, and even pets. Depending on the severity of your Mother Hunger, the ingredients for enhancing your attachment style will vary. You might be interested in an online version of the Experiences in Close Relationships Scale to take a closer look at your attachment style (openpsychometrics.org/tests/ecr.php).

The ACEs study shows a common denominator in each measure of adversity: a lack of protection. Children without a protective caregiver suffer more than children who have one. Dr. Robert Block, former president of the American Academy of Pediatrics, is often quoted as saying, “ACEs are the single greatest unaddressed public health threat facing our nation today.” Growing awareness of ACEs and their consequences reveal how much children need the protective presence of a consistent caregiver. Research shows that if a trusted adult soothes a child during adversity, the impact of distress is less damaging, and the event may not become an ACE. One pediatrician is taking this very seriously: Dr. Nadine Burke Harris, the first surgeon general of California and author of The Deepest Well, is connecting the dots between childhood illnesses and toxic stress and making changes to medical procedures that could further traumatize vulnerable children. In her widely viewed TED talk,
Dr. Burke Harris says, “The single most important thing that we need today is the courage to look this problem in the face and say, this is real.” Childhood trauma isn’t something you just get over as you grow up. (For more information about ACEs, see “ACEs Science 101” and “Got Your ACE Score?” at ACEsConnection.com.)

Finding a place to belong sounds much easier than it is. You have probably tried. Groups of women can be scary places. You might have learned that churches aren’t safe either. For this reason, I love 12-step programs. They are free, nonjudgmental places to belong. If the idea terrifies you, try a phone meeting or an online group like InTheRooms or Seeking Integrity (www.seekingintegrity.com) for support.

Out of the Storm (www.outofthestorm.website) is a helpful resource for finding a trauma-informed therapist.
Introduction


Chapter 1


18. Rich, “It is Hard to Write About My Own Mother.”

19. Ibid.


Chapter 2


11. Levine and Heller, Attached.


Chapter 3


9. Ibid.


23. Ibid., 147.


**Chapter 4**


8. Ibid., 231.


13. Ibid., 281.


**Chapter 5**

1. David Foster Wallace, “This Is Water,” commencement speech at Kenyon College, Gambier, Ohio, May 21, 2005; available at https://fs.blog/2012/04/david-foster-wallace-this-is-water.


12. Ibid., 10.


Chapter 6


18. Ibid., 41.


21. Ibid., 198.


Chapter 7


2. Ibid., 98.

3. Ibid., 14.

4. Ibid., 98.


8. Brodeur, Wild Game, 50.

9. Ibid., 50.

10. Ibid., 97.


Chapter 8


16. Ibid.


30. Ibid., 95.


36. See, for example, Ogden, Minton, and Pain, *Trauma and the Body*.

**Chapter 9**


10. Ibid., 87.

Chapter 10


Conclusion


ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Hay House team, thank you for selecting my book for publication. Your support means Mother Hunger: How Adult Daughters Can Understand and Heal from Lost Nurturance, Protection, and Guidance will find the women who need it.

Guidance is essential for every writer who wants to share a published manuscript with the world. Thank you to Ami McConnell, author and professional editor, for masterfully digesting the concepts and overall mission for this book. Your expertise guided these pages home. Kacie Main, thank you for reworking the first chapter with beautiful insight. Corrine Casanova, thank you for checking my research and cheering me on. KN Literary team, thank you for helping me with my book proposal. Thank you Mary O’Donohue for getting me “media ready.” Jenn at Mixtusmedia, thank you for the social media guidance.

Protection is essential for writing. Just as the world needed safe refuge from a sinister pandemic, our home caught fire. We needed protection. We gathered our kittens and essentials, and fled to my parents’ home a few hours away. Their protection allowed me to continue writing.

An author needs nurturance. I’m forever grateful to the special people who nurtured me while I spent hours at my desk. Melinda, my bonus mother and friend, affirmed this project every chance she could. Virtual assistant Audrey Isbell reminded to write this book even when I didn’t want to. Dear friend Jennifer Acker sent loving texts each morning, sharing an emotional refuge. Margaret Renkl and Millie, writer, neighbor, and special pup, offered writing empathy.
when our daily walks intersected. Julieann Myers felt the essence of this book and reflected it back to me. Robin Satyshur always made time for me to talk through a chapter. Britt Frank fueled me for social media and dentist appointments. Michelle Mays opened her home, traveled to mine, shared edits and tireless feedback, and reminded me of the need for this book.

Living with a therapist/writer during a global pandemic is some kind of cruel joke. In spite of adversity, Chris McDaniel kept the firewood stocked, the snack cabinet full, and managed writing mood swings with grace. Chris, thank you for the emotional space to write and the tireless hours discussing Mother Hunger. Garrett, thank you for the regular check-ins. Your life is magnificent to behold. I’m grateful to be your mother.
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kelly McDaniel, LPC, NCC, CSAT is a licensed professional counselor and author who specializes in treating women who experience addictive relational patterns. A pioneer in her field, McDaniel is the first clinician to name Mother Hunger as an attachment injury and explore the repercussions of bonding to an emotionally compromised mother. Kelly teaches workshops and speaks to audiences nationwide about Mother Hunger. Ready to Heal is her first book. Website: kellymcdanieltherapy.com
Hay House Titles of Related Interest

YOU CAN HEAL YOUR LIFE, the movie, starring Louise Hay & Friends
(available as a 1-DVD program, an expanded 2-DVD set, and an online streaming video)
Learn more at www.hayhouse.com/louise-movie

THE SHIFT, the movie, starring Dr. Wayne W. Dyer
(available as a 1-DVD program, an expanded 2-DVD set, and an online streaming video)
Learn more at www.hayhouse.com/the-shift-movie

***

THE ART OF EXTREME SELF-CARE: 12 Practical and Inspiring Ways to Love Yourself More, by Cheryl Richardson

CLAIM YOUR POWER: A 40-Day Journey to Dissolve the Hidden Trauma That’s Kept You Stuck and Finally Thrive in Your Life’s Unique Purpose, by Mastin Kipp

GET OVER IT!: Thought Therapy for Healing the Hard Stuff, by Iyanla Vanzant

SETTING BOUNDARIES WILL SET YOU FREE: The Ultimate Guide to Telling the Truth, Creating Connection, and Finding Freedom, by Nancy Levin

TRAUMA: Healing Your Past to Find Freedom Now, by Nick Polizzi and Pedram Shojai

All of the above are available at your local bookstore, or may be ordered by visiting:

Hay House USA: www.hayhouse.com®
Hay House Australia: www.hayhouse.com.au
Hay House UK: www.hayhouse.co.uk
Hay House India: www.hayhouse.co.in