

The Good Daughter Syndrome: Awaken from It. Break Free of It. Heal from It.

Katherine Fabrizio

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The Good Daughter Syndrome is a thorough, conversational self-help book about avoiding the unconscious traps that mothers set up when they see their daughters as reflections of themselves.

Psychotherapist Katherine Fabrizio's self-help book *The Good Daughter Syndrome* is for women who struggle in their relationships with their mothers.

For daughters with difficult mothers, the book says, life can be full of guilt, doubt, and putting their mother's feelings before their own, fulfilling the unconscious agreements they made with their difficult mothers at birth. It describes traps that such daughters fall into, like feelings of never being good enough and contending with mixed messages. Still, it avoids pigeonholing mothers into circumscribed categories or personality disorder diagnoses, addressing the traumas, expectations, insecurities, and life experiences that lead some women to have difficulties with motherhood.

From this foundation come recommendations for myriad methods of taking control and improving. The book works to foster awareness of one's own psychology and expand empathy for one's mother, leading to healing one step at a time. Its concepts are broad at first, but they become more specific and targeted over the course of the book, complemented by examples and accessible definitions. There are examples of chains of cause and effect that relay a mother's past negative experiences; there is coverage of the defense mechanisms that a mother may use to protect herself following triggers that remind her of bad experiences; and there's information about how daughters react to such behaviors, often without knowing the root causes of their mothers' behavior. Specific reactionary behaviors are named to make these examples more tangible, like needing to look or feel special, constant self-doubt, and shame around sexuality.

The book's later chapters represent another shift: they move from explaining behavior and psychological development to giving advice for changing the status quo. There are examples of poor mother-daughter relationships alongside breakdowns of methods for approaching specific situations, all serving to show how to best address one's mother's actions—or change one's own reaction, if addressing one's mother is not possible. There are also helpful recommendations for setting boundaries, inviting heartfelt conversations, getting therapy, guided meditation, and even going no-contact, depending on the severity of the situation. Mantras to override unconscious beliefs and rewire one's brain are shared too; they are tailored to certain types of difficulties. Recommended journaling exercises are present to further help daughters identify their thinking and behavioral patterns.

The tone is sympathetic throughout. The book expresses understanding over daughters' frustrations with their mothers and acknowledges that the process of understanding one's difficult mother, and of coming to terms with how tense relationships shape children, is complicated. Further, it balances its scientific assertions with its compassion well.

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AIMEE JODOIN (January 9, 2023)

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