

Relationships: It's sugar and spice

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The bond between mother with daughter is unique.

MOTHERING daughters: one minute she is playing dress-ups in your clothes, a few years later you are arguing over her clothes.

Mother/daughter relationships often swing from a close and loving sisterhood to a daily battleground, clinical psychologist Lyn Worsley says.

"You are not alone if you find yourself fighting with your daughter," Worsley says.

"And most gaps in mother/daughter relationships close as the child grows older and the daughters often say they can see their mothers in themselves as they enter adulthood."

Melbourne psychotherapist and family counsellor Tahlia Mandie says the bond between mother and daughter is truly unique.

"To lots of little girls there is nothing more exciting than playing in mum's high-heel shoes, smearing on lipstick and wanting to look just like mummy," Mandie says.

Here are some ups and downs mums of daughters can face in their relationship:

Highlights

0-5 years

Babies start life needing nothing but their mothers, so an intense bond is forged. Mums usually witness lots of daughters' firsts: smiles, words, walking.

Primary school age

This is a great time to start doing things together as "girls", including lunch, shopping, beauty treatments, dressing up and going to the movies.

Teenage years

Daughters are finding their identities, so mums become more like "best friend" figures and share heart-to-hearts, trips away together and school and social milestones.

Adulthood

If mother and daughter enjoy a close relationship, mum may be called on to watch her child graduate, help her child plan a wedding and support her daughter if she becomes a mother herself.

Challenges:

0-5 years

Some mothers may feel drained by being continuously responsible for their baby.

Primary school age

Daughters can become clingy, constantly demanding attention from their mother and more concerned about appearance, leading to friction over hairstyles and clothes.

Teenage years

Motherly over-protectiveness when her daughter starts dating and going out alone with friends may fuel arguments.

Adulthood

Adult daughters can feel criticism and judgment from their mothers regarding their career and partner choices.

TIPS

See your daughter as an individual. Sharing a gender does not make her a copy of you.

Accept your daughter for who she is.

Communicate together about rules. Once your daughter is old enough, set rules together that take into consideration the views and opinions of both parties.

Talk every day if possible. It keeps communication open and your daughter is never too old to need your love, respect, trust and interest in her life.

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