

**"HOW DO I LOVE MYSELF WHEN MY OWN CHILD HATES ME?"**

**"Dear Dr. Coleman,**

**Like so many of the parents you work with, I was a very dedicated and loving mother. Not only do my friends say this, but my own daughter said this up until the point that she got married and then got into individual therapy. Now she's decided that she had a terrible childhood, that I'm a narcissist, and she wants nothing to do with me. I'm a smart person, but I don't know how to hold onto my own opinion of myself as a good mother when my own daughter hates me."**

**ANSWER: Yes, this is an incredibly common problem where loving, dedicated parents (by the child's own admission) are suddenly being recast as selfish, unloving, and uninvolved.**

**The child's sudden recasting of the parent also creates the conditions where the parent steps into the quicksand of explanation, defense, and anger which only worsens the situation.**

**Holding onto your own feelings of value as a person---let alone---parent requires a number of important and critical actions. Here are some of the most useful steps:**

- Talk to other estranged parents. Nobody knows what you're feeling more than someone who's going through it now or in the past. Your friends and family are well-meaning, and if you're lucky, can provide supportive feedback, but they may also make you feel worse if they haven't gone through it.**
- Write a list of all of the ways that you were or are a good parent. Print it on a 3x5 card and carry it around with you. Pull it out and read it when you're feeling down.**
- Develop the correct theory about the estrangement. Just because it feels like your child hates you, doesn't mean that she does. There are many reasons why children do this, and true hatred is rarely the reason.**

- **Attend the Free Q and A's on Monday (tomorrow this week) or ask a question in advance and listen later. This will help you develop the correct theory and hear how similar your situation is to so many others**
- **Allow yourself to put your child out of your mind and to emotionally close yourself off to them. Contemporary psychologists, myself included, talk about the importance of compassion and forgiveness. But those only work if you're able to be equally compassionate, loving and forgiving of yourself. Sometimes, it's actually better to compartmentalize them, and put them on the back burner, now or forever more.**
- **Get on with your life. Don't let your child dictate what kind of a life you have. Invest in yourself with pleasurable, meaningful activities and relationships.**