

the  
**POWER**  
of Mother  
*on her family*

by Carissa Leventis-Cox

I remember a few months ago, a Facebook question was posed:

“What does the word “mother” mean to you? How about “power”? How does it feel to put those two words into the same sentence? What IS the true power of mothers?”





This question just spoke to me and I immediately responded:

“I feel as a mother, I have the power to influence my family’s physical, emotional, mental and spiritual health for the better... and for the worse... So I would like to make sure I use my power intelligently, proactively and deliberately.”

As I typed my comment on my computer, I thought:

- physical health (check)
- mental health (when my son’s not driving me crazy, check)
- spiritual health (check, but if tied to emotional health, maybe not), and
- emotional health (hmmm.... definitely cannot check, big fat red X).

### **WHEN MAMA’S NOT HAPPY, NOBODY’S HAPPY**

What? Here I am, the advocate in my family for a healthier lifestyle. Sure I was emphasizing healthy foods, but I was totally disregarding emotional health. I knew that emotional stress could wreak havoc on one’s physical health, but in all honesty, I didn’t want to face the fact that I was causing ill health in my family.

Admittedly, I was influencing my family’s emotional health for the worse. **You see, for the past 7 years, I have hated my mother-in-law.** When we were in the same room, the tension was almost unbearable, for me, my mother-in-law, my husband, my parents. And, I’m sure my young son felt it too.

It wasn’t always like this though. Before getting married, my mother-in-law was a friend, a good friend. And the words ‘good’ and ‘friend’ can’t even begin to describe the bond we had had from the very beginning. Let’s just say, if I didn’t have a mother, she would have been the woman I would have loved to be mine. But after I married her only son, things changed. I don’t know how it all got out of hand, but it did and it was ugly.

### **EFFECTS OF EMOTIONAL STRESS ON THE BODY**

At the height of my rage, the emotional stress was so intense my heart would pound and race, my teeth would chatter uncontrollably, my whole body would shake and, in the summer, I would feel so cold. Not a picture of health, is it?!? I don’t know about you, but

food doesn't affect my body as traumatically as anger or hatred does.

According to the [American Institution of Stress](#), emotional stress affects our immune system, gastrointestinal tract, skin and other organs, "hormones, brain neurotransmitters, additional small chemical messengers elsewhere, prostaglandins, as well as crucial enzyme systems, and metabolic activities that are still unknown."

Yes, I was poisoning my own body. And at the same time, I was bringing my family's emotional health down with me.

## FEAR IS POISON

I had thought that taking the time and the energy to forgive my mother-in-law, freely accept her for all she is and just letting go of the hurts between us would be *extremely difficult for me*. I thought taking the time to intelligently, proactively or deliberately try to heal our relationship would *completely drain me*. I thought it would *expose my ego's vulnerabilities to her*, which I was too eager to protect. So I just completely ignored her instead, which just added to her pain... and mine.

## THE ROOT CAUSE OF THE PROBLEM IS ME

I was watching Chitty Chitty Bang Bang with my son a few weeks ago and loved the song [Truly Scrumptious](#). We would youtube it and watch it a few times a day. I don't know why the song grabbed my attention so intensely, but it did. And the more I watched it, the more I envisioned my mother-in-law's face on Truly's. It was a bizarre experience, but all of a sudden, it moved me to see my mother-in-law in a whole different light. I saw a woman's utmost joy expressed in the company of the children, the love she gave to them freely, her total present state of mind while she was with them and her sensitive bond with the children. *Suddenly, I saw all the positives in my mother-in-law, where I once saw only negatives.*

In my epiphany, I realized that the burden of the past 7 years continued to weigh down on me, because of no one else but me. It was I who needed to change my attitude, my behavior

and my subjective point of view. As Thich Naht Hanh says,

**"When some persons cause me to suffer... I should ask if I myself, in fact, may be one of the causes and conditions which makes them what they are."**

## HEALING

For the past 3 weeks, my mother-in-law and I have had the most open, the most energizing, the most rewarding and the most loving experience we have ever shared together. What seemed like an irreparable relationship has been healed. Now, when I communicate with her, my heart jumps for joy, my whole body is energized and I feel warm all over. I can talk to my husband and my son about her with love and joy. Gone is the tension, the heaviness, the fear, the anger, the hatred, the suffering, the poison.

I feel emotionally healthier, physically lighter and spiritually lifted. I know my family has felt the change too. I am blessed with a mother-in-law who kept her door and heart open, ready and waiting for my return. Her kindness, forgiveness and love for me has taught me in turn how to love and how to live. Through my mother-in-law, I am beginning to really understand what it means to be a Mother and how to use the power we have as mothers to influence our family for the better.



Carissa is a passionate Mama in the Kitchen. She believe in fresh, organic, local/in season, unprocessed Vegan food. A Culinarian with cooking school, restaurant and catering backgrounds, she is also a certified Ayurvedic Nutrition Therapist and co-author of *Yoga for Cancer: Esoteric, Yogic and Dietary Remedies*.

Her family believes they are healthier both short- and long-term because of the addition of more and more unprocessed and unadulterated Vegan foods into their diets. Through her blog, she hopes to share information with other parents on how to create a disease-free, healthy life by adding more raw fruits and vegetables into their family's diets.