

Reverse Umbilification

The relationship between a mother and her child begins before the birth of the child even occurs. The umbilical cord connects the two, creating an everlasting bond. Everything the mother puts into her body enters the body of the baby. The baby relies on the mother for life. When the opposite of this is true, and the mother relies on the child and his or her successes for her own emotional survival and happiness, the term is called reverse umbilification.

Sadly, this epidemic is everywhere. Especially high reverse umbilification rates can be seen at soccer tournaments, middle school open house nights, and grocery store aisles when moms run into old friends. Many of my friends have mothers that suffer from this common disease. Mouths moving faster than listeners can keep up, the mothers strictly talk about their children, and even more specifically about their children's successes. Mentioning only the good things their child has done, victims paint false images of a perfect child. If in rare instances they reveal a failure of their child, there is always an accompanying excuse. "Susie sits the bench because her coach is biased toward the other girls," they may say, or "Johnny got his first C because the teacher is absolutely terrible," they complain. In reality, Susie is just not a great soccer player and Johnny did not study hard enough. These moms would probably rather sell all their Coach purses and Vera Bradley luggage than admit their child has struggles. 'Tough love' is a foreign term to them and even if they did comprehend its meaning, they would most likely classify it as 'too harsh'. Those who suffer from the disease will go as far as lying to protect their own reputation.

Not only is reverse umbilification a quite frustrating epidemic for those who witness it, but it is also a detrimental disease that harms both the mothers and the children. The children are convinced they are perfect, and perhaps they may be, but this notion creates narcissistic adults in a few mere years. These are the children who enter a new career and are flabbergasted when they are scolded on the job. This is such a new phenomenon to them since their mothers offered only never ending praise. These mothers who would do anything to protect their children unknowingly harmed them in one of the worst ways possible: they are not at all prepared for the 'real world' without mom.

For the mothers, a terrible consequence of the disease is the social devastation that accompanies one small failure of their children. "What will all my girlfriends think?!" they probably wonder to themselves. Yes, having kids should drastically change a woman's life, but these women are only content if their child is; they give up everything that makes *them* happy. Vicariously living through her children, the mother assumes every mistake of the child is a mistake of hers. Without their kids being 'perfect', reverse umbilification victims are emotionally and socially destroyed.

In the end, it comes down to quite selfish behavior from those who should be teaching their children better. If these mothers cared about their child's future as much as they say they do, they would not spoil their kids with words of never ending positivity and instead let the children accept their failures in order to proceed forward from them.

I can picture a world without reverse umbilification: it is a beautiful place. This disease is one hundred percent preventable if education is spread to those most susceptible. It is necessary for a mother to understand that tough love is acceptable, that the difference

between her life and her child's life is okay, and that the acknowledgement of her child's struggles will only benefit the both of them in the future. A child's future is far too precious to ruin with false senses of perfection.