

Wildheart Integration

Addiction as a Path to Awakening

Dark Mother

Society puts enormous pressure on women as mothers. In the role of “Mom”, we are conditioned to think we need to put our lives on hold and put our children first. I didn’t even give it any consideration when I had my first baby and automatically slipped from the wife role into the Mom role. Sure there was a ton of love that drove the desire to care for him. But there was also a lot of “shoulding” that prompted other behavior.

Over time, I made myself into a sterile version of myself that existed to fulfill my children’s every want in service to this idea of being a “good” mom. And when I would fall short in this idealization, I would experience deep shame and guilt. I remember the moment I first really heard the words “Should the cabin lose pressure, oxygen masks will drop from the overhead area. Please place the mask over your own mouth and nose before assisting others.” The suggestion that I take care of myself before my children was revolutionary. I started to explore my definition of a “good” mom and realized I had created an impossible scenario. I mean how long could I continue to “starve” myself in the name of being a good mother. It took about six months of concerted effort to try to transform myself within the confines of the role based on my definition before I found it necessary to completely remove myself from the role.

During that four-month sabbatical on Kauai, I became acquainted with parts of myself that were shamed out of existence. I was meeting the Dark Mother in me. In researching the Dark Mother archetype, I learned a “good” mother can’t exist without the “bad” one. I realized that my own needs I was suppressing were a healthy part of being a woman. I realized that women are human, with their own lives, emotions and experiences. And by denying the full expression of myself, I was not only hurting myself, but also my children. In this new way of being Myself in the role of “Mom”, my children would get that their full range of emotions are acceptable and they don’t have to be sterile versions of themselves. Just like them, mothers have the capacity for good and bad.

By embracing my dark mother, I disappeared my need to be perfect and feel shame for mistakes. Some of the best conversations I’ve had with my children are using our mistakes as opportunities to examine what happened and how we might do things in the future to get a better outcome. There is no hierarchical idea that parents have it all figured out and children learn from us. We are both learning together. In this, the goal is to know ourselves and others better, more intimately, more truly, more respectfully. We can learn to see and consequently love and be loved

more accurately for who we really are - the light and the dark. The more we allow ourselves to be human and imperfect, to explore our inner selves without shame, the more healed and integrated our world will become.

“Our world has yet to fully acknowledge the archetype of the dark mother. As we bring her out into the light of our awareness, we free ourselves to become authentic and to show up powerfully in our lives and in the world.”

—Bethany Webster