

The mother wound: An analysis of the American television show Grey's Anatomy

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Abstract

There are many stories in the Bible and other books of a loving and caring mother who sacrifices everything for her children, but there are only a few or none that show the greed and hatred of a mother towards her own child, which we will try to explore through this paper. There are theories of Freud and Horney that show the impact of an unloving parent in the life of the child, and at the deeper level, it can create existential crises, in a person's life. To be a good child to fulfill the needs of parents, a child fixates in her childhood and is unable to develop an individual personality of her own. This paper tries to study the impact of the parental wound on a child through the famous American television show Grey's Anatomy.

Keywords: Sigmund Freud, parental wound, existential crises, grey's anatomy

Introduction

Mother is the one we compare to God. For any child, she is the image of God "You think that true love is the only thing that can crush your heart; that will take your life and light it up or destroy it. Then you become a mother." (Meredith Grey 35:45- 36:17). The mother gives life. She sacrifices everything that she has in her power for her children. But in this belief of a Goddess on earth, we forget to realize that she's also a human. She is also erroneous, so expecting that she won't make mistakes is wrong. In the process of de-humanizing her and attaching the elements and qualities of a God, we forgot to acknowledge that she can be wrong. Therefore, when she commits mistakes, it becomes difficult for us to believe that she can be wrong (because she's a mother, the perfect-idealistic human on the planet).

Many theories of Sigmund Freud state first five years of life are crucial for the formation of adult personality. Parents play an essential role in forming an adult personality of a person. Mothers gave birth to their children, and it believed that giving birth is an act of God, and we consider mothers as the Goddess on earth, but it is not always true that she is the Goddess; she is a woman, just a human who makes mistakes. A lot of errors are sometimes selfish, sometimes greedy, who wants power too, who wants to be extraordinary. But when someone says these things about a mother, the world doesn't want to accept it. The world cannot take that a mother can be wrong because she is supreme, she is the creator, and a person who thinks bleak about her mother is not socially palatable or should not be allowed to live in the society.

The mother of the protagonist of the show, *Grey's Anatomy* 'Meredith Grey', was a great surgeon, but she failed to be a good mother, and because of this, she destroyed the childhood of Meredith that had a bad effect on her life. "She was an exacting, distant, unloving presence in Meredith's early life and often referred to her, scathingly, as being disappointingly "ordinary." (Grubbs). Meredith always describes herself as dark and twisted; it was hard for her to be happy, it was hard for her to let people in her life, it was hard for her to believe in people, it was hard for her to think

that someone can love her. Because when we are small, our first instinct is to trust our parents and believe that our parents will be there for us, but for Meredith, her mother was never there, and her father left her when she was five, she had no memories with her father. So she never learned how to believe other people and believe that people are going to stay there for her.

According to the theory of Karen's neurotic needs, underlying anxiety develops in a child when her parents are not available to give her warmth and love that she needs in her early childhood.

direct or indirect domination, indifference, erratic behavior, lack of respect for the child's individual needs, lack of real guidance, disparaging attitudes, too much admiration or the absence of it, lack of reliable warmth, having to take sides in parental disagreements, too much or too little responsibility, over-protection, isolation from other children, injustice, discrimination, unkept promises, hostile atmosphere, and so on and so on. (Horney, 1945) ^[11]

All this can lead to the development of primary anxiety and neurosis in a child. Physical and emotional neglect is one of the causes of childhood trauma. When the mother is too busy in her work, she cannot take time for the child or believe that a child's needs are unnecessary. Trauma begins. "Meredith's mother never wanted her, and her father was never man enough to hang around. She has a right to be damaged." (Derek Shepherd 25:22-25:56). Some mothers don't want their kids, or they just can't make time for them because they are too busy in themselves or they haven't healed from their trauma, but as a human, we don't want to believe that a mother cannot love her child, or can try to abandon her.

Her mother always taught her to be a right surgeon, but she never taught her how to be a person, she never told her that her feelings are valid. When a kid is born, everything is new for her. She has never seen anything in the world; she experiences everything the first time and always needs someone to be there to help her understand what she is going through. Still, Meredith's father left her when she was five, and her mother was always busy in her own life,

Meredith never found a safe place for herself. People think poverty is only being hungry, naked, and homeless, but the misery of being unwanted, unloved, and uncared for is the greatest.

For most people, a hospital is a scary place, a place where bad things happen. Most people prefer church or school or at home, but I grew up here. While my mom was on rounds, I learned to read in the O.R. gallery. I played in the morgue. I colored with crayons on old E.R. charts. A hospital was my church, my school, my home. A hospital was my safe place, my sanctuary. I love it here (Meredith Grey 00:07-02:04)

Meredith was a child who had to play in the morgue, how would she learn to make human connections, she doesn't know how to be a normal kid, how to be happy or how to trust people when her father left her. She grew up like this because of absent parents. Meredith was a different child, and she grew up differently, not like any other kid, she doesn't know how to love or how to give care. She doesn't know how to trust anyone because she was never able to trust her parents. Because when you grow up, understand that the people who meant to make sure you survive just left you, it leaves a lot of scars.

"I raised you to be an extraordinary human being, so imagine my disappointment when I wake up and discover that you are no more than ordinary." (Ellis Grey 48-16:28). Such high expectations from her daughter. It is not always that a person will be extraordinary; no one is perfect. Everyone has flaws. Everything cannot be accurate. But Meredith was good she was an excellent surgeon, she was trying to be a person, she was trying to be happy, trying to love someone, but her mother thought she should not. According to her, she cannot have a life apart from being a surgeon.

Her mother always wanted her to be extraordinary; she wanted her to be different, but she cannot handle that she is better than her. "I cannot do anything right for her, and I finally figured out why. She wants everyone around her to be ordinary so that she can be extraordinary. She wants everyone around her small." (If then 36:19-36:48) Her mother wanted her to be successful but not more than herself. She cannot bear that someone is more successful than her, even if it's her daughter. "You wanna know why I'm so unfocused? So ordinary? You wanna know what happened to me? You! You happened to me!" (Meredith Grey 25:15- 25:28) Usually, it's hard to believe that there can be a woman, who cannot see her daughter's success, but mothers are humans too they also crave for power, they desire for winning. Meredith's mother wants her to be successful, wants her to be extraordinary, but below her, she cannot see anyone above her. She is ambitious and cannot see anyone more successful than herself, not even her daughter.

According to Horney's theory of child development, if a child grows up feeling unsafe, unloved, and undervalued, he/she develop anxiety and adopt maladaptive strategies to cope with this anxiety. For a child, the most critical judgment is of its parents. We believe everything our parents say from fairytales to monsters. And when our mother says that we are not good enough, we are a mistake. We shouldn't be born. We believe that too. "You're not slitting your wrists, but you are careless. Probably because your mother told you were a waste of space on this planet. The problem is you believed her. And if you don't watch

out, one of these days you're going to die because of it" (Dr. Wyatt 24: 33-24:55). These things print in our minds, we start believing it, we think that we are no good for this world, we start feeling that we shouldn't be born, we think that we are the cosmic mistakes, and we cannot ever take those things out of our minds, because as a child we believe in everything our mother say.

When a child of an absent parent grows up, they are different from other people, they cannot trust anyone around them, because they were never able to trust their parents don't know how to trust. When they grow up, they believe that the world doesn't want them because their parents never wanted them. "It took me a long time to find him. A long time. And even then, it took me a long time to even know that I wanted him." (Meredith Grey 27:18-27-33) No matters what you do to make them believe that you are here for them, there's a voice in their head that says, you're going to leave them, and they'll be alone again. These people believe that they meant to be alone. It took them a lot of time to think that they can trust people, they can love people, and people are going to stay in their lives too.

Horney posited that a female child might become insecure and grow anxious about her femininity and desirability if she perceives a loss of her father's love. "Our dad abandoned you. And your mom, by all accounts, was the meanest person ever. And you can't let Derek love you" (Lexie Grey 19:35-19: 53) when a child abandoned, when there is no one to take care of her when she needs to be taken care of the most, she believes that she cannot be taken care of, nobody can love her because she is unlovable. And when someone tries to love her, her first instinct is to move away because she doesn't know how else to react.

"My mother tried to kill herself when I was a kid after the love of her life disappeared. I never told anybody that before." (Meredith Grey 41:30-41:52) who tragic it would have been to see your mother trying to kill herself in front of you, trying to bleed out and die, but all you can do is sit there and watch her take her own life. It's horrible even to say it, but Meredith watched her doing this. "My mother took a scalpel and sliced her wrist in front of me. And I sat on the kitchen floor in a pool of her blood, waiting until she passed out so I could call 911. It's not okay to talk about it, she asked me not to before she passes out, so I know I would be in trouble if I tried to save her life." (Meredith Grey 00:52- 01:35) when the person who brought you in this world tries to kill herself in front of you, you don't know how to carry on with your own life; you start believing that life is worthless, and it's okay to die. There is nothing worth living. You think that you should be dead because you cannot fix it. The person who created you broken. There is nothing that can set you. So it's better to be dead than to be living a life like that.

It should be universally accepted that a mother cannot always be loving and caring. When a person grows up with a woman like that she feels broken, it becomes hard to survive in a rational world for her, it is hard for her to explain all her feelings, and it is hard for her to love or stay in a relationship. It is hard for her to do things that most people can do easily because she was never taught how to do those things. She was never allowed to feel her feelings. "Do you know what it's like to be raised by someone who didn't want you? I do. To know that you stood in your mother's career? I do." (Meredith Grey 35:22-36-05) When Alabama passed the anti-abortion law policies and ban

abortion, many women protested against it. However, the law passed, the government didn't realize how much it will affect the child, to be raised by a person who doesn't want the child, it will directly affect the mental health of the child, and can never cure. And when she becomes a mother herself, sometimes the trauma carries on from one generation to the next.

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