

The myth of the perfect Mother

Continued from page 5

Child rearing evokes our most generous impulses - and our basest - cruelty, indifference, possessiveness, envy, and resentment. As much as we'd rather not admit it, these feelings are part of all family life. These feelings are often denied. We hate to acknowledge them. Yet denial of these negative emotions can lead to depression, unhappy conflict between mothers and children, and a great deal of heart-ache when children's emotional difficulties move along with them in their development, rather than get resolved.

Another way of denying these emotional realities in families is by "forgetting" over time. Once children grow up, mothers get amnesia when it comes

to recognizing how emotionally difficult it was to raise their children. When the job is nearly done, and the children appear to becoming reasonably happy, healthy responsible adults, mothers remember the whole process as easy. I saw this clearly recently, when one my peers with grown children said, "I never had a moment's trouble with my children!" I can remember full well the same mother - standing spread-eagle against the refrigerator door - 16 years earlier with a four-year-old screaming that he wanted milk, and she was screaming back that he wasn't going to have it! The child tugged at the refrigerator door and hit at his mother! She yelled back, until he fled in a rage to his room. Easy? I don't think so.

Becoming a mother (and father) awakens the most positive, and the most negative experiences of our own childhoods that have long ago been repressed to our unconscious. We may no longer remember, but these numerous experiences with our own parents and siblings help ... as well as hinder us in our own parenting tasks.

Most of us are quite out of touch with our unresolved frustrations and angers from our own childhoods. Our mothers, like us, had many strengths ... and many weaknesses. Sometimes they met our needs well and at other times did not. When we become parents ourselves, we rework - whether we like it or not - many of the problems left over from our own upbringing.

ing. The same mother who experiences bliss while nursing her beautiful baby can have fantasies of throwing the baby over the balcony while the baby cries unrelentingly, with colic, night after night. Although these are normal and natural fantasies, she may not be able to acknowledge them. She may admit these thoughts (as I did) in a disguised way by saying to the baby, "You are lucky to have me for a mother ... any other mother would feel like throwing you over the balcony when you cry so much." It was me, of course, thinking thoughts of throwing the crying baby over the balcony, but I attributed those thoughts to another mother. As a new mother, I couldn't bear to know of my hostility towards my crying baby.

But denying these real feelings can make things worse, as the following example shows. Unconscious fantasies, when they remain unknown, can interfere seriously in mother-child relationships. A mother was extremely angry with her three-year-old son who often pushed his year-old sister. The boy was consistently given a consequence for his behaviour, but it did not improve. This angered and worried his mother.

She found it difficult to overcome her anger. She came to my parenting classes with the problem, because she recognized her anger was deep and wouldn't let up very easily. As I came to know more about her feelings, I recognized she was right. Her anger was unusually strong and it seemed there must have been something more than her son pushing his sister. I encouraged her to look more deeply, and search for something in her own past that could be influencing this problem with her son. This certainly does not mean that every occurrence of a child's aggression is related to the mother's unconscious, but in this case, because of her unrelenting negative feelings, I thought something else must be coming into play. Luckily, this mother had the courage to wonder about her own inner world, and whether it was related to her anger towards her son.

One week this mother returned to class very excited. She had recalled something about her past that she finally realized was interfering with her loving feelings towards her son. She told us about her own older brother, who had pushed her around when she

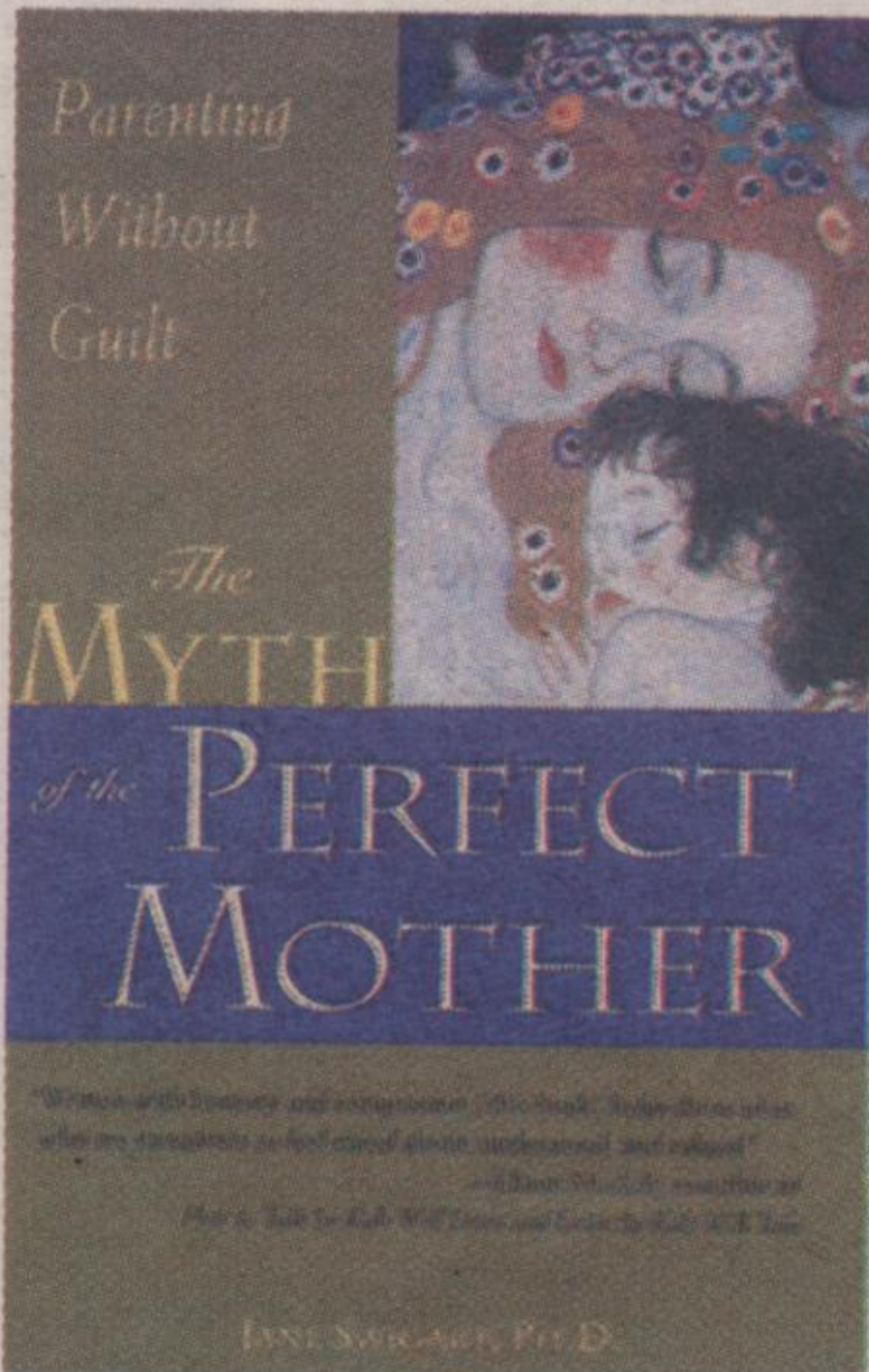
was little. She remembered how angry and helpless she felt. Her son's behaviour had been (unconsciously) reminding her of her own rough older brother who pushed her around. She had been displacing onto her son her unresolved anger with her own brother! Once she recognized that her son's behaviour had awakened an old hurt, which had little to do with her son, she could separate her old feelings from the present. She could deal with son in a less angry and more loving way. Her son, of course, could feel the difference. Feeling more certain of his mother's love, the boy was not as hostile to his sister.

Looking at the over-all situation helped this mother resolve a big problem between her son and herself and got their relationship back "on track". She could never have experienced this success without having the courage to think carefully about her own negative feelings, thoughts and memories connected with her rage.

None of us really wants to know about the cruel, indifferent, possessive, envious and resentful parts of ourselves - yet these impulses are present in every human.

None of us really wants to know about the cruel, indifferent, possessive, envious and resentful parts of ourselves - yet these impulses are present in every human. Like this mother, the more we are able to notice and think about our darker selves, ironically, the happier we will be as parents and the happier our children will be. ✨

The Myth of the Perfect Mother
By Jane Swigart Ph.D.
ISBN 0-8092-2938-2
Canada \$19.95



Play Junction Inc. Summerfest
An afternoon of summer fun and learning for young children
Ages 3 - 7 years
(*must be 3 by 1st day of camp)

9 Weeks of fun to choose from

July 2 nd - 6 th	Make Believe and Fairy Tales
July 9 th - 13 th	In the time of Dinosaurs
July 16 th - 20 th	Music Mania
July 23 rd - 27 th	Lions, Tigers and Bears
July 30 th - Aug. 3 rd	In the Ocean below
Aug. 7 th - 10 th	Bugs and other Creepy Crawlers
Aug. 13 th - 17 th	Let's Create
Aug. 20 th - 24 th	Favourite Holidays
Aug. 27 th - 31 st	Games, Games, Games

Camps run daily from 1:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.
Weekly themes encompass games, songs, stories and crafts.
For more information please call (905) 873-4166

Weekly fees: \$50/child \$95/2 siblings \$140/3 siblings

71 Mountainview Road North, Unit 1, Georgetown
(905) 873-4166

Feel You Don't Have Control Of Your Investment Portfolio?
There ARE Alternatives to Mutual Fund Investing.
Are You Ready To Learn?
Call: Rob Rubino 876-3466

RBC DOMINION SECURITIES
rob.rubino@rbcinvestments.com

EYEGLASSES, CONTACT LENSES, & SUNGLASSES
LIMITED TIME OFFER!
\$50.00 OFF on (complete) GLASSES!
*Prescription eye glasses/sunglasses only

EYE EXAMINATIONS ARRANGED
Mention this ad for discounts.

Soft Daily Wear Contact Lenses **2 for \$99.00**

Family OPTICAL
873-3050
280 Guelph St., #18
Georgetown Marketplace

Hours: 10:00 - 9:00 Monday to Friday - 9:30 - 6:00 Saturday

AMERICAN EXPRESS MasterCard VISA