

MOONBEAMS: a Mother-Daughter Journey
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MOMS' CHAPTER 6

FOOD AND BODIES

There is a fine line between making a daughter feel powerless over her own body and empowering her to take possession of her own body—and that line is different for every daughter. Mothers want to hold strong to a vision of her daughter honoring her body at a time when external temptations are beginning to creep in...but not to the point where she feels like her mother is in charge of her body and she isn't.

How can mothers empower girls to make good decisions? The best thing to do for your daughter is to embrace empowered body dynamics yourself. If you don't have your body-attitude entirely worked out, it's time to become even more conscious around the messages you unconsciously send to your daughter.

Do you truly love and honor your own body in the way you want her to honor hers? What does that even look like? How does it feel? Can you love your body even if you don't like its shape? Can you alter its shape by enhanced eating or exercising, without feeling deprived or resentful? Is it worth transforming your relationship to your body so that your daughter can grow up loving hers?

When she loves her body, when she is her own best advocate, she will treat it in a loving way and feed it life-enhancing foods. Just like she is your mirror, you are hers.

It's not life-enhancing to engage in struggle around body and food with a maturing girl; it can make your daughter feel powerless over her own body. She will say, think, or feel, "My mom is trying to control me!" It can make her hold even tighter to what she wants, which may not be what you want. At the same time, sometimes it can be difficult for mothers to watch daughters branch out and bloom physically without some guidance. It can be difficult to let go of control over her food intake—quality and quantity--as she spends more and more time eating out, with friends. Letting go, for many of us, is not within our comfort zone. But we can't control what our daughters do when they are out and about, among friends who are captivating on so many levels. But she will need you, in the background, as support. She needs you now more than ever...as an advocate for conscious choices. As an advocate for her healthy autonomy around food.

Think of yourself as a steering wheel--not as a tow truck.
Tweet that.

"Why did you let me have that?!" my daughter has exclaimed more than once. "So you would see how your body felt after you ate it. And because I don't want to have to tell you what your intuition already knows." And also, because she had said, "Can I please please *please* have a fancy drink with unknown ingredients, one of which is likely corn syrup?!" (Not a direct quote.) Because she has learned to tune in to her body, and not make choices based on what her friends are doing, Lily's first Frappuccino was also her last.

Tongue control

Notice not just what is going in but what is going out. How do you speak of yourself and to yourself? Of and to

your friends, your mother, your sister, your boss, your employees, your mother-in-law? What is the feeling as those words are being spoken? Notice: are they true? Are they life-enhancing? Do you have an agenda? (Are you trying to change someone's opinion or get someone to do something they don't really want to do?) We can get into a seemingly harmless, witty habit of making disparaging remarks about our own body; but our daughter will pick up on that as she watches herself grow, and grow. Her body-judgment can unconsciously be displaced onto other girls, through judgment and harsh words about their bodies, promoting even more judgment. One way of creating peace on earth is to create peace in our own body-mind relationship.

Watch Your Mind:

How do you feel about your hips? Can you learn to love and honor them? Hips are one of our most unloved body, yet they house our creative organs, and support our movement through the world.

Watch your tongue!

What is going in (is it good for you?)...and coming out (is it good for the world?)...and how does it feel? These two awarenesses are key.

<<Illustration:>>

Eating and Speaking with Consciousness Means:
...not taking the second bite until the first bite has been swallowed. Enjoying food with a sense of gratitude, knowing our very cells are made of what we eat. Speaking with

consciousness: communicate in a way that feels heart-opening rather than heart-closing—honoring self and others with your words.

For the spiritual self—the Goddess Self—to thrive, the mind and body need to be healthy, and in harmony. For some people, this is easy and comes naturally. Others find it frustrating to have to nourish our bodies and relax our minds and think positive thoughts about ourselves and others, as if it goes against intuition. It doesn't—it just goes against old habits. Once your awareness blossoms, it becomes easier and more joyful to stay aware, because the impetus is coming from inside. Once you feel the effects of making food choices that support your body, it becomes easier to eat healthful foods. When both mothers' and daughters' awareness blossoms, together, we can support each other—as long as we stay out of attachment to each other's actions.

Let go of control: don't allow bodies and food to become a source of struggle and conflict. It is time to be internally led, with life-enhancing thoughts.

Mothers! **We are the first generation to parent with tattoos!** So how will my daughter rebel, by *not* getting a tattoo? Or will we make a conscious choice together, about that tattoo, based on respect for what she wants, since eventually she'll end up doing what she wants anyway? Mothers have very little control, ultimately, over our daughters' actions (my mother used guilt, which did exert some psychological control, even though I did what I wanted anyway—but I still felt guilty about not being able to please both of us at the same time).

I would prefer to arm my daughter with as much information as she needs to make her decisions about her body and let her take responsibility for her own choice, rather than following what her mom says so she doesn't get in trouble, or doing the opposite to demonstrate that she is powerful, or doing what her friends say because...well...*they* seem pretty sure about what she should do, and what if she didn't follow their whims? (Would they still like her? Would they be mad? Would it hurt their feelings? And is it even worth it to be powerful and listen to your inner voice, if it hurts your friends' feelings?)

Can we raise girls who aren't swayed by others? –girls whose inner voice is louder than the external voices of peers? Part of this is self-esteem and part of it is other-esteem—the self-esteem you assume your friend has, and act under that assumption: that she will thrive whether or not you do what she wants you to do, that she will not be in any way a victim of your actions. It is most helpful to do it with support—see chapter 7 for how to create a MoonBeams Mother-Daughter group.

Find areas of agreement or compromise that you can rely on as your daughter becomes more independent and able to venture out shopping and eating without you. These are areas in which our daughters will *most easily feel empowered and not at the mercy of marketing and friends*. Then notice your areas of disagreement, and together, see if there is room for compromise or even just exploration of these areas. Exploring how she feels in different kinds of outfits—*clothes that might make you feel uncomfortable*--and how she feels after eating different kinds of foods—*foods you might not want her to eat*--will help your daughter gain the internal barometer needed so that she will know—throughout her life—to check within,

rather than with her friends or with an advertisement or with her mother in order to determine how to dress or what to eat.

BODIES

Getting clear on how you were parented in regard to your body will help you see whether you're parenting from habit or from your highest, most conscious sense of choice. In turn your daughter's inner voice will be able to come through clearly for her to make conscious choices, without the static that comes from confusion. Beliefs change over generations. Separating your own inner voice from what your parents and society taught you will be an enlightening, liberating experience. How autonomous were you, as a growing girl?

One summer day when I was 12 I was strolling through the park to my best friend's house. I bravely stopped to chat with some older boys, high school boys who worked in the park and had sisters my age. One of them casually mentioned that I might want to consider shaving my legs. I disengaged from the conversation as soon as was socially appropriate, continued through the park to my best friend's house, my leg hairs growing longer with every step, and asked for a razor. My friend wasn't even home—so I asked her younger sisters Amy and Jill. I sat down then and there on the edge of their tub and unceremoniously shaved my legs. There was no way I was walking back home through the park—or anywhere--with those gorilla-like leg hairs. This was not a topic I'd discussed with my mother, so there was no threat of repercussion for shaving my own legs at the moment I deemed perfect. Anyway, it was an emergency.

In retrospect, although I had full leg-shaving autonomy in relation to my mother, I had previously given the matter zero

consideration, grabbing a razor in response to a boy's offhand comment, as though I had no choice.

The first time my daughter mentioned leg hair, I told her she had a choice. I told her first that European women don't have the same obsession with hairless legs and that it is acceptable not to shave at all, ever, which she found horrifying. "*Of course* I'm going to shave," she informed me. "So when can I shave them?"

She was adamant, so I chose age 13. It was several months away, even though "all" her friends were already shaving, so I still had time to campaign for no shaving at all; I was passionate about my point of view: her leg hairs were blonde and sparse (although to her they looked gorilla-like). She told me how most of her friends had shaved without even asking their mother; they shaved at each other's houses. But she was willing to wait as per our agreement. After I had had my say (which consisted of an occasional: "Is there anything I can say or do that will get you to consider not shaving your legs?") I had to let go. Her verdict, after that first shave: her legs felt heavenly, and she had savored the whole shaving experience. She still does. (Apparently it skips a generation: "You'd have liked my mother's politics," said my mother, who is a thousand times more conservative than I, "She was quite the women's libber.")

BELIEFS ABOUT FOOD, AND THEIR EVOLUTION

My mother is a really great cook! She uses fresh ingredients and makes things from scratch. Rarely did she open a can or a box during my childhood.

Her parents would kill a chicken, when it was time to eat chicken. And that was just...normal to her, because she grew up with it. When I was little and she'd describe it, I couldn't even imagine eating a chicken that had previously been running around my yard. As a child I was relieved my parents didn't do that wringing of the neck thing my mom had so nostalgically described.

In my own childhood chicken memories my mom sliced her own chickens, bought whole from the butcher. I remember too well, the sound of the chicken's back breaking—apparently a necessary step in the slicing of a chicken. Frankly it was a tad horrifying but...I sure did enjoy my mom's chicken stew, her chicken soup. She never made anything that was not delicious and that back-cracking sound was not an impediment to my enjoyment.

As an adult, when I saw already-cut-up chickens at the grocery store, it made so much sense to take one further ancestral step away from chicken preparation. I made it well into adulthood never having cracked even one chicken's back.

Later I stopped buying chicken altogether, for a yoga-teacher reason: I just didn't feel great about having a dead chicken in the house. Therefore, my daughter had never seen one, though she had eaten chicken soup regularly in restaurants and with friends. When she was five, Lily asked me how to make chicken soup. I told her: first you put a chicken in a pot, cover it mostly up with water, add an onion, carrots, and celery, some spices, and simmer it.

"What do you mean, a chicken?" she asked.

"I mean, a chicken," I replied.

“A real chicken? Is it a *dead* chicken?” she asked. I nodded. She was fairly shocked. I found it slightly amusing, but also a reality-check, when she asked, “Where do you *get* a dead chicken?”

She was surprised to learn that you get them at the grocery store, and asked to see them. She was and still is a tad horrified. Eventually she re-integrated it, because her mother told her it was ok, that people do kill animals and eat them.

Is it ok?—there are various points of view. I was willing to say it’s ok. And she was willing to believe me. If I had told her it was wrong and horrifying, she’d have believed that. That’s how kids get their beliefs. She would in turn validate my belief that it was wrong and horrifying, by believing me. If I told her people who kill chickens are wrong, she’d believe that. Yet my parents grew up with parents who killed chickens for meals. My mother didn’t even consider it a belief; it just *was*. In this enlightened age I get to choose what beliefs I pass on, about bodies and food—about everything. And my daughter gets to choose which ones to embrace. Beliefs can change and evolve. This can be disconcerting to parents.

After years of enjoying chicken soup, one day out of the blue, as a teenager, Lily decided she was no longer a meat-eater. It just didn’t feel right to her anymore. Though this made my role as cook a bit harder, I was happy to find protein alternatives to support her decision. It’s up to Lily what she wants to teach—and feed--*her* daughter.

BREASTS

How can we *absorb and accept* the primary spiritual premise *that everything happens at the right time*? First we need to trust

it in ourselves, in our own lives, then we can help our daughters to fully trust.

One of the biggest and most exposed areas of trust and timing centers around our daughter's breasts. Although she may pretend it's not an issue, breast development takes up lots of space in the preadolescent girl's consciousness. It is up to mothers to guide girls' breast-consciousness in a positive direction. For those with a family history of breast cancer, it is time to transform the fear—based on statistics--that at any moment, we may be next.

Honoring our breasts now—mothers and daughters alike--is one of the best ways we have of maintaining healthy breast tissue and feeling the sense of empowerment that actually leads to good health. It is the one natural form of “cancer prevention” that we as a community of women, we as a medical community, must consider exploring. Although churches have a system of honoring God that lasts through generations, these institutions do not teach us to honor our God-given bodies—least of all women's breasts. If they did, we would have been doing this for generations and breast health might perhaps today be thriving. But in our current society, that which gives life—the physical form of woman--is not being honored. Churches aren't honoring breasts as a spiritual symbol, as a connector of generations—but we (owners of breasts) can. We must.

It's up to the world of conscious women.

Women need a place where breasts can be healed.

There is no medical entity that I know of that is actually healing breasts. There are those who have pretty good statistics for cutting into them, cutting them off, and addressing

them with chemicals and radiation. Those of us with a super strong will, or incredible grace, live through it, but do survivors ever fully feel healed? Do they truly know that their strong will or incredible grace pulled through, or do they attribute it to the medical community? Can we as empowered, conscious women strengthen our will to live, and nurture it in our daughters, without having to go through breast cancer to develop it?

“Develop!” Get it?

If women honored their breasts from the moment they developed—the minute girls become self-conscious about them--instead of when they are about to be medically altered, wouldn't that instill a sense of breast sacredness into our daughters' minds and hearts? It would teach them that this *body* is a sacred place. The act of honoring breasts is inherently healing.

That *sacred* place is within ourselves – that place where breasts can be healed. It is within us. Do I promise to love and honor and obey *my sacred breasts*? As long as they both shall live?

[*\(mp3 meditation on breasts.\)*](#)

Breasts deliver life. They link the generations physically, intimately, like no other part of our bodies. We have lost awareness of that sacred link as a culture and our breasts are sending us the message—through lumps--that something needs to change. We have a choice: we can hear this message or not. We can heed this message or not. We can try something different—something pioneering—or not. I believe someday we WILL live in a world without breast cancer, or fear of breast cancer, and if we hear the message to open up the spiritual channel NOW, I envision us altering this reality in our lifetime.

Everyone in the world does not need to be united in this new vision. The balance of beliefs just needs to be tipped a bit, to change cultural reality. Only 51% of the planet's women need to unite in a desire to significantly reduce breast illness by changing our relationship to breasts (and indeed to our health in general) for it to happen. If we are holding the highest good of all concerned in mind, and honoring our breasts, we can change the world. (If this piques your interest, *You Are the Placebo* is a book that might intrigue you.)

You get to choose. Only embrace this invitation if you wish to embrace it. This is an invitation to be specifically conscious of your breasts – not just *conscious* of, but *honoring* of them, reverent toward them...yours and everyone's, as a sacred life-giving link between generations. It can begin here, now. How many breasts are touched by surgeries in one year, both elective and illness-related, literally how many breasts are touched by a surgeon's scalpel every year? The number is in the hundreds of thousands. How many have breasts been touched with loving, reverent, nonsexual hands? What if *that* number were in the hundreds of thousands? **With conscious touch, women can change the world.**

So much time and money have gone into a search to cure or prevent cancer. Because medicine has not found a cure or the prevention, I have been tempted to look outside the confines of medicine for solutions, and I have narrowed down that search, for the purposes of MoonBeams mother-daughter groups, to breast cancer.

Breasts are what link the generations. Breasts are what link the generations to their mothers. Repairing the tears in the fabric of mother-daughter relationships will have an effect on breast

cancer. Daughters not pushing mothers away, mothers truly seeing their daughters as they are, and not as they wish them to be, will have a preventive effect on breast cancer.

Consciously honoring our breasts as the life-sustaining link that they are – more than just objects of arousal – will help to heal the epidemic that is breast cancer. Western medicine has searched, and has not made the level of impact one would expect from millions of dollars and the best medical minds. As a conscious mother you must empower yourself, you must take back and cultivate your own power to heal.

If you dare, take a moment to see where shame or judgement around breasts exists in your body/mind. Take a moment to see if you can even imagine what honoring breasts, and women's bodies, would even look like...can you?

>*ACTIVITY*

**Daughters: explain breast issues and placebos on their side of this book, chapter 6

SEXUALITY

Girls (as well as boys) use their sexual experiences as a sort of coming of age. Many, indeed most, aren't confiding in their parents as they deem themselves "of age."

"My daughter has never even had a boyfriend! I had already had dates by the time I was her age!" more than one mom has said to me, not knowing that her daughter has already played with the borders of "sex" at parties and on bus rides at summer camp. Sex is not confined to "relationship." Physical interaction is not confined to "dates." Because of disapproval emanating from the powers that be, girls (and boys) hesitate to confide in their parents about their growing interest in sex. It may not be

happening in the way that it happened to their mothers, but it is happening to varying degrees. Sexual exploits are easier to arrange, more casual, and easier to let go of. On the plus side: girls are more empowered. On the negative side: sexual energy is powerful, it is uniting, and engaging with it unconsciously can leave girls feeling empty while not knowing exactly why.

What can we do for our daughters? **We can teach them conscious sexuality.** What does that even mean? It means teaching them that sexual energy is a powerful force that unites two bodies, and can also cause people to make poor decisions. We can teach them that the union of two bodies is a sacred act, and that to put it in any other context can denigrate their connection to themselves. We can show them the different ways sex is portrayed in the media, in music, in schools, in the medical field, in churches, among their peers...and give them the opportunity to make a conscious choice about how they want to explore their sexuality, while not feeling judged or shamed by us. Since adolescents are already using their sexuality as a coming of age, it might be best for all concerned if we create a conscious space for wholehearted discussion, rather than trying to impose our judgments upon the state of today's teenage world. Additionally, that will teach our daughters not to form opinions about other girls based on how much sexual activity they have or don't have. **What if there were no value judgment based on other people's sexuality?**

Percent of population having had first intercourse, by age
<http://www.kinseyinstitute.org/resources/FAQ.html#AGI2002se>

x

Males

Females

25% by age 15

26% by age 15

37% by age 16 40% by age 16
46% by age 17 49% by age 17
62% by age 18 70% by age 18
69% by age 19 77% by age 19
85% by age 20-21 81% by age 20-21
89% by age 22-24 92% by age 22-24

• *Nearly half (46%) of all 15–19-year-olds in the United States have had sex at least once.*[1]

<http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/FB-ATSRH.html>

BULLYING

In 2008 there was a story in the Chicago Tribune magazine about cyber-bullying, a new and newsworthy phenomenon at that time. A couple years later the Chicago Tribune magazine wrote about girls bullying girls (an emerging phenomenon at that time as well).

Both are a “real” problem and *real* people are being affected. As these issues emerge, there are books and professionals geared toward counseling individuals and leading workshops in schools to heighten awareness. But for now let’s rise above the personal, and look at this situation from a different perspective.

What is it that children are not getting? Why is it that our children—“kids these days,” kids in this supposedly civilized country--would attack each other? And where does the need to attack come from – in anyone? With age, adults get better at the attacks, more coy, more subtle. Are kids just emulating adults? Is belittling inherent in children?

Adults are, of course, not-attacking individuals. Right? We don’t speak negatively about our friends, or the driver of the car in

front of us, especially when we don't like their bumper sticker, right? How about fans of the team we're against—do we speak negatively about them? No, never. Culturally and nationally as well...are we a non-attacking nation? A non-attacking culture? Think about it.

Are the girls—both “mean” girls and their “victims”—perhaps just a symptom of the culture?

Girls...they just ARE who they are. What if each individual could be celebrated for that ARE-ness, rather than for how much they embodied our points of view. What if we could transform the “mean girls” from bullies into truly empowered individuals who saw the GOOD in their peers?

What if our children, full of that ARE-ness, realized that they were unique physical embodiments of the same meta-physical energy that every other person on earth embodied? Unique, but all One in the meta-physical. What if kids grew up knowing that in attacking one's classmate, they are attacking one's self, and indeed all girls everywhere. Consider the ripple effect. Certainly if they were filled with this inner knowing of their uniqueness and their connection to each other and their power to affect others, they'd grow up to make peaceful, life-honoring choices that create a peaceful climate on earth.

The very existence of satellites, which allow us to take photos of the planet—not to mention send that photo to your friend no matter where on the globe she is, not to mention for all of us to view that photo at the same time—points to this new, literal, vision of the earth as One. **What one of us does affects others: spread the word!** Look at the bigger picture! Let's cultivate Oneness rather than fear. Yes there is bullying but

there is also the bigger picture; let's create a new narrative from that perspective.

Creating peace is not something the government is going to do for us. Creating peace happens internally, and it happens internally when all are fed at the deepest level. It is difficult to create peace while holding all the power, because when peace reigns, there won't be any need for power. What incentive is there to create peace, while holding all the power? If everyone were on the road to being, EmPowered, the powers that be might not be truly invested in peace. But mothers and daughters can invest, here, now.

A future vision for our daughters: that they be filled with a sense of empowerment, *self*-empowerment, so that they don't get their sense of value from who likes them, or from whoever thinks they're cool. In this vision they will be fully invested in themselves, aware of their uniqueness and their unity with all of life.

One could reply, "But the bully dynamic has always been like this; it's enculturated." I would insist that we can change the dynamic of power play nevertheless. In fact, I would insist that kids, in attacking each other, are BEGGING us to change it. They crave the sense of fitting in to something bigger...is there some higher place they can *fit into*?

It is up to the mothers of the world to teach them, to show them the Way, to tap them into their highest Selves and allow them to practice creating their lives from there, from Here, Now, so that they can live in a state of conscious creation and peace.

What if there were girls' centers, open to all girls who have participated in a curriculum in non-bullying? What if girls taught girls, so that their "teachers" were both role models as well as instructors not much older than they are?

BOX: "The World will be Saved by the Western Woman"
--the Dalai Lama

What does this mean to you? Write your own manifesto here:

How can we teach our daughters to be conscious? By being conscious ourselves. It takes only a change in perspective, not any extra time, to begin to alter your consciousness. That shift in perspective is easier when you have some guidance. The Mother-Daughter circle I call MoonBeams is a place where mothers and daughters can share an extraordinary space, slow down life a little bit, and go back to being more conscious in everyday moments. We can savor the moments more, when we are fully conscious, rather than replying to our daughters in a reactive, habitual way. What if, during your frustrating moments with your daughter, an angel waved a little flag saying, "Remember, she's practicing being Powerful this month"? You would smile an inner smile and allow her the space to express her Power (which is very different from letting her run the house).

That "angel" waving the flag, by the way, is your own awareness. The MoonBeams approach helps us tune into that awareness.

Early sexualization, like bullying, is just another symptom of our cultural shadow. I recommend dance as a way for a girl to move her body sexually, without needing a partner. (There is

no benefit to repressing sexual energy. There is some benefit to not needing to prematurely share it with a partner.) Girls can learn to celebrate their own sexiness without having to do it with or FOR someone. They can learn to move their bodies, not for someone else but for one's own personal enjoyment. Try it yourself. Rather than looking in the mirror, just feel the movement, the rhythm; it's not about whether you look cool, it's about whether you are accessing your own deep rhythms. Your sexual energy will circulate and flow and even perhaps grow, but be contained. It is yours to channel into whatever activity you'd like.

Being in touch with one's sexuality is a positive thing; however, girls sharing it before they are emotionally mature and fully aware of what they are actually sharing *rarely* ends up feeling positive. For girls who are not dancers, run, ride a horse, write a poem, paint a picture, sing a song, create a masterpiece in any way that inspires you—**sexual energy is just creative energy, best channeled into a creative project rather than directed toward boys who aren't ready to exchange sexual energy yet either.** The safety of a MoonBeams mother-daughter circle is the perfect place to explore all of these new ways of being and feeling. Fully owning one's physicality and sexuality creates truly empowered girls. Let's show them how it's done.

End of Chapter 6

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