

Umbilical Cord

Relationship with her mother is a cornerstone of a woman's life, as at some point in life she becomes a mother herself. Even grown up women are often guided by their mothers' opinions, feel the need of their approval and support. When is the umbilical cord really cut? The physical one gets separated just after birth, but the psychological, spiritual connection can last forever.

The project "Umbilical Cord" is a study of relationships between mothers and daughters, its aim is to discover what common psychological issues they have, find similarities in the way people of different generations perceive behavioural motives. To what extent do mothers define their daughters' future? What kind of relationship should two nearest and dearest people have? In this project contributors are trying to answer all these questions. For them it was an art therapy of a kind: an opportunity to speak out, share their personal stories, let go of resentment and pain.

0001-0003 - Ekaterina, 48 years old. Housewife. Married, sons 27, 18 and 13 years old, daughter 15 years old

"However hard I tried I just couldn't earn my mum's love... Strange isn't it? Isn't mother's love something that is given to you unconditionally the moment you are born? But it wasn't in my case. And all these years, I've been trying to prove to her that I am a good girl, that I'm worth her love. And I failed to love and accept myself. I forbid myself to wish, to want something just for myself and I keep apologizing for doing what I want. Ridiculous isn't it? I am almost 50 now... Why should I feel guilty for, say, my love of knitting? But I do..."

0004-0005 - Yanina, 28 years old. Teacher of the Russian language and literature. Single, no children

“When I was a child my mum was always at work. I was growing up on the streets or sometimes my grandparents took care of me. Maybe it was for the best, because my mum had no influence on me. I don’t think that her life has been the best one. Maybe deep inside I blame my mother for failing to give me a happy childhood - the one I’ve always wanted. She failed to earn enough money, failed to find a man who could become a pillar of our family, didn’t give me education and opportunities for development I would like to have. Now I feel it so acutely. I have to get everything myself and it’s a struggle...”

0006-0008 - Katerina, 29 years old. Photographer. Divorced, no children

“I didn’t really live with my mum. As a child I lived with my granny and grandad, my father died young, so my mum had to work. I was scared as hell of my mum. She is actually really hip and fun to be around, but she is such a perfectionist that I felt like I was some kind of project for her... At 18 I left home and never came back. But at that moment I realized one thing: it's as stupid to defy my mum as it is to do everything “her way”. I started to rebuff things I couldn’t accept and agreed with her on things I was flexible about. I think she did the same. And with this “love/hate” we gradually built really cool relationship.

0009-0010 - Maria, 54 years old. Painter, graphic-artist, sculptor. Single, two sons 33 and 25 years old

“It’s been 11 years since mum passed away. And now I realize that my childhood was, in fact, a fantastic one. But at the time I was feeling miserable all the time. In many ways it was because my mum had always been such a bright personality. Likable, lively, witty. When my friends came to visit, they fell in love with my mum right away. Well, and who is Masha? Masha is Tatyana Nikolaevna’s daughter. ...None of them saw me as *me*, for them I was just a replica of my mother, a mere projection.”

0Photos and text: Raisa Mikhaylova.

Translation: Maria Lopukhina

Russia, Moscow, 2017-2018