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Revoking Revenge and Taking Responsibility

The most difficult decision in my journey out of covert abuse and abandonment is the one we all face—whether to surrender revenge. I cannot tell you how much I want my abuser (i.e. my mother) to pay for what she has done to me. I want to stick her in a senior home and never visit her again, especially during Christmas and Easter. (She is eighty years old.)

I have lived with her for the last one and a half years as a result of a perfect storm of a career change in the middle of a recession, health challenges necessitating a move to the country (i.e. the pollution of the big city) and a sense of Christian duty to parents. I also thought it might be a good opportunity to learn to stand up to my mother and not fear her.

So I am ecstatic to say that I no longer fear her and stand up to her easily. It has been rather easy to blame her for all my past and current problems. One gift of the entire one and a half years is that I have finally taken responsibility for working through the consequences of her terrible “parenting”. No mean feat. And I have learned to say “no” to her and set limits.

How to revoke revenge? It's a daily struggle to not take everyday struggles and turn them into opportunities to attack. I try to separate the past from the present and treat each episode as unique. I also treat my mother as an adult with flaws. The greatest assets are boundaries and clear communication. She is a “boundary buster” and needs firmness and repetition.

More difficult to handle in all this is her toxic negativity and fatalism. It is also the reason I am leaving this spring. Although I can somewhat handle on any given day her behaviors, I learned that past issues for me are best worked through from a distance to diffuse the inevitable stress and conflict.

My mother knows she did a bad job. My financial and career trouble are a reminder to her of her failure. I suppose it is my form of revenge too—to fail in life. I know I need to stop that as soon as possible. Seeking revenge in that way only harms my life, not hers, as tempting as it has been and still is to some degree.

I had hoped to be married by now and would have worked through all my issues (i.e. intimacy problems, choosing unavailable women, and difficulty setting limits) with a wife, but after a failed marriage that highlighted all these struggles, singleness has afforded me the best opportunity to confront my “stuff”.

Revoking revenge takes hard work as does taking responsibility for fixing the damage of covert incest. I will never be responsible for her sins, but I'm in charge of my life, including my choices and behaviors toward others, including my mother. She has never taken responsibility for her behaviors and instead puts the blame on the lack of money, men, the government, and others. I choose to take responsibility for myself and not follow in her footsteps.

Bassman Blues