

Male role models important to both sexes, research finds

DAD from E-1

sponse to the men's movement. "Women resonated to the idea of 'father hunger' as they became aware of the writing of Robert Bly and Sam Keen," says Joan Minninger, a California psychotherapist and author of *The Father-Daughter Dance*.

Both Bly, author of *Iron John*, and Keen, who wrote *Fire in the Belly*, have bemoaned the absence of a close father-son relationship in so many men's lives.

Meanwhile, as marriages have continued to disintegrate and the number of children born to unwed moms has skyrocketed, sociologists and child-development specialists have gotten into the act.

Their research has documented the importance of male role models not only to boys but to girls as well.

Especially dramatic has been the link found between eating disorders — such as bingeing and purging — and unhappy father-daughter relationships.

"Fathers play a particularly special role in their daughter's passage from childhood to adolescence," writes Connecticut psychologist Margo Maine in *Father Hunger*.

"Girls need to be 'courted' by their fathers, in a non-sexuctive way, to move from being girls to becoming young women. They want to feel attractive, womanly, and acceptable to the most important men in their lives (their fathers)," Maine writes.

"When this acceptance does not occur... they may act out their distress in different ways — by withdrawing from social contact, by being promiscuous, or by the self-loathing and rejection of self that is expressed through an eating disorder."

Of course, bulimia and anorexia are extreme examples of the dam-

age unhealthy father-daughter relationships can inflict. Often, the results are more subtle.

In *The Father-Daughter Dance*, Minninger and co-author Barbara Goulter examine six archetypal father-daughter relationships and use characters from legend, fiction, history and popular culture to illustrate them.

For example, "the pampering father and his spoiled daughter" are exemplified by "Black Jack" Bouvier and his daughter, Jackie.

"Black Jack had the reputation of being one of the great womanizers of his day," Minninger and Goulter write. "Jackie looked like him, had been named for him, and was treated like a favorite child."

After her parents' divorce, the authors write, "she would boast excitedly about her father's many sexual adventures and scoff at her mother's distress over his infidelity."

It was no surprise, then, that Jackie was instantly attracted to John F. Kennedy — womanizer extraordinaire.

"She was aware of his reputation for philandering but that may have been part of the appeal," Maine and Goulter write. "Generalizing from her father's behavior, Jackie openly stated to friends that all men are unfaithful."

The father-daughter relationship is so powerful that, even when women consciously seek men who are different from dear old Dad, their unconscious will lead them to men who turn out to be similar, says Turner, the Winter Park therapist.

But let's not get carried away with dumping all the dirt at Dad's feet, some therapists say.

In the past, psychology "has had a very sad history of blaming virtually every behavior on the mom," says Winter Park psychologist Dan Tressler. "We have to avoid making the same mistake in

the other direction."

Just because some women pick one creep after another doesn't mean they had creepy relationships with their fathers.

"We have a tendency to select [partners] on the basis of a composite of influences from Mom and Dad," says Tressler.

And parents aren't the only factors in our selection of partners, he says. "Not being very smart" is another.

"There are people of all differing levels of intelligence, different kinds of intelligence, including social intelligence," Tressler explains. "Social intelligence is the ability to understand what motivates people. People without it are easily victimized by smooth talkers."

There's no doubt, however, that "the relationship between father and daughter," particularly when it's dysfunctional, has tremendous potential to produce dysfunctional behavior in adulthood — particularly in regard to relations with members of the opposite sex."

An Orlando woman we'll call Pam is convinced that her unhappy relationship with her stepfather has affected her romantic choices, although she's not sure exactly how.

Her relationship with her mother has always been a close, loving one, says Pam, a 45-year-old administrative assistant who re-

quested anonymity. But her stepfather, who initially showed every sign of being a loving presence in her life, turned out to be a critical, Sometimes violent man.

As an adult, Pam deliberately sought men who were unlike her stepfather.

"I thought I chose the opposite," she says. "Both of my husbands were very kind, gentle, caring people."

Yet both marriages ended in divorce.

And while divorce can happen for a variety of reasons, the probability of a link between her stepfather and her husbands haunts Pam.

"I know that if I had had a normal relationship with a father, perhaps I would have made different choices," she says.

Candy, the Orlando executive who understands exactly how her father influenced her relationships with men, is optimistic about her current relationship.

Through introspection, reading and therapy she has become conscious of the factors driving her behavior with men and feels more in control of her choices.

But the father hunger lingers. Although she speaks only occasionally to her father by phone and accepts that he will never change, she says:

"I still find myself wishing I had gotten the loving and nurturing."

Unhealthy father-daughter patterns

■ **Lost Father and Yearning Daughter.** The father abandons the daughter, either by outright desertion or by rejection, remoteness or neglect. The daughter becomes obsessed with trying to understand his reasons, or with blaming her own shortcomings, or with struggling to earn his acceptance, or with desperately seeking a father substitute. Example: Marilyn Monroe.

■ **Abusive Father and Victim Daughter.** The father persecutes his daughter through physical, emotional or sexual abuse. The daughter identifies herself as a victim and grows up seeking other relationships in which she can play victim and/or rescuer and/or persecutor. Example: Rita Hayworth.

■ **Pampering Father and Spoiled Daughter.** The father makes a pet of his daughter, giving her everything she asks for, and more, without requiring her to earn it. The daughter learns to control others through charm or temper, yet lacks inner control and a sense of personal competence. Example: Jacque-

line Bouvier Kennedy Onassis.

■ **Pygmalion Father and Companion Daughter.** The father mentors his daughter, molding her into an exceptionally able woman and his ideal companion. The daughter grows up feeling special and privileged, yet believing that she owes it all to her father and would be nothing without him. Example: Anna Freud.

■ **Ruined Father and Rescuing Daughter.** A previously distant father turns to his daughter in trouble, expecting her to take care of him. The daughter sacrifices her own well-being in order to win his approval and prove her value to him. Example: Cordelia in Shakespeare's *King Lear*.

■ **Anguished Father and Angry Daughter.** The daughter cultivates a lasting enmity against her father, deliberately punishing him however she can and rejecting him when he is in need. Example: poet Sylvia Plath.

Source: *The Father-Daughter Dance*