

Style

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Dads mold daughters' views of men

□ Experts say unhealthy feelings about a father can taint a daughter's personal relationships with men.

By Loraine O'Connell

OF THE SENTINEL STAFF

Candy is one of those women beloved by self-help book authors — wildly successful in her professional life, far less so in her personal life.

A highly paid business executive, Candy (not her real name) has never mar-

ried.

But, at age 40, she has had plenty of time to analyze her life. She has concluded that her relationship with her aloof, demanding father played a big role in the course her personal life has taken.

His behavior "has contributed to my inability to have a lasting relationship with a man," says the Orlando woman, who requested anonymity.

Her father was a man who "had this idea of what his children should be. If we didn't fit in his molds, we weren't valuable," she says.

As a result of her inability to please Dad, "I've spent a lot of my time with men trying to get their approval because

I didn't get it from my father."

Her need for men's approval manifested itself as clinginess, especially in her younger years, she says.

"I only felt validated when they wanted to spend time with me and give up the rest of their life to be with me" — behavior that just drove men away, she now recognizes.

Candy gets bravos for her self-awareness from counselors and authors who in the last few years have turned the therapeutic spotlight on the father-daughter relationship.

"Daughters learn from fathers what men are," says Karen Turner, a Winter Park mental health counselor. "Depend-

ing on your father, men are competent kind, angry" — or even abusive.

Indeed, women base their adult expectations of men on what they got from Dad, most therapists agree. That's why women who were abused by their fathers often marry men who abuse them.

For good or ill, women also draw their self-image largely from Dad's reaction to them.

"We learn from our fathers how men see women. We see ourselves through our fathers' eyes," she says.

Interest in the father-daughter relationship has developed partly in re-

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