

LETTERS

thank Yitta Halberstam Mandelbaum for her recent "My Take" piece about the wife of a man with mental illness (Issue 423) and for last week's "Truth or Consequences" article (Issue 426) about a wife who is bipolar. Yitta's article was extremely validating and gave a much-needed voice to the many heroic individuals struggling with mental illness. Similarly, the "Truth or Consequences" article pointed out how we never know what's going on behind closed doors. Thank you for helping the Jewish community come one step closer to cradicating the stigma of mental illness.

Please keep those articles coming!

Thank you,
Sarab

A Mother's Love Child, are you reading this?

To My Beloved Child:

To be perfectly honest, I didn't quite know how to address you in this letter. Should I call you my estranged child, my distant child, or my lost child? While it is true that I haven't seen you or communicated with you for a long time, you will always be a part of my heart and soul, so those adjectives just cannot be true.

"Beloved" best describes you, so let's go with that. I think about you every day, you are always on my mind, and in my *tefillos*. Missing you is a wrenching, physical pain that never goes away. I wonder constantly: Are you happy? Do you have everything you need? Are you healthy? Do you have good role models in your life? Does anyone prepare your favorite foods, plan your favorite activities, appreciate your amazing personality and gifts?

I wish every day that things were different. I feel terrible that my divorce served, in a way, as the catalyst for your estrangement from me. I did everything I could to keep you safe, to shelter you from the harsh realities of the difficulties between your father and me. Perhaps I did you a disservice in putting up a positive front to protect you from the truth. Still, if I could go back, I cannot see myself telling you about what I was going through. You love your father, and that is as it should be.

Hashem intended for children to have two parents, and I could never take that away from you. I will tell you, though, that I sometimes wish I was a little less principled, because apparently I was alone in taking the high road, and my heart is broken. If I had known that day, close to a decade ago, that I was seeing you for the last time, I would have held you in my arms and never let go. I wonder, sometimes, how

much you've changed. If I saw you on the street, would I recognize you? I haven't seen any photos, but my heart tells me I would know you instantly.

I want you to know that I am not angry with you. I know how very difficult it was for me, an adult, to face the truth about my marriage and summon the strength to get out. You were a vulnerable child when I saw you last, and you spent many of your formative years hearing what I can only imagine were terrible things about me. I forgive you completely, and I *daven* every day that you never experience the pain I live with.

I just want you to be healthy, happy and successful, and if you choose to do that without me in your life, know that whatever you may think, my heart and *tefillos* are always with you, and always will be. Nothing you say or do can ever make me love you less. I trust the *Ribono Shel Olam* to see to every one of your needs, and I will continue to *daven* that someday, you will return to me.

Love, hugs and kisses,
Your Mother

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