

Vicki Werner: My Mother

Born and raised in Utah, Vicki Werner has always had to be a mother. When she was born, she and her twin were polar opposites; one might describe them as night and day. Vicki, the day personality, was the responsible, kind, safe, and helpful twin; however, her sister, my aunt Syndi, was the night personality. A crazy, thrill-seeker, who only took up the necessary responsibilities and rarely much more. These drastic differences gave more responsibility to Vicki because their mother was sick and weak for many years when they were growing up. Though they have older siblings, my mother took the emotional responsibility of helping raise her own younger siblings much of the time; this made her feel as though she was a mother from the time she was born.

In her teenage years, Vicki became a literal mother. As the school bells chimed for the beginning of the new high school year, my mom was not there. After turning seventeen a few months earlier, she was home, washing and folding newborn clothes in anticipation for a new baby who would be arriving within a few weeks. My sister arrived on the morning of the fall equinox. As the seasons shifted, my mother's life was shifting too. She was no longer a young girl with dreams of entering adulthood, instead, she was to become an adult overnight. The pains of missing out on senior sluff, graduation photos, and grad night celebrations did not compare to the pains of eight hours of labor, yet the joys of new life in her arms gave her a sense of purpose and she embraced motherhood magnificently.

When I think about the common seventeen-year-old, he or she does not have their life together, but she pulled through exceedingly well because I now have a wonderful older sister who is thirty-two years old. My mother married my older siblings' father and they stayed together for fifteen years; also adding two more children to their family. The parents eventually

became a preschool director and a computer-aided draftsman. Later, the couple went through a divorce, but little did she know it would lead to her meeting the love of her life.

Vicki Werner loved being a mom, however, her heart longed for an identity of her own and was excited when an opportunity opened up at a nearby medical office, working as an assistant to the doctor who owned the clinic. This doctor was my father, and the two of them quickly fell in love. Love is undoubtedly hard to come by, but twice? That sounds quite impossible, yet it happened nevertheless. She married a man who had also been divorced, having his own family of five children. Though these sons and daughters are not biological, she loves and cares for them as if they were. Adding up, this makes her a mother to her younger siblings, the first set of children, and the children in the family she married into. One might say it was too many, but they ended up having my sister and me to add to the bunch.

Fast-forward through the many years of taking care of her children, her home has always been clean. The kitchen counters were wiped down, the throw pillows nicely placed, every mirror free from marks, and the hallway's floor was shiny enough to reflect an image. The only impurities of the home were the teenagers' rooms strewn with clothes across the floors and makeup on the dressers.

"I need you to clear your floors and declutter your room," my mom said every single day when she saw the mess.

"Yes, mom!" is what I would say, but I knew I had many other agonizing tasks that needed to be done that day before their soon deadline. The overwhelm I felt caused me to sit down on my fluffy carpet floor in my bedroom and look around stressfully at all the items surrounding me waiting to be tidied away. As I sat there, I could hear the buzzing of the vacuum running upstairs and the smell of dinner wafting down the hallway to reach me. I decided to start

being productive once I drank some ice cold water because my mouth tasted dry from dehydration. The expectation of a clean room would cause a strain on our relationship because of the little differences in priorities such as tidiness versus turning homework in on time or spending valuable time with friends. This back and forth of trying to make her teenage daughter keep her room like the rest of the house is one of the few times there is a struggle between the two of us.

One of the differences between my mom and many other moms is she died. When I was seven years old, I often arrived home to my mom being sick in bed. I knew her stomach was causing her pain, but I barely knew much else. Luckily, I was not aware as to how sick she truly was. Late one night, I was woken up to some lights turned on outside my room. My eyes were heavy and sensitive to the light as I peeked out of my bedroom door. I heard some noises in the kitchen and my mom did not look good; she was bent over holding her stomach.

“Where are you going?” I asked.

My dad was helping her out the door as they were about to head to the hospital in a rush, but they made an effort to calm me.

“Mommy does not feel well, so we are going to get help from a smart doctor,” my dad reassured me.

“Okay,” I responded, but I still did not understand what was happening at the time and all I was given was a rushed explanation and extended family bringing me back to bed. Later that night they returned home with more questions than answers as to what was wrong with her body. The next evening, unbeknownst to our family, my mom passed away for eight minutes but returned to her body before we were aware of the occurrence. She had a long road ahead of her

with being sick for many years to come but was determined to continue being the mom she had committed to being and she eventually grew to be much more.

From a common perspective, she had a happy yet challenging life as she went through the trials of teenage pregnancy, divorce, illness, and raising a family, but all of these experiences made her the mom I know and love. I have learned many attributes about the person she is daily and I know her to be an amazing, kind, helpful, intelligent, and loving mother. She and I have made each other better people and I love her for that. I cannot say I will be the mom she has been for me, but I will say she has been the best mom I could ever ask for.