

# Raising Stronger Daughters , Part 2

transform your spark, ignite your inner fire

By Mill Creek Resident, Elizabeth Lambert



Mother and Daughter, Michelle Renschler and her sweet daughter, Ella.



Does your daughter have an intrinsic worth that makes it possible for her to get up after life knocks the wind out of her? The world is tough, and we can raise daughters who are, too! Girls face many challenges and with the right tools, they can be confident and effective! In the April issue, I discussed role-playing as a valuable tool that helped my daughter gain her footing in elementary school. With a little fine-tuning it also got her through her small middle school. However, it became clear that there was more work to do for her to survive to integrate into a high school of 2000+ students. The social game in high school is complicated! **Stay Alert!** Your daughter may face situations that are over her head. This can be intimidating. Furthermore, some students don't play by the rules you teach at home. Can you identify when your girl is suffering silently or when she's under peer stress? Having this skill was a valuable tool for me.

My daughter started high school full of bright expectations. Finally, able to ditch her school uniform, she looked forward to expressing herself. She was determined to try new things and expand her friendships. Things were going well until a few months into the school year. I arrived to pick her up. She stood in her usual spot, not seeing me in the line of cars, but I had a good view of her. Down-cast, eyes staring at the ground. As the cars moved forward, she looked up. Her disposition changed - **Cue** - bright smile. I asked about her day. According to her, "It was good!" I pressed, asking more questions. She held to her story and then became unusually quiet for the remainder of the ride home. The next steps, in my opinion, were

critical. Too much pressure and she'd potentially retreat. She trusted my advice but was hiding something. For a couple of weeks, I'd arrive at the same scene. Each week she appeared to spiral downward. The independence she had been looking forward to seemed to have lost its appeal. When home, she stayed close to me. The break I needed came one evening as I worked on my laptop. She sat nearby, silently staring at her cell phone. Suddenly her loud, "What the Hell?!" and tears broke the silence. The unusual language told me we were in uncharted territory. She handed her phone to me, and I read a sexting thread, on which the names were hers and a boy. In tears, she repeatedly told me she didn't write it. That was obvious. It was well outside of her character, and besides that what child would create something like that and show their mother! I searched for evidence of the account owner, which I found at the end of the thread; time-stamp, date and account owner's name. Kids are not always as skilled at covert action as they believe. When I asked about the account owner by name, my daughter was surprised. Parents, maturity, and wisdom are on our side! That evening the story unfolded. A boy at school liked her, but another girl liked him. This girl impersonated my daughter to deter the boy's interest. In addition to the sexting thread, the girl and her friends had stalked my daughter in the hallways and created rumors. I wanted to address the legality of what had happened, but she worried that would make things worse. However, during the days I thought she was spiraling, she was actually thinking about solutions. With everything out in the open she still wanted to handle it. The waters can get murky between protecting and supporting. I conceded to allow her to handle it, but put conditions and limits in place: 1. Her emotional and physical safety was priority one; stalking and harassment at school could not continue. 2. I set a time limit and prepared to play my authority card if necessary. 3. Transparency; no secrets, she had to be open with me.

She resolved the issue by showing the girl her name at the end of the thread and offering to keep it between them as long as she stopped the harassment, it worked. I congratulated her. The former years of coaching had given her courage and confidence. It further helped her later manage other girl drama, sexual harassment (with my help) and politics in sports.

As we consider how to raise stronger daughters, we must look at the big picture. By equipping and empowering them to solve problems, we in effect say, "You are strong and I believe in you!" If we are quick to intervene, we may inadvertently deprive our daughters of important life-skills. The latter will not serve them well. Therefore, let us make the investment that results in the



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type of women who contribute to stronger families, stronger organizations and stronger communities.

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