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# UNLEARNING THE FIRST LOVE:

## How a Daughter Put Down Her Father's Choices and Chose Her Own Healing

The first man I ever loved taught me a lesson I had to spend years unlearning.

As a young girl, I watched my father cheat, and without realizing it, I began to believe that love had to be earned. I told myself that if I could just be good enough, do enough, be enough—I could keep someone from leaving.

So I tried.

I tried to be everything I thought someone needed. Loving. Understanding. Patient. I believed if I did everything right, I could prevent betrayal. That love was something you worked for—something you proved yourself worthy of.

But what I didn't realize was how deeply that belief would follow me.

It showed up in my relationships.

It showed up in my work.

It showed up in how I saw myself.

I questioned my worth. I overworked. I overgave. I carried the pressure of trying to be everything for everyone, believing that if I could just get it right, I would finally feel secure.

But the truth is—that kind of thinking will drain you.

One of the hardest challenges I've had to face was unlearning that belief.

I had to sit with the truth that my father's choices were not a reflection of a woman's worth—they were a reflection of his decisions. That realization was painful, but it was also freeing. It meant I no longer had to carry something that was never mine to hold.

I had to go back and meet the little girl in me who believed she had to earn love.

And I'm still healing her.

That healing is ongoing. It shows up in how I speak to myself, how I show up in relationships, and how I allow myself to be seen without performing. I've learned that every man does not cheat, and more importantly,

I've learned that my worth is not defined by someone else's behavior.

Today, I stand differently.

I am a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist.

I am a retired Deputy Probation Officer with 22 years of experience.

I am the founder of Knot Our Kidz.

But before all of that, I am a woman who chose to heal.

And that healing changed everything.

My defining moment was an internal, conscious choice—the exact moment I chose to let go of the burden of performance and heal.

It gave me my voice.

It gave me my confidence.

It gave me permission to stop shrinking.

I no longer feel the need to prove myself—I know who I am.

And to the fathers reading this, I want you to hear me clearly: You are your daughter's first example of a man.

The way you love, the way you show up, the way you treat the women in your life—it shapes how she will see herself, what she will accept, and what she believes she deserves.

Because I watched my father—and it shaped me.

And while it challenged me, it also pushed me into purpose.

Now, I show up differently. I use my voice. I stand in my truth. I remind others that they are already enough.

In short, I became a Black woman before I earned the titles of therapist, deputy probation officer, or founder—but before all of that, when I became a woman who chose to heal.

Now, I don't chase love—I stand in it.

I don't prove my worth—I know it.

*I am Monee Brown TS#24 of 52 of The SoulTown Magazine. I want to thank you all for having SOUL! 🌟*