

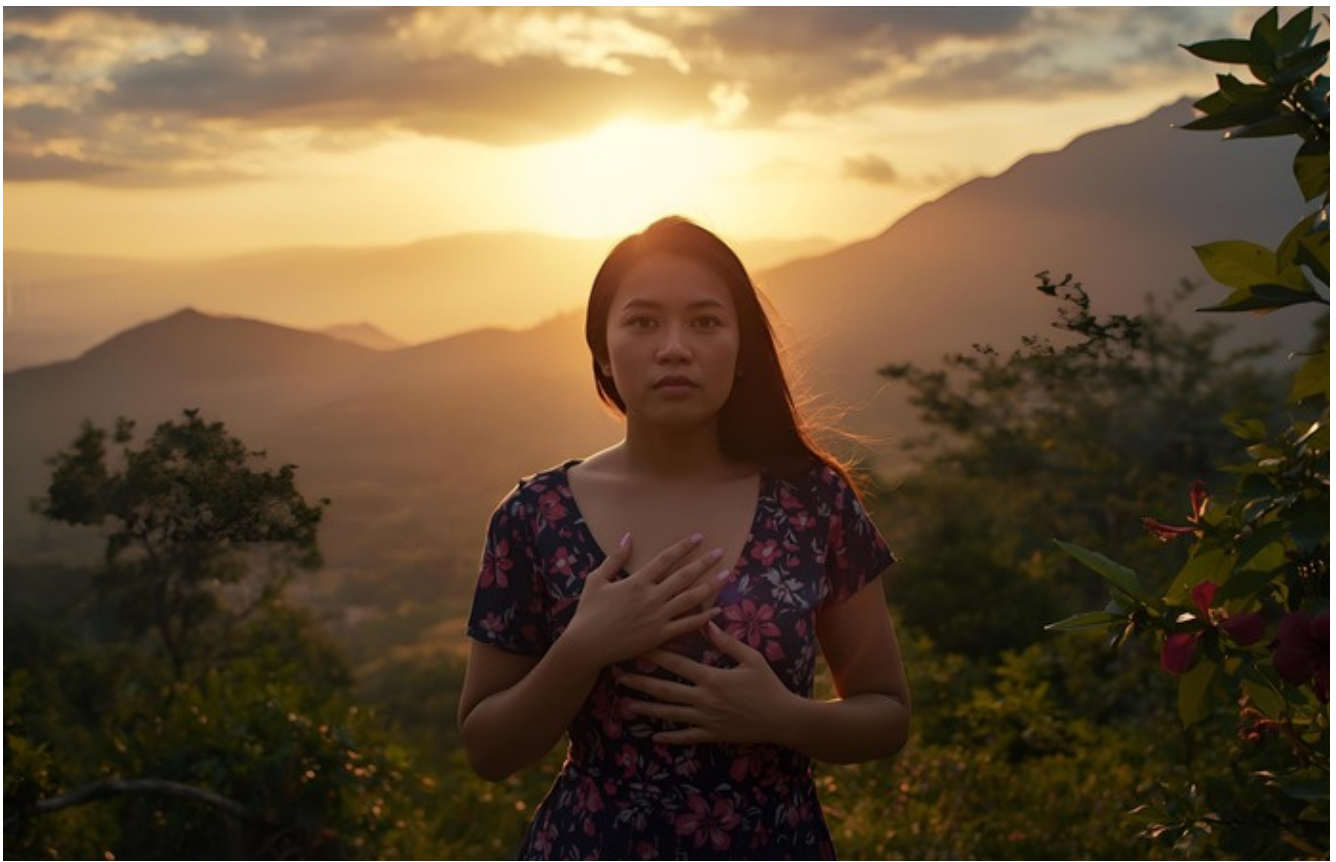
E-BOOK

Filipina Mother Wound



*A starter guide to understanding your
mother wound and reclaiming your truth*

BY @FILIPINA_MOTHER_WOUND



Introduction

This is a starter guide for survivors of the Filipina Mother Wound to educate and empower themselves. This guide will cover unique dynamics, challenges, elements and emotions around maternal abuse. Not all these experiences apply to everyone. Each survivor has a unique, evolving experience and severity of abuse with their own mother. **Use this guide with discernment.**

Disclaimer: This guide is for informational and educational purposes only and does not replace therapy, counselling, or professional advice. We are not liable for any outcomes, including emotional distress, related to the use of this guide or participation of any advice. **If you're struggling, please reach out to a qualified mental health professional.**

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Our Filipina mothers were our first love and also our first heartbreak and bully

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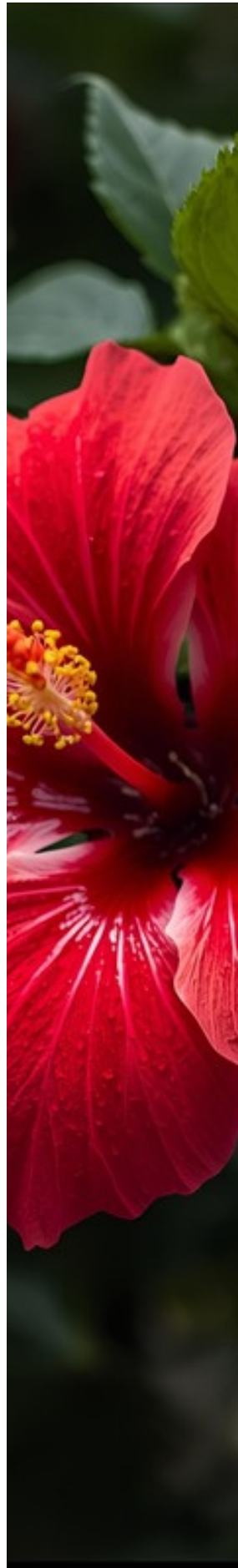
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Healing is not a one-size fits all. What may work for you, may not work for someone else. We offer a second workbook for healing



01 What is the Filipina Mother Wound?

The Filipina Mother Wound is an ache born from a mother's absence, neglect or abuse - a thread of sorrow woven through generations shaping how we trust, embody ourselves and belong. Our wound of unmet needs is a call to return, to heal, to remember the wholeness we were born from. It is a longing for the Divine Feminine, lost through our distinct trauma of colonialism and migration as well as cultural and societal roles.

Healing our emotional, mental and physical scars means being the loving, safe mother our inner child always needed and deserved.



What is the role of a mother?



If your mother did not fulfill any of the below, and no other parent did, then you may have developed a Mother Wound

Nurturance

A mother feeds us with the milk from her breasts, clothes us, nourishes our minds and bodies with healthy food and experiences

Protection

A mother shields us from harm and danger. She protects us from harmful people. She creates a warm, loving, safe haven for us.

Compassion

A mother instinctively senses when we're hurting or sad and provides emotional care and loving words so we feel supported

Gentle Guidance

A mother is our moral compass, she gently corrects when we make mistakes, and she imparts wisdom on how to navigate the world

Unfortunately, toxic Filipino families mistake abuse for love. Love does not tolerate harm. “Your mother just wants the best for you” or “What did you do to make your mother angry or treat you like that?” These words invalidate our experience and enable her abuse

- FILIPINA_MOTHER_WOUND



02

How this affects us

“Maternal abuse and narcissism is very painful. It causes real harm to our mental and emotional well-being and our nervous system. For daughters, we look up to our mothers as our first role models and when she hurts us, our world feels less safe”

Pamilya tayo. The abuse is dismissed.

“Ganyan ang mom mo, pasenya mo na lang sya.” We were conditioned to tolerate abuse because “they’re blood.” The wounds are invisible, but the pain exists in our bodies. Relatives invalidate our pain and reinforce our silence. Maternal abuse is not talked about at all.

- FILIPINA_MOTHER_WOUND



Filipina Mother Wound Dynamics

- ✓ If you spoke up about your mother's abuse, you most likely experienced gaslighting from your family. You became silent for fear of retaliation. Their punishment or threat was outcasting you or exclusion from family events or family support
- ✓ Sibling relationships become strained. Your mother probably assigned roles to each sibling like the golden child or the scapegoat. Your sibling relationship will suffer and become tenuous. There was no healthy mediator, instead a mother that incited conflict or even competition between siblings.
- ✓ Our bodies will be on chronic fight or flight mode. Your health might suffer. You experienced more headaches more unknown pain. You are more likely to get a cold or have sleep issues. You may also develop chronic depression and anxiety which are signs of PTSD. See your doctor if you experience these symptoms.

Filipina Mother Wound Dynamics

- ✓ You're trapped in a cycle of trying to negotiate with your mother to treat you better or uphold your boundaries. However, this is always met by guilt trips, temporary ceasefires, empty promises, and further frustration
- ✓ You go through cycles of grief like the Kubler-Ross model - denial, bargaining, anger, depression and finally acceptance that your mother will never change
- ✓ You might suggest therapy to your mom. But Filipino culture does not believe in therapy, either due to cost or the Filipino stigma of being perceived as being morally defective, fear of having a mental illness or personality disorder like narcissism
- ✓ You became an expert at dissociating either through food, alcohol, drugs, sex, overworking, bingeing tv shows, overeating, excessive spending/travelling, as a firefighting mechanism to numb and escape the pain and hurt

Parentification

Parentification is when we were given adult responsibilities as a child. Taking care of the parent or siblings, earning money to provide for the family as a child or teen, or being the therapist, confidant or pseudo-spouse for our mother. This is abuse as children are not capable of handling adult responsibilities and often puts the child in very risky situations. Children do not have the mental and emotional skills or expertise to be their mother's punching bag. In Filipino families, children that are parentified are conditioned to be people pleasers.



The Scapegoat

Families need someone to blame and unfortunately the victim is turned to the scapegoat. Instead of listening to us, we were shamed and misunderstood. The isolation of being a scapegoat is painful. Don't doubt your truth, trust in yourself. **You are a truth-teller, most awake, most attuned, most brave, most clear.**



Generally, Parents must earn the child's respect. But Filipino moms feel entitled to respect. Some employ gaslighting, manipulation and scapegoating tactics.

Narcissism and DARVO

Narcissism is a personality disorder and is on a spectrum. Not everyone who displays narcissistic traits is abusive. There is a healthy amount of narcissism in all of us in order to survive. But some mothers can be extremely narcissistic and manipulative. They make us question our truth. They use DARVO: *Distract, Attack and Reverse Victim and Offender* to avoid accountability of their abusive actions. They guilt trip “I gave birth to you” to make us tolerate more abuse.



Anxious or Avoidant Attachment

Because of our Mother Wound, we will often unconsciously choose partners who resemble our mother because this toxic love is familiar in our nervous systems. We become anxious or avoidant in relationships and unconsciously replay scenarios to try to change the ending.



Trauma Archetypes

Because of our Mother Wound, we lose our authentic selves and embody a trauma archetype: the perfectionist, the lone wolf, the fixer, the people pleaser, the peacekeeper, the inner critic, the escapist, the chameleon or the stone wall.



Toxic family systems expect us to abandon ourselves, and tolerate our mother's abuse for the sake of keeping up appearances. This is harmful and hurtful.

Negative or Limiting Beliefs

These may be some negative beliefs we developed as a child carrying the Filipina Mother Wound and need to be released

People pleasing

We believe we are **unloveable** or unworthy of true love. That we need to perform for love, or need to prove our “goodness” to others

Self-worth

We believe that we are not good persons, and that somehow **we don't deserve a good life**

Self-esteem & confidence

We believe our **inherent worth** is in our success, accomplishments, material objects, social media followers or external validation

Self-blame and shame

We believe we must have deserved our mother's ill-treatment. That somehow, **this is our fault and we are to blame**

Not acknowledging our needs

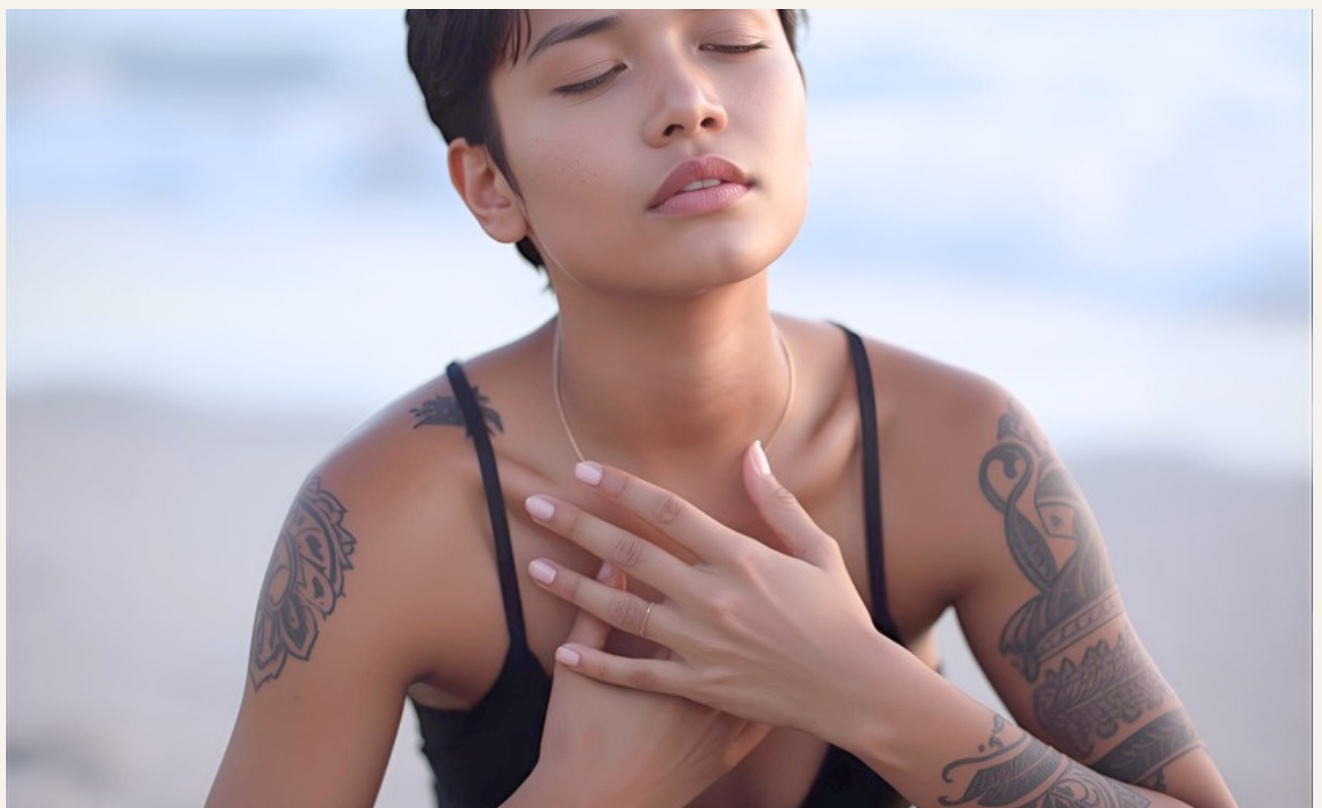
We believe that **our needs do not matter**. That our mother's needs come first, that we needed to shrink or stay silent to stay safe

Chronic Loneliness

We believe we are alone in life, **no one is coming to rescue us**, and we become hyper-independent and untrustworthy of others

03 Honoring our feelings

Often, anger is not accepted and shunned as a bad thing. We face backlash and ongoing pressure to keep the peace. This is our mother, we are physically and emotionally dependent on her for our survival as children. Survivors are forced to choose emotional safety or family belonging. **We shift into fight, flight, fawn or freeze trauma response as a result.**



*Honor your feelings: confusion, anger,
sadness, shame, regret.*

*It takes a lot of courage and clarity to
face our experience with abuse. It is
normalized to dissociate from the
truth of the reality. Mothers are
supposed to love us unconditionally.
They're supposed to protect us.*

- FILIPINA_MOTHER_WOUND





Anger:

Filipino families may impose shame or turn a blind eye to keep the “peace.” Society conditions us to believe “anger is bad”, however anger signals to our body something is wrong or unjust. As a survivor, we have a right to be angry. If we suppress our anger, we end up unwittingly re-projecting our anger onto others. Repressed anger turns to resentment which turns to passive aggressiveness. Repressed anger makes us sick. We need a **healthy** way to release anger. We might become angry at ourselves for not leaving her sooner.

Shame:

Toxic Filipino families will impose shame on the victim. Mothers reprojected their shame from their own insecurities, lack, anger, jealousy and unhealed wounds on to us. It is hard to escape this re-projection because we are physically and emotionally tied to her. We are connected to our mothers since birth. **The antidote to shame is energetic boundaries. “The shame I carry isn’t mine. It was planted in me by family who needed someone to blame.”**

“
*Place a hand over your heart and take
3 deep inhales and exhales. Honoring
our feelings especially our justified
anger and sadness is an important
part of healing. Tell yourself “I’m
here, anak”*

- FILIPINA MOTHER WOUND



04

Cultural and societal forces that shape the Mother Wound

“Family is a big deal for Filipinos and emotional abuse is not acknowledged. I’m tired of my Filipino mom getting a pass. The worst part is Titas, Titos enable her abusive and manipulative behaviour.”

-Filipina Mother Wound Survivor

Our Filipino culture is very tight-knit and close. This is great if your family system is healthy, stable and respectful. But if there is toxicity, it leads to codependency. We are expected to respect our elders by default and we become subject to many guilt trips from “your parents gave you life” to manipulating Catholic religious beliefs with the concept of “forgiveness” or “forgive and let go, it’s in the past”, which can only be earned by the abuser when they are repentant and have changed their behaviour.



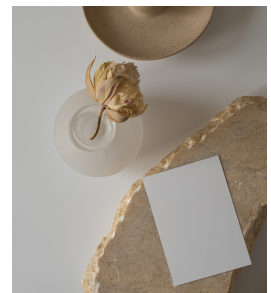
Religious Conditioning

Spiritual bypassing is common in our Filipino Catholic families. “Just pray about it or pray for her” is a common response to her abuse. **Filipina moms are exalted to saint-like status.** Catholic religion emphasizes “Honor thy Father, and thy Mother” but this is based on a covenant that the parents are holy and accountable. This perpetuates the cycle of abuse.



Colonialism

We have been colonized by the Spaniards, the Americans and invaded by the Japanese. Our experience of authoritarianism regime expected us to follow rules even if paternal figures were abusive. **We lost our divine matriarchal identity of the Babaylans.**



Patriarchal, cultural & societal role & expectations

It was inherently expected that a woman in the Philippines would get married and have children. **This was the role and primary identity of a woman** - even if the woman did not show signs of being a healthy maternal figure. Even if women didn't want to be mothers, some did it for socio-economic reasons. Women also were not able to educate themselves on their traumas and understand how certain unhealthy dynamics from their parents were passed down onto them.



Psalm 27:10:

*"When my father and my mother forsake me,
then the Lord will take care of me."*

Generational Trauma and Legacy Wounds

It was our grandparents job to raise our mothers well. **Not ours.** But if they didn't and mistreated our mothers, she developed trauma as a result of that. If she was parentified, she would raise her children to be parentified too. If our grandmother projected her unhealed anger and insecurities at our mother, she would then do the same thing to us. Our mothers weren't taught mental or emotional well-being. She might have developed a mental illness or personality disorder due to her trauma. Then she passed it on to her children and so on. Breaking the cycle is so important.



Migration and Survival

Filipinos needed to stick together to survive. As immigrants, we are forced into survival mode and moms become emotionally unavailable, distracted or overwhelmed with stress. Moms didn't get a chance to slow down. They might have lashed out onto the children, making us her scapegoat for her stress. As immigrants, we couldn't depend on outsiders or others, so **codependency** became a survival mechanism to stay in the family even if a mother was abusive



Understanding the underlying reasons and causes allows us to have a broader perspective of The Filipina Mother Wound. It doesn't excuse it but it gives us context.

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Family loyalty does not mandate silence. God does not tolerate abuse.

We have the right to demand accountability. We have the right to seek safety. We have the right to reclaim our faith that honors our dignity.

- FILIPINA MOTHER WOUND

Healing and Next Steps

The next guide will introduce healing options which will look different for everyone. Setting **boundaries**, or considering going low-contact, with your mother is very uncommon in Filipino families but sometimes necessary. Daily **rituals in nervous system regulation** to build safety in the body and release fight/flight/freeze/fawn trauma responses. Creating **found family**. **Self-validation vs. external validation**. We hope you continue your journey with us.

It is all within us to heal.



If you enjoyed this ebook, purchase the follow-up “How to Heal the Filipina Mother Wound” on practices, steps and strategies. This is a valuable guide to start your healing journey, free yourself from a toxic relationship and reclaim your truth

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