

There is a disease known as Rh factor incompatibility, a mismatch of bloodtypes between the fetus and its mother. If a woman does not have Rhesus factor in her blood, she is considered Rh negative. Sometimes, when this type of woman becomes pregnant with an Rh positive baby, her body recognizes that there is a foreign substance flowing back and forth through the umbilical cord and creates antibodies to defend and protect against it. This can result in spontaneous abortion, stillbirth, seizures, jaundice, heart defects and other problems. The treatment is a vaccine for the expecting mother who is Rh negative and has previously delivered an Rh positive baby or is known to be carrying one.

One of my early memories of my mother occurred shortly after her separation from my Dad. I was five years old and heard her crying. The door to the Master bedroom was ajar; I peeked in and saw her sitting cross legged on the edge of the bed, her back curved and head bent over a pile of financial paperwork, a checkbook and bills.

What I did was looked upon as an act of empathy; what I felt was a leaden burden in my stomach, a sour taste in my mouth and a frown that bent my eyebrows without my being aware; what I now recognize as bitterness. In my five-year old style, already knowing that my gift would be rejected, but feeling it necessary to offer I padded into my mother's room in my purple footsie pajamas and thrust my piggy bank toward her "Here, so you stop crying." She wiped her tears and looked at me with her wet eyes and said with her coffee breath "That's your money; you keep it." And then she wanted to hug me, so proud of her 'big girl' for being sensitive to her needs and offering assistance.

I can also recall a time when my Mother dressed both herself and me as Minnie Mouse and we walked the streets of Tucson in our matching polka dot skirts, mouse ears and makeup, stopping at the Mall to meet the real Minnie Mouse, Mickey, Pluto and the gang. The memories are fuzzier but I feel quite certain there was a time when I depended on her lifeblood, when her hand in mine meant safety and her arms around me meant reassurance, when the word "Mom" represented all I needed to know to put my world to rights.

When did our Rh incompatibility begin? And where is the vaccine that will fix this problem, that will mend my heart back to hers? Because ever since my Dad went out of my life and she brought Tim into it, allowing the umbilical cord of life-sustaining substance- love, closeness, trust, security- to flow between us has only resulted in my ingesting the poison she let into our lives. So I pinched the cord and now she cries "I love you, I miss you, I want to be a part of your life." But how do I ever, ever go back?

What if I don't want to?