

“What shall I do?”

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The relationship between a parent and child is one that takes on many obstacles. Many of these relationships withstand the burdens put upon them; however, some relationships shatter when the burden is too great. In *Hamlet*, the death of Hamlet's father causes tension in the relationship between Hamlet and his mother, Gertrude. Hamlet begs and pleads for his mother to see the error in marrying her brother-in-law, and Gertrude, in turn, begs Hamlet to see the error of his ways. A couple years ago, the relationship I have with my parents followed a similar path.

There was a time not too long ago when I felt a great deal of grief with no real reason. My parents were concerned for me, but I kept thinking that they never understood what I felt. I wanted make them understand how they were making a mistake by not understanding exactly what I was conveying to them. In *Hamlet*, Hamlet pleads with Gertrude to see how awful the act of betraying his father was. Hamlet says to Gertrude, “Sit you down/And let me wring your heart” (III.iv.35-37) before he begins to list his grievances. One day, I had done the same to my parents. I figuratively sat them down and began to convince them they did not understand my problem. Gertrude, at first responding with anger, begins to listen to what Hamlet tries to tell her. Then, when he begins to state her sin in detail, Gertrude pleads Hamlet to “speak no more” (III.iv.89) when the grief of his tale becomes too much to handle. My parents mirrored this reaction when they listened to my list of grievances. They asked me what troubled me, but I responded with anger. I lashed out and began to berate them for their sin of not understanding my problem. What Hamlet and I had most in common was that we both broke our parents' hearts with a few words. The only difference was that in Hamlet's case, Gertrude deserved to have someone talk some sense into her; in my case, my parents did not deserve any of what I said. Still, both Gertrude and my parents ended the conversation by asking, “What shall I do?” (III.iv.184) The love of a parent is shown best when the parent stays on the child's side even after being unfairly treated. Gertrude listens to Hamlet's plea and even covers for Hamlet and claims he is still “mad as the sea and wind when both contend/Which is the mightier” (IV.i.7-8) when she is accosted by Claudius. My parents, even after listening to my rant, asked me how they could help me. They stuck by me, though I was clearly in the wrong. I can never thank them enough for how much they love me and for how they were so quick to forgive me.

Parents like Gertrude and my own parents are what keep relationships between them and their children from breaking. The love between parents and children inspires novels and other great works. Even *Hamlet* was inspired by Shakespeare's love for his son, Hamnet, whom had passed away. When it comes to our parents, in some ways I'm different from Hamlet. In other ways, however, I am exactly like Hamlet.