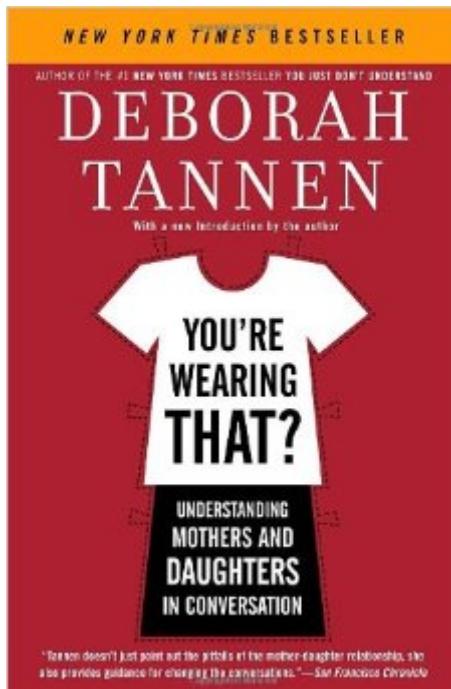


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# You're Wearing That?: Understanding Mothers And Daughters In Conversation



## **Synopsis**

Deborah Tannen's #1 New York Times bestseller *You Just Don't Understand* revolutionized communication between women and men. Now, in her most provocative and engaging book to date, she takes on what is potentially the most fraught and passionate connection of women's lives: the mother-daughter relationship. It was Tannen who first showed us that men and women speak different languages. Mothers and daughters speak the same language "but still often misunderstand each other, as they struggle to find the right balance between closeness and independence. Both mothers and daughters want to be seen for who they are, but tend to see the other as falling short of who she should be. Each overestimates the other's power and underestimates her own. Why do daughters complain that their mothers always criticize, while mothers feel hurt that their daughters shut them out? Why do mothers and daughters critique each other on the Big Three "hair, clothes, and weight" "while longing for approval and understanding? And why do they scrutinize each other for reflections of themselves? Deborah Tannen answers these and many other questions as she explains why a remark that would be harmless coming from anyone else can cause an explosion when it comes from your mother or your daughter. She examines every aspect of this complex dynamic, from the dark side that can shadow a woman throughout her life, to the new technologies like e-mail and instant messaging that are transforming mother-daughter communication. Most important, she helps mothers and daughters understand each other, the key to improving their relationship. With groundbreaking insights, pitch-perfect dialogues, and deeply moving memories of her own mother, Tannen untangles the knots daughters and mothers can get tied up in. Readers will appreciate Tannen's humor as they see themselves on every page and come away with real hope for breaking down barriers and opening new lines of communication. Eye-opening and heartfelt, *You're Wearing That?* illuminates and enriches one of the most important relationships in our lives. Tannen analyzes and decodes scores of conversations between moms and daughters. These exchanges are so real they can make you squirm as you relive the last fraught conversation you had with your own mother or daughter. But Tannen doesn't just point out the pitfalls of the mother-daughter relationship, she also provides guidance for changing the conversations (or the way that we feel about the conversations) before they degenerate into what Tannen calls a mutually aggravating spiral, a "self-perpetuating cycle of escalating responses that become provocations." "The San Francisco Chronicle" From the Hardcover edition.

## **Book Information**

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## Customer Reviews

If nothing else, this little volume reminds mothers that their words have more power and impact on their daughters than they may realize....and vice versa. I absolutely agree with Tannen that mothers should avoid discussing weight, clothing and hairstyles unless ABSOLUTELY necessary (would you want anyone critiquing you in those areas, especially if the advice was unsolicited)? While much of the book is common sense, there are many insights at well. The intimacy between mother and daughter can so easily turn into hurt and pain. Tannen gives solid info on treading through those dangerous waters with a fair shot at maintaining deep bonds throughout life. One tip I found particularly useful: Communicate via email or in writing when things get really hard. Somehow putting down one's thoughts on paper, editing and rewriting one's words can offer a calmer perspective and avoid impulsive and angry reactions. In other words, allow some breathing space before continuing the conversation...or find another way to communicate without speaking directly. Good advice - because, in the end, it doesn't really matter HOW you maintain the mother/daughter bond...it just matters that you do.

I must say, I read the book with an open mind but I really got so much more than I could have ever dreamed of. This book is a must for Mom's and adult Daughters. My daughter is reading the book now and already I can see the effort she is making to understand me better and I certainly will think before I speak (to her) from now on. I truly did not see how I was coming across to my daughter. The book has truly opened my eyes, made me think and has helped me a find a neutral and effective way to communicate with my 20 something daughter.

It never occurred to me that my mother and I are "typical." What a relief. Yes, the book is "light" in parts. Yes, Tannen's own issues and angst come through loud and clear, as though she truly needed to write this book to purge her own demons. But it is also extremely enlightening. Many AHA moments. The book is a blueprint for mending fences, reading signals, and growing up. Either the mother or the daughter has to be the adult. It doesn't matter which one. The rewards for learning how to put the past behind are tremendous. And as an only daughter who lives 1200 miles away from my 84-year-old mother, with brothers who all live 15 minutes away from her, I might have to give up all the resentments I've invested so heavily in toward the boys for ignoring mother's needs. Now I understand that our mother is not interested in receiving their help - she wants mine.

This book HAD to be written for my daughter & me!! My daughter had started reading it & was not even past the 2nd chapter when she was yelling, "MOM!! YOU JUST HAVE TO READ THIS!!" Ohmigod, It is DEAD ON our relationship. Unlike some books that before you finished it, would have you seeking professional help, this makes me feel WONDERFUL that we are obviously not the only ones with all these same feelings and interactions. How comforting in itself! I absolutely love this book so far & am looking forward to reading the rest of it. HIGHLY recommended :) Thanks for writing such a good one. Beverly (& Jennifer) Armstrong

Great book. It was hard not to see myself, my mother and my daughter. First half of the book points out the error of our ways but the second half gives some practical advice on how to stop hurting those you love.

"You're Wearing That?" is a frank review of the various dynamics in discussions between mothers and daughters, and it is helpful to have each angle pointed out and made clear that you're not alone in your dysfunction. In that way, the book was therapeutic. On the other hand, it offered little solution to the problem, other than to recognize that is what you're doing, that those are universal problems, and why the female nature unwittingly recreates these situations. The basic format of most of her examples went something like, "The mom said this, the daughter took it wrong, the mom was surprised and hurt." And the general thrust of the advice was, "Moms, don't give too much advice. Daughters, they don't mean it that way so don't overreact." I sensed that perhaps the author's recent loss of her mother led her to cast a more generous light on dysfunctional mothering communication, giving it the benefit of the doubt, while her late realization at how she'd misunderstood her mother

led her to cast daughters' perceptions as the problem. Perhaps that is true in more healthy families, but what if they DO mean it that way? There was some discussion of darker dysfunctional relationships, but not much advice about what to do to change that or heal from it, which left an otherwise comprehensive discussion quite lacking.

It took me a while to get through the book because I would read a few pages and then have to spend some time processing. Obviously it didn't apply totally to the "issues" I was having with my two grown daughters but it was a huge help. It got me to stop and think about words and conversations, how important they are and how "loaded" they can be. I like that it wasn't a "fix it" book, she is a linguist and not a therapist. So the focus was just on how we talk to each other. Sometimes that awareness is all that is needed.

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