

‘Being Raised by 2 Mothers Ruined My Life’

A woman raised by two mothers has admitted the experience was “damaging and confusing,” and has warned of the potential for “irreparable, long-term damage to a child.”

Hetty Baynes Russell, 58, said her unconventional parental setup fostered “a life of confusion and a lack of emotional security,” which landed her in therapy for many years, “trying to make sense of it all.”

She said her heart sank when she read recent comments by retailer Mary Portas, who has a 2-year-old son with fashion journalist Melanie Rickey, saying “sharing motherhood with a female makes it doubly wonderful.”

‘Damaging and Confusing’

Hetty was born the youngest of five children to mother Margot and father Leslie Baynes, but she recalls the troubling memories from early on in her childhood of her father being “airbrushed” out by her mother and her mother’s lesbian partner.

She said: “And far from being a healthy, nurturing state of affairs, this arrangement—where I was caught in a destructive, triangular battle for my mother’s affection with another woman, while forced to watch helplessly as my father was emasculated and airbrushed from our lives—was simultaneously damaging and confusing.”

She added: “With so many people vying for space and prominence within the family, I know, from experience, they can become hotbeds for resentment and jealousies which can cause irreparable, long-term damage to a child.”

Troubled Soul

Hetty said the damage of being raised in this family context only manifested itself when she was 15 and developed clinical depression and anorexia.

She said: "From then on, it was a slow process of coming to terms with pain I had buried deep inside my troubled soul."

Father Figures

Hetty also revealed that in her twenties she cultivated an "overtly heterosexual" image, and formed a "string of inappropriate relationships with men" with a particular attraction to "father figures."

She warned that "sometimes—frighteningly often, in fact—unconventional parental relationships end up being hotbeds of jealousy and confusion that are damaging to children."

Insecurity

"That has been the problem for me all of my life: despite the enormous amount of privilege I enjoyed, it was a life of confusion and a lack of emotional security."

"And that is why I was in therapy for so many years, trying to make sense of it all."