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Author explores influence of mother-

daughter relationship Counselor to present 'self-help career book' at Women's Philanthropy event

by Debra Rubin NJJN Bureau Chief March 5, 2018

Six years ago, Ilana Tolpin Levitt, a career development and mental health counselor from East Brunswick, came to the realization that the choices made by her female clients in their professional lives were often influenced by their relationships with their respective mothers.

She recognized that "looking at my client's family history could really unlock a secret."

The complexity of the mother-daughter relationship is a subject that has long fascinated Levitt; for 12 years, she led workshops with her own psychoanalyst mother on that very topic.

The results of more than five years of The results of more than five years of research — based on her professional experience and those years working with her mother — are in her new, self-published book, "What's Morn Still Got To Do With It? Breathe New Life Into Your Career By Understanding Your Mother-Daughter Relationship."

Levitt will share her insights with the mothers and daughters of the Women's Philanthropy of the Jewish Federation in the Heart of NJ on Wednesday, March 14, at the Jewish Heritage Museum of Monmouth County in Freehold.

At the book-and-author event Levitt who At the book-and-author event, Levitt, who, with her husband, Jack, and two children belong to the East Brunswick Jewish Center will be interviewed by writer and journalist Jennifer Altmann, of Westfield.

In a phone interview with NJJN, Levitt described her volume as a "self-help career book," outlining the power of "unconscious a conscious family influence" on career choice

"Depending on the mother-daughter relationship, women either get propelled or get stuck in what I call 'career trauma," said Levitt, 53, who has private practices in Manhattan and Middlesex County and is director of training and development in human resources at The New School in Manhattan.







Views on money and career are often passed from generation to generation, she said, adding, "A lot of women have not had role models in the workplace, especially my generation. Women with young children struggle whether to stay home or go back to work. Some were told never to depend on a man for money, or to marry a man with money."

"Our whole identity, how we see ourselves as working women, what we pass on to our children, has everything to do with where we came from," said Levitt. "The other piece is how do we help our own children? How do we strike the right balance between role modeling for them and directing them?"

Levitt said that at many of her programs women often ask her how they can best help their children. Some of these women, she learned, were unfulfilled themselves.

"The best way is to be satisfied with what you do and take ownership of your life whether that is a relationship with a spouse or partner or working as a volunteer or in a career," said Levitt. "It think daughters are watching very carefully whether their mothers are fulfilled. I think a lot of parents put unconscious pressure on their children to fulfill their own unfulfilled dreams."

What's more, she said, "there are always issues of separation. We are not separate from our parents and our children are not separate from us."

And does she follow her own advice with her own children?

"Ironically, I have two sons, " said Levitt.

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Author Ilana Tolpin Levitt will explore how the dynamics of the mother-daughter relationship can influence career choices.



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