**ESSAY PLANNING SHEET FORM**

Name of Essay:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Your Mirror Image? \_\_\_

Essay's **Thesis Sentence**:

\_\_Our children are our mirror image.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Topic sentence (Point) of First Body Paragraph:

\_\_\_\_Kids are watching even when we do not think they are.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Topic sentence (Point) of Second Body Paragraph:

\_\_\_\_Kids grow up having the same problems as the parents, such as an eating disorder\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Topic sentence (Point) of Third Body Paragraph:

\_\_\_Kids not only copy their parents’ mistakes, they magnify them.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Topic sentence (Point) of Fourth Body Paragraph (if you have one):

\_\_\_The parents themselves need to change if they want to see any change in their children.\_\_\_\_\_

**Your Mirror Image?**

                In her essay, “Your Mirror Image”, Francine Russo explains how to create a healthy environment and raise healthy kids. She brings up some examples of where a child’s actions shock the parents and the parents don’t know where it came from. Well, our kids are our own personal mirror image. They do everything they see us do; in fact, they often take it further than us. Kids are like sponges. As they are growing up, they suck everything in; when they are old enough to express it, they let it all out. Many times when this happens parents do not know where their kids got the habits and words from. Most of the time, parents blame the public and media for their kids’ profane language when really they should be blaming themselves.

            Russo begins with an example of a mother, Jenny Moran, who was obsessed with her own weight. To Moran’s surprise, she noticed her little 3 ½ year-old daughter weighing herself several times a day. You would think that such a young child was not old enough to understand anything. In fact, the mother did not think the little girl was paying attention when her mother was weighing herself. However, we often underestimate our children. Jenny Moran says, “I never thought she was paying attention” (qtd. in Russo 233). Often, by the time parents notice their kids imitating them, the issue that the child is copying, in this case weight obsession, has gotten to the point where it shocks the parent. At this point, how does a parent explain to their child that what they were seeing before from their mommy or daddy is bad and they shouldn’t do it anymore?

            Continuing into the essay, Russo goes on to explain that more often than not, little girls that grew up with a mother that was self conscious about her weight have more eating disorders than the girls that grew up with healthy mothers. Psychology professor, Lora Jacobi, says, “We model our mothers” (qtd. in Russo 234). She says that out of her class, those students that struggle with eating issues say that their mothers were overly worried about their weight. Also, according to Jacobi, our children will make their judgments based on what they see us do and say. For example, Jacobi brings up an example, “If you declare yourself ‘good’ for eating only salad and ‘bad’ for eating cookies, they will judge their own goodness and badness the same way” (qtd. in Russo 234). In other words, our kids will grow up eating only salad and missing out on all the iron and other nutrients found in other types of food that they will consider “bad.”

            It gets worse: our kids don’t only copy what we do – they exaggerate what we do. Research shows that while 45% of women say they are dieting on any given day, 46% of girls ages 9-11 say they are “sometimes” to “very often” dieting. I do not think that the 45% percent of women that diet in their older ages started their diets at the age of nine. Even looking back at the story of Jenny Moran and her young daughter, leaves me thinking. I highly doubt that Jenny, the mother, started being obsessed about her weight and weighing herself several times a day at the age of three and a half years old. This is just another example that proves that kids not only imitate us, but they also magnify our mistakes.

            Russo finishes her essay by giving advice to the mothers that are self-conscious to help them raise healthy children that won’t have eating disorders. Phyllis Cohen says, “To avoid passing on an unhealthy obsession, it’s wise to deal with weight and eating as health issues rather than moral ones” (qtd. in Russo 234).  In other words, there is no such thing as fat until your brain defines it as that. It is not a state of health; it’s a thinking process. Also, Carleton Kendrick says, “Try to like your body and don’t hide it from your daughter. When she sees you in your bra and panties playing with the dog, she gets the message you’re comfortable with your body and your sexuality” (qtd. in Russo 234). Just like eating disorders and weight obsession, the concept of being comfortable with your body affects kids just as much. Since children are a personal mirror image of their parents, they pick up on the positive things as well as the negatives. So in order to see any change in the children, the parents themselves have to change.

            To conclude, the parents are the source for many of the things their children do; most of the times the children even exaggerate what they see parents do. Therefore, if parents do not like what their children are doing, they need to stop doing it themselves. Russo says, “Sure, you can blame the media for imposing a parade of surgically enhanced pop icons on your impressionable child, but the real danger to her self-image comes from closer to home: you” (234)! In order to raise healthy children, a mom has to be healthy herself. One can’t be a self-conscious parent in front of their kids, no matter how they really feel inside, but one has to be a confident adult that kids can look up to and imitate.