

The Daily Mail • National UK

'Best-friend mums make their daughters out-of-control disasters like Britney Spears,' warns psychologist

By **BARRY WIGMORE** - Last updated at 16:42pm on 15th April 2008

It's a growing trend as the age gap shrinks and women strive to stay younger longer – mothers want to be best friends with their daughters.

They wear similar clothes, hairstyles and make-up, go out partying together, and mothers try to stay forever young with botox and cosmetic surgery.

But it can only end in tears, warns a top family psychologist.

An "epidemic of best-friend mothers" is eroding parental boundaries, leaving children with no-one to guide them, says Dr Stephan Poulter.



Are their mothers to blame? Britney Spears, Paris Hilton and Lindsay Lohan

The results are all around for us to see, he adds, in disasters like Britney Spears, Lindsay Lohan, Paris Hilton, and the tragic death of Anna Nicole Smith. Dr Poulter, a father-of-two, and a former policeman and church minister, bases his views on 25 years of dealing with family relationships at his Los Angeles clinic.

He said: "You see this with a lot of the actresses in Hollywood – their mothers are their friends. But it obscures that important difference that is vital between being a parent and a kid.

"One unfortunate example is Lindsay Lohan. Her mother was out drinking with her a lot. Now Lindsay's been in and out of rehab and has been arrested twice. What kind of role model is she getting? Look at Paris Hilton too. Same story."

Others who have been accused by some critics in the past of becoming too much of a "best-friend" rather than a mum to their children include Fergie, the Duchess of York, who enjoys partying with Princess Beatrice, 19, and Princess Eugenie, 18; Sharon Osbourne and her daughter Kelly, 23, who's been in rehab; and Demi Moore with daughters Rumer, 20, Scout, 17, and Tallulah, 14.



Britney Spears with her mother Lynne and manager Sam Lufti

Similar problems can also exist between mothers and sons, says the doctor. Former Playboy model Anna Nicole Smith died of a drug overdose last year, just five months after her 20-year-old son Daniel had died in a similar fashion.

It all boils down to what today's mothers learned from their mothers, says Dr Poulter, who has a new book out called *The Mother Factor* based on his findings. He said: "Today's best-friend parents had discipline problems with their own parents who they saw as being too strict.

"They never resolved those problems and now they don't want to be so hard on their own children, and just want to be liked. At the end of a long working day they don't want conflict.

"But kids need a parent, not another friend. When mothers become best friends it leaves their children motherless.

"This can create a lot of rage in boys. Motherless daughters of this type tend to be drug-orientated and out of control."

Dr Poulter's views are backed up by another top celebrity's mother who has also written a book about her own incredible experiences.

Rose Rock, the mother of US comedian Chris Rock, has raised 10 children of her own and cared for 17 foster children.

She warns about the changes in parenting and sets out her 10 commandments in her book, *Mama Rock's Rules*. The first one is to be a child's mother, not their friend, and to have rules in your house.

Mrs Rock said: "At no time should you let your children think they can disrespect you or treat you like a buddy.

"It is the latest thing – everyone wants their children to like them but parenting is not a popularity contest.

"I don't need to be a 12-year-old's friend but I do need to be their protector, guide and warden. Otherwise it's just a cop out."

Dr Poulter said: "Parents must recognise that they are not their child's friend. They need to get their children's respect then the kids can separate from their mother and move forward in their lives.

"For the kids this can work. But it is very hard for a mother to shift her attitude and become a parent."

###