

MY TURN

A mom, her (sort of) kids and a lighter spa experience

By BETSY R. ROSENTHAL
Special to The Times

IT'S become our annual tradition. A fortysomething, fiftysomething, sixtysomething and seventysomething spend the weekend at a health spa in Ojai. My mom treats her sisters and me. To take advantage of the mother-daughter special, her sisters masquerade as her daughters.

The laughs begin immediately, as we weigh the granite-like breakfast muffins the spa serves, the ones we've dubbed hockey pucks. Unlike many of the guests here, we don't overly exert ourselves. We're too busy making trouble. During the water movement class, when our bouncy instructor tells us to pirouette in the pool, we keep pirouetting into one another, bursting into fits of laughter. And when we have to do arm lifts, can I help it if my hand keeps smacking my aunt (I mean, my sister) in the face?

We probably make spa history when we finally get booted

from the class.

Later, during a Flexa-ball class, my mom, with her short legs, tries sitting on the giant blue ball that has cow-like teats poking out of it — but it keeps shooting out from under her, bouncing around the room while we crack up.

At the evening program, we're intent on maintaining a low profile. But there's a palm reader offering sessions, and when she gazes into my palm and tells me that I was a nun in a past life, none of us can keep the laughter from erupting. We just don't know too many Jewish nuns.

After our late-night snack of Styrofoam-like popcorn, we return to our room. When I climb into bed, as much as I push, I can't get my feet under the covers; somebody has short-sheeted me.

The muffled giggles coming from the other bed reveal the culprit pulling these college pranks — it's my septuagenarian mom.

My revenge comes later. When my mom goes off to get

her late-night massage, I and my senior-citizen accomplices stuff oranges and apples in her pillowcase and under the covers at the foot of her bed. As soon as she gets into bed, she screeches an expletive befitting a sailor, not a grandmother. Those of us feigning sleep can no longer suppress our laughter.

The fun's not over yet. I lie awake waiting for someone to get up to use the toilet, which I earlier smeared with Vaseline. Finally someone shuffles into the dark bathroom, and again that expletive reverberates through the room, followed by new peals of laughter.

By the end of our four-day stay, I feel as if I've laughed off at least a few pounds.

Sure, there are undisputed health benefits to the yogic cleansing breath, but for me, there's nothing like a good cleansing laugh.

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