

WRITE YOUR WAY HOME

With Yocheved Rottenberg

Masks are something we put on to pretend we're someone else. Sometimes, we have to wear it all the time. We pretend things are fine in our home, we pretend that our parents are not overwhelmed by all the stress going on, we pretend we're not in agony over what is happening with our sibling. We pretend and pretend and pretend until it hurts to pretend anymore.

One of the ways that we can make things easier for ourselves is through journaling. A journal is a best friend that can hear everything you say and never react wrongly. A journal is a best friend that's available for you any time of day or night. A journal is a best friend that you can share anything you want with and never have to wear a mask.

SibLink contacted Yocheved Rottenberg, who is a world-wide journal facilitator and asked her to share some journaling tips with our readers.

Siblink: Can you describe the basics of therapeutic journaling that you do?

YR: All journal writing is cathartic, which means it makes us feel better by getting things off our chest. When we get our pain out of our heart, onto the page, we already feel better.

I do a specific type of writing called Therapeutic Writing. The difference

between this type of writing and regular journal writing is two points. In my writing we have structure. Meaning that either we're following a specific exercise or we're timing our writing. You can take a kitchen timer and set it for five minutes and just write anything that's on our heart. When we time our writing, it makes sure we don't get overwhelmed by our emotions.

When we finish our writing, or when the timer rings and we stop, we do something called Reflection. We read over our writing, we reflect on it, which means we think about how the writing made us feel or what we learnt new from reading our writing, and then we write our reflection.

So the main two steps of therapeutic writing is Structure and Reflection.

Siblink: So, if we follow these steps, we'll feel better after we write?

YR: Most of the times you will feel better. But sometimes it might take time to feel better. Sometimes, when we finally allow ourselves to confront painful feelings, it brings up feelings that we haven't given ourselves permission to feel before so it can be overwhelming. Usually, the difficult feeling will pass. Have patience with it, accept that it's normal, and allow it to be, and it will pass after a few hours. If it doesn't go over, it might mean that a topic came up that was very difficult for

you and you would benefit from discussing it with a parent or therapist.

Siblink: Do you have any other tips you can share with us?

YR: Yes! I really recommend going to a store and finding a journal that you love. There are so many different designs and colours, when you buy one you love you connect to it and it becomes a precious possession and safe place for you.

Also, there are really great gel pens available. Writing becomes more fun when it's

colourful. Lastly, it's very important to keep your journal private.

Always put it away and ask your parents to please respect your privacy and never open your journal. It's very important that you have the freedom to write your absolute truth and you can only do that if no one will see it aside from you.

Siblink: Can you give us any ideas of writing exercises?

YR: Sure! See below:

FIVE MINUTE WRITING

The simplest technique is to simply set your timer for five minutes, ask yourself "What do I want to write about right now?" and just write for five minutes straight. Don't stop writing. It's fine if you go off topic and it's fine if you don't have what to write and you just write "I don't know what to write." Just keep on writing, without stopping, until the timer rings. When you finish, read it over and write a reflection.

List of 50

Make a list of 50 things that are hard for you about your sibling's struggle. Feel free to write whatever comes to your mind, even if it seems off topic. If something comes to your mind more than once, you can repeat yourself. You can also write "I don't know," if you feel stuck. Just keep on writing until you reach 50. When you finish, read it over and write a reflection.

PERSPECTIVE

If you are trying to understand someone better, you can write from their perspective, as if they are the one that is talking, and have them share their story with you. It's very powerful to help you understand them better.

When you finish, read it over and write a reflection.

UNSENT LETTER

An unsent letter is a letter you will never send. You can write it to your sibling that it struggling, to your parents, your friends, or anyone else you would love to share your feelings with. In this letter you can write whatever you truly feel, however you truly feel it, without worrying that you'll make someone feel bad. This letter will never be given to anyone, but it really can help you. When you finish, read it over and write a reflection.

YR: I wish you tremendous success in removing your mask of everything being okay, and sharing your most real and deep emotions with your precious journal. You'll see it become your best friend!