

# A Letter to

Writer Brett Aronowitz's mother died more than 25 years ago. Brett remembers how writing helped her deal with her loss.

I remember crying until my cheeks were raw from the sting of tears, and my head was so clogged I couldn't breathe. Then I picked up a pen and pulled out a sheet of notebook paper from my desk drawer.

*I'm only fourteen. I feel scared and alone. It seems that nobody has time to listen to me anymore. I guess I thought if I wrote this, I would feel as if someone were listening to me.*

*Today I wondered if they paint the walls dull green so that you think of mints instead of smelling sickness. The fluorescent lights make my eyes tired, and it always feels like it's the middle of the night. I never noticed that before. Maybe they do that so you will get tired and not stay too long. The paintings on the walls look like someone pulled them out of the attic without even dusting them off. They are so old and gloomy.*

*When we got off the elevator today, I could hear someone screaming. But*

*nobody seemed too concerned. The doctors and nurses were just walking around, doing their business as usual. They certainly weren't running around as if there were an emergency... but it sounded like an emergency and it frightened me.*

*We walked down the hall, Dad and I. The screaming got louder and louder and I was more and more scared. As we came closer, the screams grew more and more familiar. I dreaded taking another step. I was terrified of going into her room. Why wasn't anyone helping her? She sounded like she was in so much pain.*

*It was Mom screaming. She is very sick. She's in the hospital; she's always in the hospital. We just got home from visiting her. She's been sick for so long, I don't feel I know her anymore. I think she is going to die soon. I wish someone would tell me the truth. I am hurting so much, but Mom hurts more. I don't want her to hurt anymore.*

*Did I hear them right? Did they say, "There's nothing more we can do"?*

I look back on the day I wrote that letter to myself, and I remember feeling a sense of relief. My life was filled with a darkness I thought existed only in books—or in other people's lives, not mine. I didn't know anyone with whom I could share my feelings, someone who could be my friend without feeling so sorry for me that I felt like a freak. I knew my mother's death was forcing me to grow up before I was supposed to. Writing helped me face the pain.

When I look back on that time, I remember dark, windy December days with fleeting glimpses of sunlight. I hoped my mother would live long enough to wear the pearl ring my father had bought her for Hanukkah.

I was self-conscious about my weight and

# Myself

the pimples on my face, and at the same time I felt guilty for thinking about my own problems when my mom was so sick.

I braved the cold that day, walking through an icy wind to go to the mall. I wanted to be in the company of other people, even if they were strangers. Books had always been my friends, so it was no surprise that I found myself in a bookstore. I stared at a shelf containing books with blank pages. That day, I bought myself an early present that started me on the path to becoming a writer. It was a journal, with small pink roses decorating the cover. You see, my mother loved roses. On that pivotal day, pen and paper became the friend I could confide in.

Painful feelings accompany any loss, from the end of a relationship to the death of a dream. Pain can be especially intense during the holiday season, when we feel we are "supposed" to be happy.

I hope you don't have a loss in your life as sad as the death of a parent. But whatever painful feelings you have, writing can help you

as it helped me. A journal is a great place to express your feelings. It's a place to say things you could not say aloud, or never had the chance to say, or should have said. You can work out problems in a journal, considering options and consequences. You might even create a wish list of things you want to achieve in your life, helping you to move on from your loss. Writing can help you understand and work through your grief, desolation, and anger, and then leave them behind.

Perhaps sometime in your life you will look back, as I have done, at a painful period that you not only endured, but emerged from, like a blossoming rose.

—*Brett Aronowitz*

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