



Listen to Your Mother: What She Said Then, What We're Saying Now

Ann Imig (Editor), Lea Grover (Contributor), Lisa Allen (Contributor), Nancy Davis Kho (Contributor)

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Irreverent, thought-provoking, hilarious, and edgy: a collection of personal stories celebrating motherhood, featuring #1 *New York Times* bestselling authors Jenny Lawson and Jennifer Weiner, and many other notable writers.

Listen to Your Mother is a fantastic awakening of why our mothers are important, taking readers on a journey through motherhood in all of its complexity, diversity, and humor. Based on the sensational national performance movement, *Listen to Your Mother* showcases the experiences of ordinary people of all racial, gender, and age backgrounds, from every corner of the country. This collection of essays celebrates and validates what it means to be a mother today, with honesty and candor that is arrestingly stimulating and refreshing. The stories are raw, honest, poignant, and sometimes raunchy, ranging from adoption, assimilation to emptying nests; first-time motherhood, foster-parenting, to infertility; single-parenting, LGBTQ parenting, to special-needs parenting; step-mothering; never mothering, to surrogacy; and mothering through illness to mothering through unsolicited advice. Honest, funny, and heart-wrenching, these personal stories are the collective voice of mothers among us. Whether you are one, have one, or know one, *Listen to Your Mother* is an emotional whirlwind that is guaranteed to entertain, amuse, and enlighten.

Listen to Your Mother: What She Said Then, What We're Saying Now Details

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From Reader Review Listen to Your Mother: What She Said Then, What We're Saying Now for online ebook

Rita Arens says

This collection contains some bone-rattlers, some essays that make your breath catch. Though the pieces are short, I wouldn't call this a quick read. I'd treat it more as a daily touchstone as long as you can make it last.

Jessica Woodbury says

I'm saving you a lot of time: this is what to get your mother, your wife, your friend, your sister, your daughter, your anyone for Mother's Day this year.

I'm a Listen To Your Mother director and cast member (2013 Providence, 2014 and 2015 Boston) so of course I love Listen To Your Mother and everything it's about, how it gives voice to the position that is often the quietest one. The book is a collection of some of my favorite essays from men and women around the country.

Putting together a Listen To Your Mother show is a tricky job and I have no doubt editing the book was as well. It's about balancing humor and sadness, finding stories that are unique and balancing them with stories that are universal, talking about the biggest things and the smallest. The anthology does that well, covering pretty much any topic you can possibly imagine. There is adoption, same-sex marriage, the death of a child, the death of a parent, step-parenting, infertility, divorce, deployment, poverty, and significant struggles with mental and physical health. But there is also much that happens every day, those moments where you stop to take in just what's happening around you. There is sending a child off to college. There is a search for a child's lost lovey. There is pretty much everything.

These stories are personal and they are short, so even someone who isn't much of a reader will enjoy themselves. It's a book best enjoyed in small pieces so you can enjoy each story and savor it a bit. These essays were all read aloud in Listen To Your Mother shows, and you can tell that the writing has been refined and perfected to be enjoyed by an audience. The translation to book form is well done.

Seriously. Your Mother's Day gift work is done.

Bookphile says

Some really affecting essays in here, all reflecting the diverse experience that is motherhood, yet there's some universality as well. More complete review to come.

Full review:

Listen to Your Mother is an interesting, diverse collection of essays ruminating on all things related to motherhood: a mother's influence on her children, the trials and tribulations of motherhood, and a good representation of family structures that don't necessarily include a mother. Some of the essays are humorous,

some serious, and many of them made a strong impression on me.

A high point of this book, for me, is that the voices in it are diverse. Women from working class and more affluent backgrounds are represented, as are the voices of parents from various religious affiliations and parents in relationships with same-sex partners. The U.S. is a diverse country and its social fabric is changing, and I like that this book reflects that. I also like that many of the essays don't shy from portraying the more challenging, gritty aspects of parenthood as society still has a tendency to be a bit misleading when it comes to the realities of parenthood. This book challenges readers to look beyond the boundaries of the traditional nuclear family, and to gain some insight into same-sex couples, children who don't conform to gender norms, parents who must grapple with how to make sense of racism for their child, etc. At heart, parents want the same things for their children: for them to be healthy and happy, but the obstacles in parents' ways vary, and I liked that this book showed that.

One of my favorite essays was *A Year by the Lake*, in which author Jenny Fiore writes about the challenges of raising her daughter while her husband is deployed to Kuwait. It's an eye-opening read that exposes the fact that not only do our service men and women make sacrifices for their country, so do their spouses, partners, and families. Fiore has to deal with her own worries, fears, and sadness over what's happening with her husband and all the milestones he's missing while also coping with the stresses of raising a child on her own.

The Broken Bowl by Jennifer Ball is another high point, a reflection on the difficulties of single parenthood and raising children while struggling financially, but also in parsing out what's really important in life. The bowl helps Ball to see beyond her day-to-day struggles and realize that she has been creating important and lasting memories for their children. The challenges her family faces certainly shouldn't be minimized, but the takeaway from this piece is that it's easy for parents to get caught up in worrying about all the things they're doing wrong and miss the things they're doing right.

Alexandra Rosas explores similar themes in *The Reach of a Small Moment* by looking back on the small, quiet times she shared with her grandmother and how those times left a lasting impression on her. When you're in the thick of parenthood, trying to get dinner on the table and homework done while rushing to get ready to get your kids off to practice, it can be hard to recognize these small moments of grace.

Not a Princess by Vikki Reich is also fantastic, an unflinching look at the difficulty in letting go of ingrained social messages when your child begins to defy gender norms. I've read a lot about how traditional couples struggle with this, but it was interesting to read the perspective of a woman in a same-sex relationship. It drove home for me just how ingrained gender norms are in society, how much we internalize them and how huge the struggle can be when a child breaks the mold. Reich writes eloquently about the disconnect between wanting to support her child's mode of expressing herself while also wanting to protect her child from society's censure.

These are by no means the only well-done essays in the collection, but they all struck a particular chord with me. Sometimes parents get so caught up in maintaining an image or trying to do everything right that I think we forget that every other parent around us is struggling with many of the same issues. Parenthood seems to have become something of a competitive sport, and I like that this book reminded me that we parents have much common ground, regardless of where we come from.

Michele says

Full disclosure that I am biased: I participated in the 2014 LTYM show, and it changed my life. Even still, this is a rich anthology on parenting (on mothering, really) that kept me laughing and crying - sometimes in the same piece. The addition of the video clips of some of the performances in this deluxe addition is a happy bonus.

April Rogers says

An eclectic collection of essays averaging about 3 pages each on the topic of mothers- some humorous and some more serious or sad. There were a few I'd have liked to have had longer passages but it did convey the essence of the topic.

Peyton Price says

This is not a collection of essays to scarf down. This book is delicious, but rich. Read one or two of these honestly and well told stories, then spend the afternoon or evening with them. Swish them around a bit. They take a little time to digest. Even the ones that go down easy have a surprisingly sharp and complex aftertaste. Read one before bed, and you'll have vivid dreams about mothering and being mothered.

Janet says

Great Mother's Day gift. An homage to mothers. Thank you Goodreads First Reads for my free copy.

Kristin Boldon says

A great collection from a wide range of voices about many aspects of mothering--funny, sad, hard, weird. I do wish the author bios had appeared at the end of each essay, and that some of the essays would have left off their last paragraph, which pulled some of the punch of what went before.

Erin says

As a mother myself, I absolutely loved this book. It was great because with it being short stories, you could read a little at a time. You could find yourself connecting to different mom stories throughout the whole book and experiencing all of the different emotions you experience as a mother. I enjoyed it!

Dolores says

This diverse collection of essays was written by ordinary people from all over the country, focusing on motherhood today, in all its forms. I thought reading it just before Mother's Day seemed appropriate, but it would have been a great experience no matter what the season.

I chuckled over Wendi Aarons' hilarious explanation of why motherhood ISN'T the toughest job in the world and Marinka's revelation that when you get a call from your kid's school, it's never good news. And I was touched by Katie Wise searching for her three-year-old's lost "lovey", remembering how my Mark loved his "blankey".

Every one of these stories is a little jewel and I loved the whole book. I received it from Goodreads at no cost and hope all mothers and offspring get a chance to savor it as I did.

Lorilin says

Listen to Your Mother is composed of a huge selection of short essays written by various women (and a few men) in a variety of relationships and life circumstances. Authors are daughters, wives, widowers, husbands, gay, straight, trans, single, and divorced--with children both biological and adopted (or even none at all). Honestly, the variety of perspective in this book is actually pretty impressive.

And this is serious motherhood here. Sure, there are a few lighthearted, aiming-to-be-funny essays, but these were actually the weakest of the bunch--and my least favorite. No, most of these stories are written from a place of honest-to-God struggle and pain, with a genuine longing to understand and improve and cope and love.

Some of my favorites:

A Year by the Lake by Jenny Fiore: "More than halfway into the deployment, Elizabeth and I are at a local gym for toddler playtime. She hates leaving, and I know it will end in a theatrical mess, but I go anyway. See, more than she does, I need the gym, the zoo, the petting farm. I need the pet store, the playground, the pool. I need these in order to keep my child happy enough, occupied enough to not break me."

Mo' Betta Mama by Tasneem Grace Tewogbola: "Accept all situations, she said. Recognize the struggle. Slide into the valley, if you must. Moan, stew, thrash, rage, if you need. But, soon, summon the Most High, the Creator, the One, Big Mama."

Mother: A Multiplication Lesson by Dana Maya: "Because mothering is a difficult math problem, though, there is not only more in the sum, but also less. So many parts of our lives: gone. We lose what we need (sleep), what we crave (choice, solitude). We lose relationships and vanities, routines, and sanity. And we see, as the losses slough off of us, slow, then fast, what is now as plain as our own skin: there are a great many losses to come. When we flower, then we see."

By the time I finished Listen to Your Mother, I actually felt a bit less alone. (I'm a mother of three kids, and, truth be told, this past year has been a bit rough for all of us.) I think sometimes it helps to be reminded of how many brave, resilient, intelligent, and thoughtful women (and men) are out there. It's comforting to

recognize that the world is full of good people who, just like me, are not perfect but are trying to make good decisions and live good lives. So even though this book ended up being much more serious than I expected, it really resonated with me and I enjoyed reading it.

Michelle says

I like the concept of the book, but really only read the sections with authors I know. Jenny Lawson has a strong writing style and makes me love her crazy wit. Jennifer Weiner is funny and clever while still being self-deprecating.

Suzy Soro says

(I got an advanced PDF of this book so my review is based on that.)

I've followed Ann Imig's journey from the inception of her live show, Listen to Your Mother, to this book by the same name.

If you've ever had a mother, known a mother, or are a mother yourself, there is something in this book for you. Some of the essays are hilarious while some are sincerely touching. Ann has curated these essays from the regional shows held around the country and has given us an excellent cross-section of how we all feel about mothers.

Jean Coltharp says

Hug your mom.

Kizz Robinson says

As with the shows so goes the book. A fabulous experience!
