BOOK INVITATION: Do you remember a time when you read stories from other teens who were having emotional struggles you could relate to? True stories can make you think deeply about different situations that teens come across and those you never expect to deal with.

We are putting together a book just like that, a chance for you to be the writer. You’re the one getting your feelings out on paper like a journal entry that when you share it to help others it also benefits you to think things through and appreciate everyday blessings we take for granted.

We have been hearing that many kids are looking for better ways to talk to their moms, dads, adults, and other siblings during the COVID-19 stay at home times. The ways you are having to face new times, can have a huge impact on other kids lives when they read what it is like for you and how you are dealing with it. We would love to hear from you. You can sign with your full name, just your first name, or an anonymous nickname, just make sure you list your age.

**Step 1:** See the list of suggested topics below

**Step 2:** Enjoy the 3 sample stories

**Step 3:** Write your one-page story!

**Step 4:** Submit by June 12, 2020
• Things that went wrong since I got stuck at home with my mom and dad.
• I go running to get away from everyone in my house.
• My only friends are now my parents.
• I think my mom wishes I was in school and I just want to talk to her more.
• Parents’ - I can’t handle my sister or brother another minute.
• My mom thinks I am on my phone just wasting time, I’m not.
• My parents make me do work in the morning when I am a night person.
• I need space not chores.
• My dad just does not understand technology.
• Things that went wrong since I started trying to talk to my parents like an adult.
• The weird things my family does.
• The most embarrassing things my mom makes me talk about.
• It’s my birthday and no one made it special.
• I think I know why my parents actually love me so much.
• I discovered my dad actually likes me.
• I think it is time for me to respect my parents for becoming my teacher.
• I think my parents are too busy to see I am bored and want to do things together.
• Things that went better since I got stuck at home with my parents.
• My siblings get all the attention and I am home too.
• I’m better friends with my mom now that we are spending more time together.
• This is how I want you to talk to me mom.
• This is how I wish you would listen to me dad.
• I took a chance, confronted my mom (or dad) and now we talk without fighting.
• I do not get along with my parents anymore.
• I hear my parents talking and it worries me we are not okay.
• I think my mom is listening, but I don’t know.
• I think my dad is listening, but I don’t know.
• I don’t want to sit down to dinner together.
• I need me time mom and dad.
• The consequences of screaming at my parents.
• How I feel when my mom or dad screams at me.
• Why I go silent when my mom or dad tries to talk to me.
• Why I am scared to tell my mom or dad the truth.
• How I calm down when my parents just don’t get it.
• Just listen to me mom and dad, I don’t need your opinion.
• The song lyrics that I wish my mom and dad could see are just like me.
• How I turned the situation around so my parents understood why I do/did it.
• I think I am falling for someone and this is what my parents said when I just wanted them to help me figure it out.
• The fun times were turning into arguments, so I did this to fix it...
• My mom limits the time I can talk to friends online, and that is all I want to do.
• I feel like I am going to explode, and I got another lecture from my parents to calm down.
• I just want to get out of the house but it feels like my parents are offended.
• I put my headphones on to block it out, and my parents yell at me for ignoring everyone.

[We will share the book as soon as we have enough stories.]
Sample Story 1: Starlight, Star Bright

When I was five years old, I took an extreme liking to my sister's toys. It made little difference that I had a trunk overflowing with dolls and toys of my own. Her "big girl" treasures were much easier to break, and much more appealing. Likewise, when I was ten and she was twelve, the earrings and make-up that she was slowly being permitted to experiment with held my attention, while my former obsession with catching bugs seemed to be a distant and fading memory.

It was a trend that continued year by year and, except for a few bruises and threats of terrifying "haircuts" while I was sleeping, one that my sister handled with tolerance. My mother continually reminded her, as I entered junior high wearing her new hair clips, that it was actually a compliment to her sense of style. She told her, as I started my first day of high school wearing her clothes, that one day she would laugh and remind me of how she was always the cooler of the two of us.

I had always thought that my sister had good taste, but never more than when she started bringing home guys. I had a constant parade of sixteen-year-old boys going through my house, stuffing themselves with food in the kitchen, or playing basketball on the driveway.

I had recently become very aware that boys, in fact, weren't as "icky" as I had previously thought, and that maybe their cooties weren't such a terrible thing to catch after all. But the freshman guys who were my age, whom I had spent months giggling over at football games with my friends, suddenly seemed so young. They couldn't drive and they didn't wear varsity jackets. My sister's friends were tall, they were funny, and even though my sister was persistent in getting rid of me quickly, they were always nice to me as she pushed me out the door.

Every once in a while, I would luck out, and they would stop by when she wasn't home. One in particular would have long conversations with me before leaving to do whatever sixteen-year-old boys did (it was still a mystery to me). He talked to me as he talked to everyone else, not like a kid, not like his friend's little sister . . . and he always hugged me good-bye before he left.

It wasn't surprising that before long I was positively giddy about him. My friends told me I had no chance with a junior. My sister looked concerned for my potentially broken heart. But you can't help who it is that you fall in love with, whether they are older or younger, taller or shorter, completely opposite or just like you. Emotion ran me over like a Mack truck when I was with him, and I knew that it was too late to try to be sensible - I was in love.

It did not mean I didn't realize the possibility of being rejected. I knew that I was taking a big chance with my feelings and pride. If I didn't give him my heart there was no possibility that he would break it . . . but there was also no chance that he might not.

One night before he left, we sat on my front porch talking and looking for stars as they became visible. He looked at me quite seriously and asked me if I believed in wishing on stars. Surprised, but just as serious, I told him I had never tried.

"Well, then it's time you start," he said, and pointed to the sky. "Pick one out and wish for whatever you want the most." I looked and picked out the brightest star I could find. I squeezed my eyes shut and with what felt like an entire colony of butterflies in my stomach, I wished for courage. I opened my eyes and saw him smiling as he watched my tremendous wishing effort. He asked what I had wished for, and when I replied, he looked puzzled. "Courage? For what?" he questioned.

I took one last deep breath and replied, "To do this." And I kissed him - all driver's-license-holding, varsity-jacket-wearing, sixteen years of him. It was bravery I didn't know I had, strength I owed completely to my heart, which gave up on my mind and took over.

When I pulled back, I saw the astonished look in his face, a look that turned into a smile and then laughter. After searching for something to say for what seemed to me like hours, he took my hand and said, "Well, I guess we're lucky tonight. Both our wishes came true." - Kelly Garnett, Chicken Soup for the Teen Soul II ©
Sample Story 2: That is the best - to laugh with someone because you both think the same things are funny

Sometime during the seventh grade two things happened to me. The first was that I got hooked on salami. Salami sandwiches, salami and cheese, salami on crackers—-I couldn’t get enough of the salty, spicy sausage. The other thing was that my mom and I weren’t getting along really well. We weren’t fighting really badly or anything, but it just seemed as if all she wanted to do was argue with me and tell me what to do. We also didn’t laugh together much anymore. Things were changing, and my mom and I were the first to feel it.

As far as the salami went, my mom wouldn’t buy any because she said it was too expensive and not that good for me. To prove my emerging independence, I decided to go ahead and eat what I wanted anyway. So one day I used my allowance to buy a full sausage of dry salami.

Now a problem had to be solved: Where would I put the salami? I didn’t want my mom to see it. So I hid it in the only place that I knew was totally safe---under my bed. There was a special corner under the bed that the upright Hoover couldn’t reach and that my mom rarely had the ambition to clean. Under the bed went the salami, back in the corner---in the dark and the dust.

A couple of weeks later, I remembered the delicious treat that was waiting for me. I peered beneath the bed and saw...not the salami that I had hidden, but some green and hairy object that didn’t look like anything I had ever seen before. The salami had grown about an inch of hair, and the hair was standing straight up, as if the salami had been surprised by the sudden appearance of my face next to its hiding place. Being the picky eater, I was, I was not interested in consuming any of this object. The best thing I could think of to do was... absolutely nothing.

Sometime later, my mom became obsessed with spring cleaning, which in her case meant she would clean places that had never seen the light of day. Of course, that meant under my bed. I knew in my heart that the moment would soon come when she would find the object in its hiding place. During the first two days of her frenzy, I watched carefully to judge the time when I thought she would find the salami. She washed, she scrubbed, she dusted..., she screamed! She screamed and screamed and screamed. "Ahhhhh...ahhhhh...ahhhhhh!" The screams were coming from my room. Alarms went off in my head. She had found the salami!

"What is it, Mom?" I yelled as I ran into my room. "There is something under your bed!"

"What’s under my bed?" I opened my eyes very wide to show my complete innocence. "Something... something... I don’t know what it is!" She finally stopped screaming. Then she whispered, "Maybe it’s alive." I got down to look under my bed.

"Watch out!" she shouted. "I don’t know what it is!" she said again. She pushed me to one side. I was proud of the bravery she was demonstrating to Save me from the "something" in spite of her distress.

I was amazed at what I saw. The last time I had looked at the salami, the hair on it was about an inch long and fuzzy all over. Now, the hair had grown another three inches, was a gray-green color and had actually started to grow on the surrounding area as well. You could no longer tell the actual shape of what the hair was covering. I looked at my mom. Except for the color, her hair closely resembled the hair on the salami: It was standing straight up, too! Abruptly she got up and left the room, only to return five seconds later with the broom.

Using the handle of the broom, she poked the salami. It didn’t move. She poked it harder. It still didn’t move. At that point, I wanted to tell her what it was, but I couldn’t seem to make my mouth work. My chest was squeezing with an effort to repress the laughter that, unbidden, was threatening to explode. At the same time, I was terrified of her rage when she finally discovered what it was. I was also afraid she was going to, have a heart attack because she looked so scared. Finally, my mom got up her nerve and pushed the salami really hard. At that same exact moment, the laughter I had been trying to hold back exploded from my mouth. She dropped the broom and looked at me.

"What’s so funny??" my mom asked. Up close, two inches from my face, she looked furious. Maybe it was just the position of having her head lower than her bottom that made her face so red, but I was sure she was about to poke me with the broom handle. I sure didn’t want that to happen because it still had some pieces of gray-green hair sticking to it. I felt kind of sick, but then another one of my huge laughs erupted. I was as if I had no control over my body. One followed another, and pretty soon I was rolling on the floor. My mom sat down---hard.

"What is so funny??"

"Salami," I managed to get out despite the gales of laughter that I had no control over. "Salami! Salami!" I rolled on the floor. "It’s a salami!!" My mother gazed at me with disbelief. What did salami have to do with anything? The object under the bed did not look like any salami she had ever seen. In fact, it did not look like anything she (or I) had ever seen.
I gasped for breath. "Mom, it's a salami---you know, one of those big salami sausages!"

She asked what any sane mother would ask in this situation. "What is a salami doing under your bed?"

"I bought it with my allowance." My laughter was subsiding, and fear was beginning to take its place. I looked at her. She had the strangest expression on her face that I had ever seen: a combination of disgust, confusion, exhaustion, fear---and anger! Her hair was standing on end, perspiration beaded on her flushed face and her eyes looked as if they were going to jump out of her head. I couldn't help it. I started to laugh again.

And then the miracle of miracles happened. My mom started to laugh, too. First just a nervous release, a titter really, but then it turned into the full-on belly laugh that only my mom's side of the family is capable of. The two of us laughed until tears rolled down our cheeks and thought I would pee my pants. When we finally were able to stop laughing, my mom shoved the broom into my hands.

"Okay, Patty Jean Shaw, clean it up, no matter what it is!" I had no idea how to clean up something and not look at it or touch it. So, of course, I got my little sister to help me. I could get her to help with anything, as long as I bribed or threatened her. Since she didn't know what the object was supposed to look like to begin with, she didn't have much fear attached to helping. Between the two of us, we managed to roll it onto the evening newspaper (my dad never knew what happened to it). I carefully, carefully carried it outside and put it into the trash. Then I had my sister remove the remaining fuzz from the carpet. I had convinced her that I was too large to get into the small corner where it had grown. I ended up owing her my allowance for two weeks.

My mom never got mad at me for buying the salami. I guess she thought I had already paid a price. The salami provided a memory of shared, unrestrained laughter. For years to come, all I had to do was threaten to buy salami to make my mom laugh. - Patty Hansen, Chicken Soup for the Pre-Teen Soul ©

Sample Story 3: My mom took my phone away, and I think I am lucky. You could not pay me enough money to go back to being 13 years old now that I am a graduating. At the time, it did not seem so bad, but thinking back on it, figuring out your teenage years, is so not easy. It is hard enough being a teenager today on social media, but to give a little background on what life was like for me at 13, I had the newest iPhone. Yup, and even then, it seemed like the most difficult time in the world. There is so much pressure and figuring out your life, trying to act grown up, but still understanding that you are so young. When I was 13, I was on the verge of trying to grow up way faster than I should have. A lot of my friends were on the same page too, so it was just basically following along with what everyone else was doing.

On top of that, my spoiled younger sister was 4 years younger at the time, and she was very on top of everything that I was doing. She thought I wore too much eyeliner, straightened my hair way too much – honestly, I think she was a little scared of how fast I was trying to grow up, which I admit I was, but I didn't know it at the time. While trying to grow up too fast, one of the things that I did, for no reason at all, just because I wanted to, was take a picture in my bra and underwear. It was not for anyone, I had no intention behind it, I was just like whatever, let me see what this looks like. It was the first time I had taken a picture like that, and I just wanted to do it for me and to see what I thought I looked like. I should have deleted the picture, but I did not, because I did not realize the severity it could cause. I guess my sister somehow saw the picture, because a few days later, my mom came into my room – in a very nice tone - but let me know that my sister told her and was freaking out about the picture, and my mom was not happy about it either, and decided she was taking my phone away. There was no time frame, she was just taking it until I realized what I was doing. I freaked out and started begging her to let me have my phone back, but she would not listen to me. I was so upset because she would not even give me a chance to explain, and just let me sit there and cry, and walked out of the room. In my eyes, it was so unfair. I knew my friends were doing worse than me, and I legit was not sending it to anyone, I was just bored, but my mom would not listen to me. I was so mad at her; she was running my life.

She took my phone away for so long, and I had no idea what to do with myself for the first little bit. I eventually did not mind it so much, it was a breath of fresh air, but still, it was not fair, and I thought she overreacted. She eventually gave it back 6 weeks later, she took it until I understood not to do that anymore, and I really think she feared how fast I was growing up too. I get it now, it would not have mattered what I said or what my mom said, at that moment in time we would have never agreed. Sometime after this happened to me, I started thinking I am so glad my picture never got leaked because I know it would haunt me every day wondering if it could show up. I'm lucky, I think. - Miss Phoneless, Age 18
SUBMISSION STEPS

STEP 1: Submitter’s contact Information
First Name, Last Name, or Nickname, and your Age
(If you want to leave your first and last name blank, here is where you give us a nickname. It can be a nickname you make up that goes along with your story. We will not be collecting email address from your submission.

STEP 2: Story Information
Story Title (suggest one for us to go by)
Comments

STEP 3: Paste your story or poem in the Goggle form
One page (or up to 1000 words) or poem (14 to 20 lines)

STEP 4: Submit! [By June 12, 2020]