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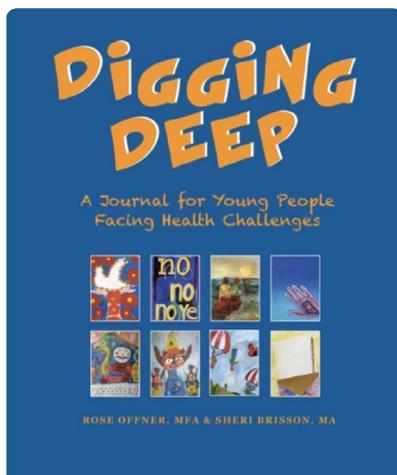
Digging Deep: Who Benefits From Journaling and What Are The Obstacles?

An Interview With Sherri Brisson

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Digging Deep. Sherri Brisson

By **Pat Bass, MD**

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I had the opportunity recently to interview Sherri Brisson, one of the co-authors of *Digging Deep*. This is a wonderful book for adolescents with any chronic illness. *Digging Deep* helps a young adolescent in expressing their feelings about their asthma. Many times parents and doctors fail to recognize some of the impacts chronic illness has on kids-- mostly because we have not given our kids the appropriate outlet.

Take a look at the questions I had for Sherri and her really inciteful answers. After reading the questions and answers let me know if you think journaling could help your child's asthma control.

Are there any particular groups of children that are more likely to benefit than others? Are there any kids who should not participate?

One of our biggest surprises has been the variety of young people that our journal has helped. Two boys I particularly remember were teens with brain tumors, both 16-years old, not the most likely candidates for pouring their hearts out in a journal. One said to his mom, "Look, Mom, Sheri wrote this journal just for me." He could see himself in the journal and could identify with it. The other teen said to me, "You gave this book to the right kid. I can answer *all* of the questions!" It is very empowering when kids realize they already have the answers inside.

Whether a young person has a chronic illness or a disability he or she was born with, I truly feel journaling can help.

All these health challenges may bring up feelings of loss, feeling different, being out of control, or trigger strong emotions, such as anger or sadness. Journaling can help throughout the process, as the young person's relationship to their illness grows and changes over time.

Digging Deep supports kids with physical illness who may have emotional issues stemming from these illnesses.

Our journal was not intend to address the needs of kids with mental illness or learning disorders or kids whose parents or siblings are sick. In fact, kids with these issues have been using *Digging Deep* because there really isn't any other alternative, but this is not our primary audience or the focus of our nonprofit.

Digging Deep is also not intended to replace therapy if needed. We stress to parents, professionals, and the young people themselves that journaling may bring up strong emotions, and they are uncomfortable or concerned, to reach out immediately to a trained professional who is there to help.

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Journaling can truly be started at any point in time—whether it is to record feelings at time of diagnosis or an opportunity to reflect back and gain understanding of their health challenge.

Journaling can help whether young people are reflecting on a particular situation they are grappling with or as they begin to understand the overall role illness has played in

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