



## Letters to a Young Therapist

*Mary Pipher*

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## Letters to a Young Therapist Mary Pipher

Mary Pipher's groundbreaking investigation of America's "girl-poisoning culture," *Reviving Ophelia*, has sold nearly two million copies and established its author as one of the nation's foremost authorities on family issues. In *Letters to a Young Therapist*, Dr. Pipher shares what she has learned in thirty years as a therapist, helping warring families, alienated adolescents, and harried professionals restore peace and beauty to their lives. *Letters to a Young Therapist* gives voice to her practice with an exhilarating mix of storytelling and sharp-eyed observation. And while her letters are addressed to an imagined young therapist, every one of us can take something away from them. Long before "positive psychology" became a buzzword, Dr. Pipher practiced a refreshingly inventive therapy--fiercely optimistic, free of dogma or psychobabble, and laced with generous warmth and practical common sense. But not until now has this gifted healer described her unique perspective on how therapy can help us revitalize our emotional landscape in an increasingly stressful world. Whether she's recommending daily swims for a sluggish teenager, encouraging a timid husband to become bolder, or simply bearing witness to a bereaved parent's sorrow, Dr. Pipher's compassion and insight shine from every page of this thoughtful and engaging book.

## Letters to a Young Therapist Details

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Author : Mary Pipher

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## From Reader Review Letters to a Young Therapist for online ebook

### Kevin says

For the longest time, my favorite 'adult' book was one called 'If You Want To Write.' I love book because you can replace the word 'write' with any of your passions, and the book's words hold true.

'Letters to a Young Therapist' is my new favorite book for the same reason. (although, I'll readily admit that it helps if you're looking at the advice through the lens of understanding people or being in a helping profession). As a teacher, it was easy to make corrolations from Pipher's advice to the needs of my students (and their families). This book literally had me pausing in reflection.

And, if the above isn't enough of an endorsement, i'll admit that after reading the first three chapters of this library book, I jumped online to buy myself a copy. In this age of technology and my Kindle bookshelf, I have been steering away from buying actual books... but 'Letters to a Young Therapist' is definitely a book I want to have on my bookshelf.

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### Jennifer says

I gave this book three stars, and I think it would have enjoyed it more if I had read it while I was trying to decide if I wanted to go into counseling or very early in my educational process. I still consider myself a "young therapist" (doing clinical work for just four years), but I found the book a little lacking in terms of deeper substantive issues related to therapy. This is not a research based or even theoretical book, but it is an anecdotal account of her experience as a therapist written in the form of letters to a fictional student named Laura. At times, I felt like I was sitting around a kitchen table with an older, kind and wise, but sometimes quite dull, therapist telling me stories of the "good ole days". Many of these stories were quite good and I did enjoy several parts of the book, I just felt a little slow going, like a meal of finger foods when I wanted to sink my teeth in something. This made me wonder if I would experience her in a similar way if I was a client in her therapy practice. That is hard to say, because I think most clinicians talk about therapy outside the room differently than they practice in the room.

My favorite part of the book was probably her comparison to how writing is so similar to therapy. I studied English Literature in undergrad and Clinical Social Work in graduate school, and I have often thought about how these areas are so parallel. She says that both jobs involve "spending time in small rooms waiting for inspiration" and "at the end of the day, our backsides hurt and we are not sure if we have done anything lasting". She also writes, "writers and therapists must continually fight our awareness that we are not smart enough or skilled enough to do what we do. Therapists constantly discover that we simply aren't capable of changing human beings. Both jobs are frustrating, demanding and fraught with emotional peril and they are they best jobs around. As William Stafford said, it's really fun if you can stand it". This is just very well-described and very accurate to my own experience.

Here are some other quotes that I enjoyed:

"Families cannot be more honest with you than they are with themselves"

"When you see families remember, they have solved a thousand problems without your help"

"All human beings, not just poets, are metaphor generating creatures"

(Quoting a woman describing her husband) "He is so aggressively dull. He would be happy with anyone who liked to have sex and knew how to grill a bratwurst".

I wished for a little more, but I don't regret reading it.

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### **Jaycee says**

Attn: SW Clinicals-- This book is a must-read! Let me know if you'd like to borrow it. (though I'll warn you now that I highlighted almost the entire thing.)

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### **Diana says**

An awesome book if you work in human services at all, or even if you just like learning about people. Mary Pipher has been doing therapy for something like 30 years, and she's seen just about everything. She has a unique ability to weave a narrative out of a collection of case anecdotes which is somehow universal. I picked this book up years ago, and it is still one of my absolute favorites.

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### **Wendy says**

First of all, Laura must really be someone special to get a whole book written to her. I've been advised I should be happy if I get the required one hour a week chat with a mentor, forget about poetic letters and advice that could become a book.

That aside, I am so on fire about this work (therapy) and this book is kindling. Good, simple, easy to read advice and it's written pretty too. It made me happy.

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### **Paul Baker says**

This a lovely book that can be read by way more than therapists: in fact, it is a great recipe for solving many of life's therapeutic problems: a dash of common sense, a sprinkle of care, and a whopping dose of hope.

I highly recommend this book for everyone!

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### **Sherry says**

This book is an inspiration for anyone studying to become a counselor or who is struggling as a counselor. There are good lessons to be learned from the author's experiences, particularly in terms of patience, accepting imperfection, and always doing one's best. I really enjoyed every moment of it.

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## KC says

More like 2.5 stars. The Dear Laura thing was actually pretty awkward so I skipped those parts each chapter. I took a few valuable things away from the book, otherwise it was underwhelming. I expected much more since the author has been a therapist for so long.

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## Katherine says

I'm picking my way through this book again, because sometimes I like to fantasize about being a therapist. I also like to stare into the photograph of Mary Pipher on the cover of the book; the love, goodwill, and sanity in that woman's face are almost enough to make you burst into tears.

'Letters to a Young Therapist' is simple but fluent; it covers a lot of ground in many short chapters dedicated to different challenges, frustrations, and joys of the therapist's life. It's a short book, but it's packed dense with common sense. It's kind of like plutonium that way. Plutonium for the wannabe-therapist soul.

I reread or -skimmed more than half of it before bed last night. I came away with a renewed sense of how hard and, in a strange but real sense, lonely performing therapy can be. I also gained an admiration for the therapist's willingness to become involved with people who are often at the most difficult, neediest, and least charming ends of their range. Pipher makes doing therapy sound difficult (often in the sense of being tedious or unglamorous, actually) but rewarding. I still think there's something about doing it that, even in our secular-ass place and times, approaches the sacred, and I'm grateful to Mary Pipher for allowing me to explore her profession from the safety and comfort of my armchair.

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## CJ says

I picked this book up while browsing because when I flipped it open to scan a single page, I got caught for 10. She had hooked me, right in the middle of the book, so it had to come home with me. As a counselor, this book appealed to me because I found one of the most overwhelming aspects of providing therapy was the feeling that I wasn't really helping \*enough\*. (And yes, I had completed all my classes, my internship, etc., and knew that there is no way that a counselor, therapist, psychologist, etc. can "fix" anyone else or that we can cure every problem we come across. It was still overwhelming to have someone walk in, sit down, and trust that I was going to be able to point them in the right direction to help them get better.)

It was nice to read about someone who had done some truly valuable work with people, but who had also made some serious faux pas' and only realized it after she had erred, and who could later say "Look, this was what I did that didn't turn out right."

She offers some wonderful general advice to new therapists and also provides a much needed window into why people do this kind of work, all in such an engaging way that it's hard to put down once you start it. It's refreshingly lacking the sickly sweet touchy feely we're-all-wonderful-human-beings-who-need-to-be-valued sentimentality that seems to have pervaded the watered down self help pseudo therapeutic writing of late.

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## Meowbie says

This was a breathtakingly trite book, passed off as a series of saccharine letters to a supervisory grad student called Laura. After the fact, it comes as both a disappointment and a relief to learn that Laura is fictitious. As another reviewer aptly said, Pipher's relationship with Laura borders on inappropriate and the notion of declaring a favourite so emphatically also feels icky.

The title is a tilt towards Rilke, but expect none of Rilke's magic in these pages. The quotable passages that I did glean all ended up being other people's words (e.g. the therapist who said he could probably only productively help clients most like himself). Pipher herself seems to have little depth as a therapist, preferring twee conclusions and homespun advice rather than exploring the gritty boundaries and limits of therapy in the field. And for all her talk of non-judgment, her judgmental tone seeps through jarringly in several places e.g. when she proffers to an imaginary client who has just mentioned his "dysfunctional family", "Let's not worry about what to call it." I would not be happy as a client if my therapist said that to me. There are precious few moments in the book she digs deeper, such as the mother and son whose infighting was the only real connection they shared.

This book was assigned reading in the Orientation class of my Counselling Psych grad course. It is not fun to contemplate an upcoming class discussion by starry-eyed Pipherphiles who gush about how they sipped peach tea with a cat on their lap, just like Mary told them to. It will be up to me to reveal that the emperor has no clothes, to recuse myself from the rest of the discussion and take an honourable zero.

I happened to read Pipher in between Stephen Grosz' "The Examined Life" and Irvin Yalom's "The Gift of Therapy", both of which are brilliant retrospectives on the alchemical relationship between therapist and client. Instead of gold, Pipher delivers lead-covered lead. I read the book a second time, thinking I had been too harsh, but now I only wish for those precious hours of my life back. For readers of the audiobook version, you can also look forward to Eliza Foss' achingly soppy delivery -- the perfect tone for this book.

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## Alexis says

This was an amazing book. At my new job, the therapists I have shadowed tend to be very solution focused. I work mostly with pediatricians who seem to want quick fixes. For some issues, this works, but for others, it's down right silly! Mary Pipher does a wonderful job talking about the beauties of therapy, the pitfalls, and the overall process. Reading it helped me center myself in this new role and actually helped me solidify that I really want to be doing this even though it's hard at times. Also made me desperately want to enter therapy again as a way to process my move, life, relationships, etc. I love therapy! Adding this to my amazon wishlist for Christmas. I feel like it'll be nice to have on my bedside table and just pop open from time to time. Oh, and since it's letters to one of her supervisees, it made me think back on all the wonderful mentors, supervisors, etc that I've had over the years and our interns too. What a neat field we work in!!

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## Brandice says

I'm a longtime fan of Mary Pipher and this book doesn't disappoint. I've wanted to read it for ages and am so glad I finally did. Her insights are timeless, sometimes deceptively simple, and her heart and wisdom always show in everything she offers.

## Mary says

This book actually lands somewhere between "didn't like it" and "it was ok" for me, but - alas - goodreads doesn't allow half-stars.

As I suspected when I realized this was part of a series (called Art of Mentoring), they really should have left the form to Rilke. Pipher's book is endless advice, delivered in a manner so thoroughly forgettable, you can't even remember what you were told on the last page. The anecdotes she offers from her practice as evidence of her points are almost never developed beyond a single, short paragraph, so that stories that could perhaps speak for themselves if presented more fully become instead weak illustrations of points she's made in less interesting ways. In a collection of 25+ letters, I considered roughly two of them worth reading. Boo.

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## Lindsay says

This book was interesting. It didn't give me any new incredible insights on counseling, mostly just reinforced concepts I had already learned at the jail. It doesn't follow a storyline, so if you aren't interested in social work this book is probably not for you. It is written by a "seasoned" therapist in the form of letters to a new therapist explaining what she has learned about people and therapy over the years. Overall, a good read but nothing incredible.

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