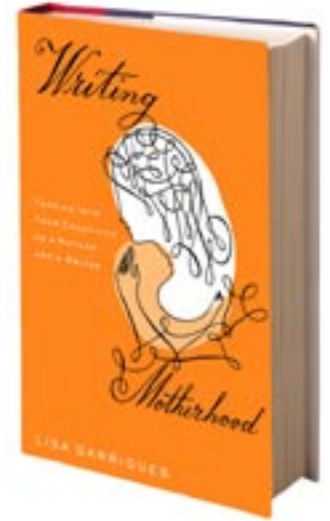


BUILDING BLOCK #3

THE ABC'S OF WRITING MOTHERHOOD



Every mother can become a Writing Mother. All you need to do is follow the ABC's of *Writing Motherhood*. Here are the first ten letters to get you started. In the book, you will find the entire alphabet—A through Z—to keep you going.

A WAKEN TO THE MOMENTS OF MOTHERHOOD. Both the extremes and the routines—the highs, the lows, and the in-betweens—are rich in material for writing. Don't worry about getting it all down or even getting it right. Just try to express some truth about what it means to bear and care for your children on a given day, at a given moment.

B E A WRITING MOTHER. Mothers don't wake up every morning and decide whether to feed their children breakfast. Nor do writers wait around for inspiration or the desire to begin writing. When it is time to write, write. The more you do it, the easier it becomes. Ideally, this is something you do every day for you.

C HOOSE YOUR TOOLS. Writing Mothers need two tools: a Mother's Notebook and a pen. You may later want to transcribe select pages onto a computer, but the notebook is both more portable and more personal. Get in the habit of taking your Mother's Notebook and pen wherever you go. You never know when you will find fifteen minutes to write.

D ATE YOUR MOTHER PAGES. You do not need to begin writing at the top of a new page every day, but be sure to date each entry. You may also want to note the time and place. Simply skip a few lines after your last entry, jot down today's date on the far right margin, and begin writing. Dating your Mother Pages allows you to locate material you may later want to revisit.

E ASE INTO IT. More important than how long—or how much—you write is how regularly you write. Begin with short stretches—two pages (approximately fifteen minutes) each day. In just two Mother Pages, you can easily capture one moment of motherhood.

F ORGET THE RULES. Rules encourage us to think of writing as correct or incorrect, right or wrong, good or bad. When you write your Mother Pages, forget about punctuation, grammar, spelling, accuracy, logic. You can do the housekeeping later. For now, just write.

GENERATE A LIST OF WRITING STARTS. Writing starts are intended to get you started writing. They come in many forms: a directive (*write about bedtime*), a phrase (*on the day you were born . . .*), a word (*hand-me-downs*). Begin a list of writing starts in the back of your notebook. Then, whenever you sit down to write, just copy down a writing start and start writing.

HAVE FAITH. It takes courage and confidence to be a mother today, especially when we feel anything but courageous and confident as we send our children out into the world. And it takes equal amounts of courage and confidence to write about motherhood when no other experience in our lives will dredge up more fear and doubt. Trust that you have something to say and the means to say it.

IGNORE THE CRITIC. Every time you sit down to write, you may hear the voices of your mother, your brother, or your sixth-grade English teacher telling you that you can't write. These are the voices of your self-critic. Ignore them. Silencing these voices is the first step toward liberating your own.

JOT DOWN A WRITING START AND START WRITING. Pick up the string of the first image that comes to mind and fly it like a kite. If the wind changes direction, let your writing change direction. If the wind dies down, rewrite the writing start and fly another kite. There is no right answer. Ten writers responding to the same writing start will come up with ten different writings.