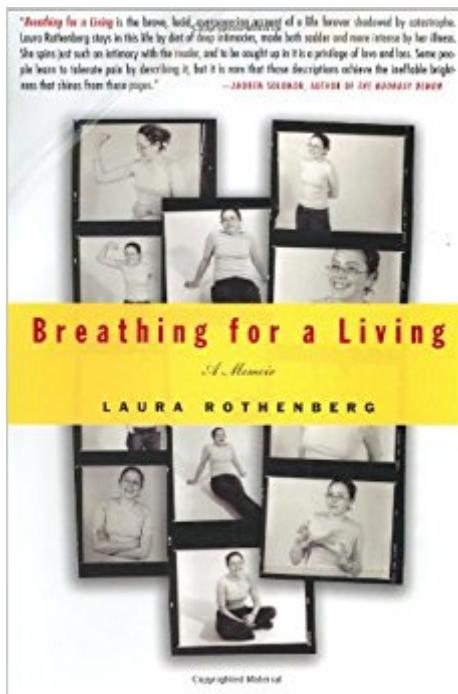


The book was found

Breathing For A Living: A Memoir



Synopsis

A moving account by an extraordinary young woman who mounts a daily struggle with cystic fibrosis in an effort to lead an ordinary life. Twenty-one-year-old Laura Rothenberg has always tried to live a normal life--even with lungs that betray her, and a sober awareness that she may not live to see her next birthday. Like most people born with cystic fibrosis, the chronic disease that affects lungs and other organs, Rothenberg struggles to come to grips with a life that has already been compromised in many ways. Sometimes healthy and able to go to school, other times hospitalized for months on end, Rothenberg finds solace in keeping a diary. In her writing, she can be open, honest, and irreverent, like the young person she is. Yet mixed in with this voice is an incredible maturity about her mortality. The memoir opens with Rothenberg's decision to accept a lung transplant. From the waiting--and all it implies to the surgery, recovery, and her new life, Rothenberg muses on mortality in journal entries and poetry. Through it all, she reveals a will and temperament that is strong and wise despite her years. Laura Rothenberg's story, recorded and shared on NPR's Radio Diaries, was awarded the prestigious Third Coast Audio Festival Award, it also received an unprecedented listener response and generated more e-mail than any other story the producers could recall. Rothenberg's story was also featured in the New York Times and U.S. News & World Report.

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Customer Reviews

It would be easy to assume that the story of Laura Rothenberg's battle with cystic fibrosis is one of a brave young woman staying constantly positive in the face of tremendous adversity. But situations

such as hers are rarely that simple. Thankfully, the portrait that emerges in her memoir, *Breathing for a Living*, is that of a complex and very real human being who experiences joy, anger, despair, and hopefulness while struggling to live the kind of normal life most of her fellow college students take for granted. And while her candor is admirable, what makes Rothenberg a remarkable author is her dedication to just getting words written down on the page at times when many would simply retreat from the world. Through an agonized process of waiting for a lung transplant, she writes down exactly what she's feeling. She writes extensively as her body fights the disease and struggles to accept the new lungs. And as she is shuttled back and forth between her New York home, her academic career at Brown, and numerous emergency hospital stays, she keeps on writing. Diagnosed with cystic fibrosis at three days old, Rothenberg spent much of her life in and out of hospital rooms so her medical knowledge is extensive and well documented. One gets the impression that staying on top of this information helped her feel at least somewhat in control of her own situation and it lends a steady gravity to her emotionally charged memoir. The book is a pastiche of e-mails to friends, journal entries, and the occasional snapshot. It looks very much like a college kid's scrapbook, which, in many ways, it is. Rothenberg's energetic prose is highly informal and probably more guileless than one would see from a more seasoned writer. But that intimacy and simplicity adds to the charm and, as Rothenberg's health deteriorates, the heartbreak as well. By the end of *Breathing for a Living*, the reader loses a friend but gains a greater appreciation of what it means to live. --John Moe

"I'm a typical college student, if there is such a thing," writes Rothenberg in this far from typical work. "Except that I won't be able to look back on my life from an old age." Rothenberg, who died in March at the age of 22, originally wrote these calm, devastating lines in an essay as a freshman at Brown University. During her sophomore year, after Rothenberg became so ill from cystic fibrosis that she had to leave school, she decided to weave this essay into a much longer account. Starting early in 2001, as she waited in Boston for a double lung transplant, and continuing until her death, Rothenberg collected her personal diary entries, poems and copies of the e-mails she wrote to her many friends-dispatches from the battlefield of her own body. Shining through every report, every raw or bittersweet detail, is a fierce dedication to honesty and an immense desire to connect to friends and to life. "We have lungs," one of her doctors calls to tell her early one morning. Rothenberg describes repeating the phrase into the phone to her still-sleeping parents; they were on their feet and packing by the time she repeated the joyous phrase to other friends, who repeated it like a mantra into mobile phones until the waiting room at Boston's Children's Hospital was

overflowing with people who loved her—"Team Laura." Too soon, however, the joy of the transplant and her return to Brown gives way to descriptions of one setback after another, culminating in rejection of the lungs. Refusing to indulge in even a wisp of false hope or consolation, Rothenberg reminds us that there is a power in us that is greater than even the greatest suffering. This slim book will help anyone whose life has been touched by cystic fibrosis, and countless others as well. It is an unforgettably real testament of the strength of one human spirit, and of our common human wish to know and say and be the truth. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc.

I first heard Laura Rothenberg's story on NPR- as a student at Brown she recorded her daily life with Cystic Fibrosis- waking up each day trying to breathe- multiple treatments each day to rid her lungs of the thick mucus that clogged her airways. A typical story of this chronic terminal disease, but told in private, personal terms. Laura was a model for other students her age- she so wanted to live and to love. She went through a bilateral lung transplant but suffered from chronic then acute rejection. She was able to find romantic love with Brian and friendship with her many friends. Whomever Laura knew she touched their lives, and many of these people remember her in their stories in this book. Tragically Laura died at age 22- she was ready to die when the time came, and she helped prepare her loved ones for this loss. People with Cystic Fibrosis are my heroes- they live each day trying to breathe-every day of their lives.

I read this book several years ago, and as a professor of medicine at Harvard, I have given it to many trainees during their clinical training. I also give it to college students before they head off to medical school. I read it again this year, and in a few pages, Laura teaches more about what medicine is really about than any of our professors could in a lifetime. Laura's courage and love of life are inspirational, and her descriptions of being chronically ill but still loving life will make any medical professional better at their job--and a better person. I don't think you can easily teach empathy, but you can learn it from this wonderful memoir. If any of Laura's family reads this, I hope they have some comfort that Laura's memory goes on, and that her brief life is appreciated by many of us who were not fortunate enough to have met her.

Really moving book

...and that made me want to get the book. She was very prolific. Rothenberg was an awesome girl, with an awesome story.

As a nurse I found this book to be so insightful regarding the perspective of living with a terminal illness and the care given by providers-I felt she captured the difficulty of knowing that her life was short-I have recommended this to all the nursing schools in our area-

Love this book so muchxoxoxoxo

One of the best memoirs I have read in recent years, and I've read a few. As a person with CF who also had a lung transplant (more than 2 years ago), I found many personal similarities between myself and Laura, and found myself underlining the passages I related to. There were times where I laughed aloud and other times when I very much related to her feelings of loneliness and isolation.

A wonderful book.

laura was supposed to be in my year at brown, and although i didn't know her, i knew her face as i did many of the other kids at brown (being that we're about 5500 students). i was in one of her classes - the one that her grandmother refers to - and i clearly remember her coughing, the comments on the daily jolt, laura's op-ed piece and the professor's remarks the next class. i remember being so disappointed and angry that the professor actually had to get up in front of our 500 student class and tell us to be respectful of one another.when i listened to laura's piece on npr, i felt chills throughout my body. this was someone i barely knew, but i could feel her strength and energy shining through. reading her memoirs gave me a feeling that i can't explain - i knew some of her close friends at brown and travelling back and forth between home, school, and multiple hospitals while remaining strong for others is such an admirable quality that many of us can't even imagine having.laura is such a unique person with very strong qualities that i find truly amazing. although her memoirs can be saddening, they're a reminder of how lucky we are and how trivial some of the things we complain about really are.

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