

Level 4: Advanced Writers

Winner: Sarah Kim
Newport Beach Public Library

Book: *What to Do When I'm Gone*

Author: Suzy Hopkins and Hallie Bateman

December 4, 2019

Dear Suzy Hopkins & Hallie Bateman,

I appreciate that I got to read your beautiful book WHAT TO DO WHEN I'M GONE.

To be honest, I hesitated for quite a while before reading it even though my daughter insisted that we should read it together. That's mostly because I guessed your book would be a sad and touching story about the death of beloved ones. And I am dreadfully reluctant to speak about death as it is always accompanied by grief of loss. Besides that, I was sick and tired of everything that happened to me so I deemed if I had to read something with her then I would rather choose a funny and humorous book that can comfort me.

However, I have found that your book is not only about the sadness of loss but also about the continuous joy and value of life brimmed with all diversities of life lessons.

Lately, I seemed to be lost not knowing who I am, what I want to do, and how I want to shape my life. I felt like I was all alone and left behind. I was not able to appreciate what I had and could not enjoy my life here as huge responsibility overwhelmed me. I was cynical about everybody while easily faltered with any criticism toward me. So I put countless efforts not to make any mistakes even tiny ones just to make myself look flawless.

I only cared about how others hurt me but did not enough care about how I hurt the people near me. I even built up an invisible high barrier around me letting no one enter in the name of self-defense. I just kept creating excuses and vindications for myself.

All my situations were deteriorating not to mention my relationship with family. I was demotivated and just wasting my time sinking deep down.

While reading this book, it seemed like you're patting my shoulder and giving me a warm encouragement saying that "it's okay if you cannot stand firmly. It's okay you are flopping down and crying. That's all part of life and rite of passage" and "you are doing great."

I paused and looked back at the time when I was self-centered, narrow-minded, pessimistic, and shortsighted. I realized that I could have expressed and shared my fear/anger and asked help instead of grumbling. I could have made as many trial-and-errors as I need to adapt here. I could have taken a detour for looking around and considering others' thoughts and feelings.

Your optimistic attitude on life showed me how I can pleasantly deal with and confront every situation that I am faced with. You taught me that it is more important to have a happy life with others than trying my best without purpose.

Above all, I have learned that respecting and loving myself would be the first step for admiring others.

I will definitely read it again whenever my heart is so full of desolation and loneliness that I need consolation.

Thank you so much,

Sarah Kim