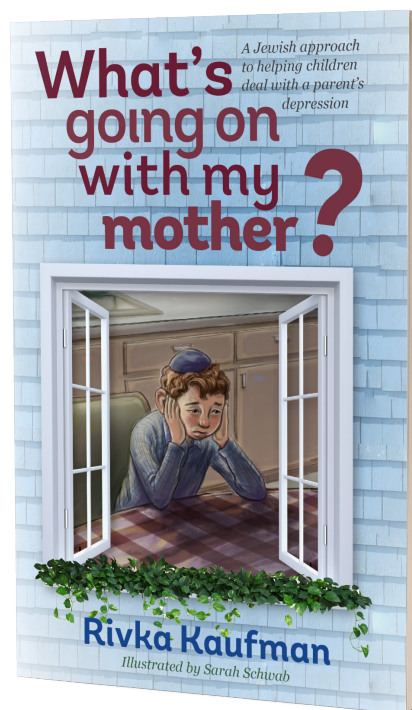


BREAKING NEWS: KIDS NEED THIS BOOK

Unique book by Rivka Kaufman for children of parents suffering from depression or other mental disorders



TITLE: “What’s going on with my mother?”

AUTHOR: Rivka Kaufman

ILLUSTRATOR: Sarah Schwab

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AVAILABLE: Feldheim.com or Amazon

Emotional illness is a difficult phenomenon for everyone; when someone in our family suffers in this way, life changes – sometimes in extreme ways. We become suddenly aware of how much we don’t know, and how important it is to get real information to address the challenge and help our loved ones in a positive and effective way. The tension between our need to resolve the crisis and our desire for life to continue as always can place us in a terrible bind. Add to this the unfortunate stigma that is associated with mental illness, and you have a very intimidating task.

If mental illness is frightening and confusing for adults, it is much more so for children, particularly when it is a parent who suffers. They look to the older people in their lives for safety and stability, and when Mommy or Daddy can’t provide that because they themselves are struggling, it’s scary.

Children need to know what’s going on, and not in the language of diagnostic manuals. Mrs. Rivka Kaufman has given us the tools to do this by encapsulating this gentle but crucial conversation in story form.

The following key points (included in the story) will enable you to connect with your child and reclaim the “teachable moment” with which difficult situations in life present us.

- There are illnesses that affect emotions rather than body parts.
- People suffering from such illnesses often can’t function the way they normally would or want to.
- The person who is suffering doesn’t love you any less because of it.
- The one who is suffering needs extra help, love, and support when they’re going through it.
- It is not the child’s fault.
- It doesn’t make the person who is suffering “crazy” or “bad”.
- There are resources to help.
- It is a courageous, positive, and responsible thing to reach out for help when you need it.
- Families and people who care for each other can come together to support each other and share the load.
- Despite the feeling of being alone, Hashem is always “standing on the other side of the wall” –watching over us and helping us.

-From the Foreword by Tani Burton, LSW, MH, CDEA, psychotherapist and educator

Excerpt from
“WHAT’S GOING ON WITH MY MOTHER?”
BY RIVKA KAUFMAN:

“Hashem decided how to make every person. Hashem decided that some people will have blue eyes, and some people will have green, hazel, or brown eyes. Some people will be tall and some people will be short. Some people will be fat and some people will be skinny. Some people will be healthy and other people will be sick. Yoni, I’m sure you know that people get sick with illnesses that make their bodies feel bad – like colds or strep throat or the flu.”

“Yeah, I know that,” I said.

“But did you know,” asked Bubby, “that people can also get sick with a kind of sickness that hurts their moods and makes them feel different from everyone else?”

“Huh?” I asked quizzically.

“Hurts their moods? What’s that supposed to mean?”

“Well,” said Bubby, “it’s like this. There are many different types of illnesses that affect how a person thinks and feels. For example, there’s ‘anxiety’ – that makes people feel very nervous, worried, and tense all the time. They can even get worried about things that make no sense at all.

“There’s another illness that’s called ‘depression’ – and it makes people feel miserable. It’s true that everyone feels down sometimes, but we can usually feel better pretty quickly – and on our own.

“Depression is different. Depressed people can become so low that it becomes very hard for them to do the regular things that they used to do all the time. All they want to do is stay in bed all day. Sometimes it even becomes hard for them to show the people in their families how much they love and care about them.”

“Oka-a-y,” I said slowly, “but why are you telling me this? What does it have to do with my mother?”

“Well,” said my Bubby softly, “we just found out that your mother has depression. *Baruch Hashem*, your father realized that something was happening to your mother, so he took her to a special doctor called a psychiatrist. The doctor said that your mother has depression, and



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“

I grew up with a father suffering from mental illness. It was not spoken about. We learned to assess our father's status as soon as we got home from school, and if it was a bad day, we made ourselves scarce. If it was a good day, we relaxed a little and enjoyed a semi-normal day. We had no idea what was going on or why and we were absolutely positive it was all our fault. I love Rivka Kaufman's book, "What's going on with my mother?" I wish there had been a book like this in my life when I was young. Buy it for the children in your life who are dealing with a mentally ill relative, even if it's not a parent. In fact all children should read this because all children will, at some point, have a classmate, cousin, neighbor, or other person in their life go through mental illness and this book will help them understand it, not blame themselves, and deal with it appropriately.

-R. Locht, Boston, MA.

that's why she isn't acting the way that she used to act."

"Wow," I said with relief, "you mean my mother is sick, and the strange way that she is acting is not because of me?"

"That's right, Yoni, you got it."

"But Bubby," I asked nervously, "are you sure that it's not my fault? Maybe Hashem is punishing me for all the *aveiros* that I did."

"Yoni," my Bubby said firmly, "I'm a hundred percent sure that it has nothing to do with you. You are not perfect and you don't have to be perfect. You are a wonderful boy, and I know that Hashem and your parents are very proud of you."

"Proud of me? What do you mean proud of me? My mother has no interest in me anymore. How can you say she's proud of me?"

"Yoni, my sweet Yoni, listen carefully to me. This is exactly what I'm trying to explain to you. Your mother loves you so very much, and she is super proud of you. She is just having a very hard time showing it, because she is sick with depression."

"Bubby, if it's not my fault, then why did my mother get sick with depression?" I demanded.

"You are asking a very good question," Bubby answered, "and the truth is that it is hard to know. Sometimes, the chemicals in a mother's body get out of balance when she has a baby. Or it can happen to anyone if they are very tired, worried, or stressed. For your mother, we don't really know for sure. The chemicals stopped working right, and she needs some special medicine and a special doctor to help her get better."

"The only thing that I can tell you is that Hashem is much smarter than you or me, and Hashem knows what He is doing – even though it's very hard to understand."

"But Bubby," I protested, "I don't get it. Okay, so even if my mother is sick, why doesn't she just try to make herself happy again? She's not a baby – she's an adult!"

"Believe me, Yoni," answered Bubby, "it's not so simple. Your mother really wishes that she could just make herself happy again. She is trying her best to be cheerful, to take care of you, and to show you how much she loves you, but it's not in her control. It really isn't."

"..Your mother just started taking medicine, and she is also going to go to a special place called therapy to help herself feel better."

That got me scared.

"Medicine and therapy?!" I blurted out. "My mother



doesn't need to take medicine or go to therapy. Medicine and therapy are for people with problems! What if my friends find out?" I moaned. "They'll make so much fun of me."

... "Yoni, you're making the same mistake that lots of people make," said Bubby sympathetically. "Medication and therapy are for people who are brave and who want to get better! Everybody has problems and everybody goes through some hard times. Wonderful, successful, happy people can get depressed. They are still wonderful! Medication and therapy are the help they need. There's absolutely nothing to be embarrassed about. Even if people make fun of you, you know the truth."

"You know that your mother is a very special person who is just going through a hard time. It isn't her fault that she is depressed – just like it isn't somebody's fault if they catch the flu or break a leg, *chalilah*. Things happen. I am proud of your mother for being so brave and doing the right thing, even if it means that people who don't understand that depression is an illness may look down at her."

"Yeah, I guess you're right," I said. "No matter what people say I know that my mother is the best..." ❧

B"H

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