



**BOOK CLUB KIT**

This is the most personal book I've ever written.

I didn't plan for it to be that way. I set out to write about motherhood—after ten years of writing a women's column in Israel's most widely read newspaper. I wanted to reflect on a decade of stories about home, family, and what it means to be a woman and mother now.

But then something unexpected happened: I started writing the truth. Not just pieces of it—the whole truth. The truth that comes after the fairy tale ending, after the “happily ever after.”

I wrote about staying home after giving birth while your partner goes out into the world—working, growing, succeeding. I wrote about how no one really prepares us for what motherhood is. And I wrote something I had never shared before: That my beautiful little girl, the one who looks like a painting, is a child with special needs. She doesn't speak. She is autistic. And if being a mother is hard, being a mother to a child with special needs is even harder.

When the book originally came out, I was stunned by the response. It became a bestseller in Israel. Women told me they saw themselves in its pages. I had written my story—but more than that, I had written our story. The one we sometimes don't even share with our best friend.

Those early years of becoming a family can shake the strongest couples. But it's also possible to survive them—to find light, to laugh, and to hold on to the good moments. But first, we have to be honest.

You won't always be amazing. Neither will I. And that's perfectly okay.

With warmth,  
Lihi Lapid



# Q&A with Lihi Lapid



**1. What prompted the decision to weave your personal story with a fictional narrative centered around the princess? How did you balance the personal with the fictional when writing *I Wanted to Be Wonderful*?**

When I began writing this book, I didn't set out to tell my own story. I wanted to write about motherhood in general. But writing is always personal, and slowly, my own life started to seep in. I didn't plan it—it was stronger than me.

It was frightening to expose myself and my family so openly, but that's the essence of literature and art: to push past your own boundaries in pursuit of deeper truth. To speak the things we usually leave unspoken. I believe that's why this book has touched so many hearts—because there is an honest, raw truth in it. A truth that women often carry in silence.

**2. This book is extremely intimate and vulnerable, particularly in regard to feeling a loss of identity following the new title of “mother.” What made you decide to write about a topic that is often considered taboo?**

I wrote this book because I needed to scream. I wanted to tear off the sweet, pink mask that hides the real cost of motherhood—the part no one talks about.

We grow up being told that women can do anything. And yes, we can. But we often pay a heavy price—especially when transitioning from being a couple in love to becoming a family. It's usually the woman who's expected to slow down, to step back, to give up her dreams. So many marriages end. So many couples stop loving each other. And we need to talk about it.

**3. In addition to being a novelist, you are also a journalist. How do these two crafts differ? Is there a way that you connect your photography with your writing?**

I wrote a weekly newspaper column for 15 years and often took my own photographs to accompany it.

But writing a novel is a completely different rhythm. A column requires you to stay connected to real life and meet constant deadlines. A novel demands that you step away from everyday life—it needs space, silence, and time.

This book came out of me like a scream. I had to get it out of my body.

Once it was inside me, I couldn't let it stay there. I needed to put it on paper. I wanted every woman I know to read it and feel seen. To finally hear someone speak the hidden truths of motherhood.

**4. The word “wonderful” is repeated throughout this book as a mantra for what the narrator and the princess long for. What does being “wonderful” mean to you now?**

Back then, “wonderful” meant achieving the perfect life: the perfect family, the perfect house, the perfect image.

Today, I know that being wonderful means listening to myself. It means giving myself permission not to be perfect. It means recognizing that I have the right to follow my dreams and to be happy. I don't have to be everything to everyone all the time. I'm allowed to take a step back and take care of myself, too.

**5. This novel was first published in Israel under the title *Woman of Valor*. What do you hope your new American readers will take away from it?**

I hope to remind readers that family life is a bumpy road. It never goes exactly as planned.

We can't control who our children become. Marriage is not always easy. But if we learn to accept our partners and our children—as well as ourselves—with all our flaws, we can build a home full of love. Not perfection, but connection.

**6. What advice would you give to mothers who want to pursue their own dreams while still being present for their children?**

Looking back, I realize it's okay to slow down for a while. Children grow, and we gradually get our freedom back. But it's also important not to completely let go of your dreams. You can pause—but don't disconnect for too long.

And above all, make sure the people around you understand: just as you're there for them, they need to be there for you. That's part of love, too.

**7. Are you working on any new projects? Can you share what you're writing or photographing next?**

I'm currently finishing the filming of a six-episode TV series based on my book *On Her Own*. It's such a privilege—pure magic—to see the characters I created come to life. I've absolutely fallen in love with television. The most beautiful part is that it's a collaborative process. After so many years of writing alone, just me and my thoughts, it's amazing to create something as a team.

# Letters To The Author

**Below are letters to the author which were included in the original manuscript of *I Wanted to be Wonderful*.**

Many times, when you write about your children, I cry. I'm not a depressive type – quite the opposite. I'm usually happy. The thing is that I've been trying to get pregnant for the last two years, with no success, and I'm not alone in this. We all know what menstrual pains are, but we don't know how painful our menstruation is when we don't want it to arrive. Only someone in a situation similar to mine can understand. I am writing to you and hoping that you'll print these words for the sake of all those kind souls, the majority of them women, who know you for one year, five years, and sometimes only five minutes, and ask: "Don't you want kids? Why? Because of the money?" People find so many ways to nose their way into our wombs and twist the knife just a little bit more. I want them to know that it doesn't really demonstrate friendliness or interest. Whether we've decided that we don't want children, or that we have no way to sustain a child, or we're having fertility issues, it's simply nobody's business. Stop with this nosiness. Please stop. You're hurting us terribly. —Shoshana

You wrote, sadly, about the shorts that you decided you'd no longer wear. I thought so as well. And it became intolerable. I developed ugly lines of bitterness, an awful despair, and such an obsession toward my body and the mirror that I craved for old age to redeem me from my fixation on my inconsolable, unsatisfied, starved, and treacherous body. As a former photographer, you know how destructive it is to let an external glance – male, female, or your own – destroy your body image. I come from this awful, painful, desperate misery, and I have no husband or children to comfort me because I wasted my twenties on my body image, on the worship of beauty, and on the things women put themselves through – diets and eating disorders and everything that causes me to cringe when I look back at those years. What a shame. You at least have a home, and a job, and all sorts of gifts, and a lot of luck. You have a place to contain your pain, and that's much more important than shorts that will contain your thighs. Don't be sad. —Sarah

Can it be that we've really reached a stage in which everything is more important than myself? After ten years of marriage and two children, I can barely understand what I want. And even when I express the slightest interest in something a little bit unusual, it always scares me to try. —Betty

From the early hours of the morning, I wait for noon to roll around so that they'll go to sleep, and when they wake up, I am already planning ahead for the evening bath. I bathe them at 7:45 in the evening, there's a story immediately after that, and then straight to bed. I need this time for myself, this quiet. My husband calls me a robot. Every morning I say, "Grow up, already; get married and leave home," and they're still tiny (two and a half years old and eight months). Everyone keeps telling me to enjoy it while they're still small, because it just gets harder as they grow up. But for now, it's hard enough for me to get up at six o'clock in the morning to the sounds of the baby crying, and his brother harassing me and calling out, "Mommy, he's crying!" —Kayla

**Read more letters to the author that were included in the original manuscript [HERE!](#)**



# Thank you for reading!

If you selected *I Wanted to Be Wonderful* for your book club, we would love to hear about it! Please follow and tag us on social media:

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paperback, e-book, and audiobook  
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