

Is literature good for your mental health? This writer says it is



Mexican author Jaime Alfonso Sandoval explains how books can help you through tough times.

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Mexican author [Jaime Alfonso Sandoval](#) says that **books** can be by your side during **difficult moments** or **times of crisis** on your journey through life.

In one of his works, the author of ***Los fantasmas de Fernando*** (Fernando's Ghosts) addresses some issues related to **mental health** and believes that people can **find refuge** in **books**.

*"Over 52% of young Mexicans suffer from anxiety. One way to purge and reset that is through **writing**."*

*"It doesn't matter what **you write even if it's only for yourself**. It's the start of a **therapeutic process**; although it's different and not the same as undergoing therapy, it helps," he said.*



Jaime Alfonso Sandoval, author of 'Los fantasmas de Fernando' (Fernando's Ghosts). Photo: Diego Romero

Jaime Alfonso Sandoval is an author who writes for children, teenagers, and young adults, encouraging them to **ask for help in times of difficulty** as his characters do.

*"Don't think that just because you have problems, your life is over and done. On the contrary, it's about to start; you have to start a new life because it's not normal to feel pain, it's not normal to **live with a secret that hurts**.*

*"We all have secrets but if that secret causes you pain, you need to ask for help. In all my books, I try to include characters and stories in which **people get help**," he added.*

CONECTA shares five tips with you from the Mexican author **on finding companionship in reading and writing**.

"It doesn't matter what you write even if it's only for yourself; that moment is the start of a therapeutic process."

1. Don't be afraid

The Mexican author's first piece of advice is not to **be afraid** and not to wait until you are academically ready to enter the world of literature.

*"When someone says, 'First I'm going to study literature; then I'm going to do a diploma, a master's degree and a doctorate. I'm not ready to start writing yet', I always tell them **not to be afraid**."*

*"It doesn't matter if no one reads them, **the main thing is to come up with ideas**, share them, and then decide if you want to write in a particular genre or just express yourself," he explained.*

2. Don't judge yourself

For Jaime Alfonso, **writing without judging yourself** is a good way to start expressing your emotions and organizing your thoughts.

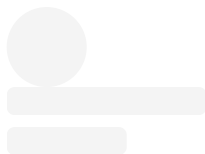
*"You need to **give yourself some space without judging yourself** because what we normally do is engage in **internal self-criticism**, especially if we grew up with an adult -a mother or father- constantly judging us.*

*"You start **imagining inner voices** that always judge you because even when you're not with your childhood critics, you can still hear them passing judgment," he said.*

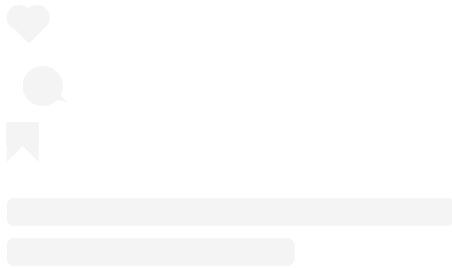
Saying no to those inner voices will prevent you from suffering from writer's block, which is why the author invites you to silence the people judging you, even if you are the one doing it.

*"I have come across many students who want to write but hold back because **they are turning into their own worst critics**.*

*"So, the first thing I recommend is to silence those inner voices. **People passing judgment** (yourself included) are not invited to the party. Silence them."*



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3. Put your ideas into words as a healing process

Escribir es un proceso que ayuda a sanar el interior, así lo considera Jaime Alfonso.

Jaime Alfonso believes **that writing is a process that stimulates internal healing**.

Consequently, he encourages young people and teenagers to **write** to themselves and even to people who are no longer part of their lives.

*“You can just let it flow out of you; you could **write a letter**. You could write a letter to anyone even though it may never be read.*

*“Perhaps your father or grandfather are no longer with you, but you want to write a letter because you want to express and make sense of feelings bottled up inside you, so **write it all down**.*

"It doesn't matter if you keep it and tear it up later - you've managed to get those feelings out," he said.

He added that putting **ideas and feelings into words is a healing process.**

"It's something I always recommend. It's there, within reach, but few dare to take the first step; the second and third steps will be much easier. The process of putting your ideas into words is also a powerful healing process," he said.



Jaime Alfonso Sandoval in conversation with CONECTA. PHOTO: Diego Romero

4. Keep a book by your side

The author believes that people who say they don't like reading **haven't found 'their book.'**

Jaime Alfonso explains that this special book can be found by genre, author or subject matter: you're sure to come across something that connects with you.

*"Books find the right words for **feelings you don't know how to express** and become lifelong companions.*

*"They become '**literary homes' and safe spaces** for reflection where you can find answers and gain an understanding of the world and your place in it,"* he said in an interview with CONECTA.



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5. You don't know where to start? Here are a few authors you can consult

One book that can help you through difficult times is ***Los fantasmas de Fernando*** (Fernando's Ghosts) by Jaime Alfonso Sandoval as the story touches on topics such as violence, grief, and forgiveness.

Moreover, the author recommended other **literary works** that can help you at difficult moments.

- *Los fantasmas de Fernando (about violence, grief, forgiveness).*
- *36 kilos by Mónica Brozon (eating disorders).*
- *Las sirenas sueñan trilobites (Mermaids Dream of Trilobites) by Martha Riva Palacio Obón (violence).*
- *Supernaturalia by Norma Muñoz Ledo (magical beings of Mexico).*
- *Books authored by Antonio Malpica and Ana Romero.*

FIL Monterrey 2025

Lectures, tributes to renowned authors, chats, workshops, activities for children, and more were offered at the fair organized by **Tec de Monterrey**, at which this year's special guest was **Colombia**.

More than **700 authors** from twelve different countries came together at the book fair held at Cintermex in Monterrey.

*"This **year's Monterrey International Book Fair is very special**. Having Colombia as our guest of honor is something we're looking forward to; it fills us with dreams and possibilities,"* said Juan Pablo Murra, Rector of Tecnológico de Monterrey.

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