

# Letter to Educators

In these unprecedented times, when space and access to food is limited and comparative suffering is prevalent, my hope is that *Taking Up Space* will help readers recognize how much they matter and see that, if something negative is taking up space in their minds, even if there isn't a name for it, they should ask for help.

As I was writing *Taking Up Space*, there were many moments when I thought about walking away, because telling this story was painful. I was scared to be honest about the mixed-up way I saw myself growing up—as a person who wasn't worth being loved or being fed. Like Sarah, the main character in this book, I felt I was taking up too much space in the world. And food was starting to take up all the space in my mind.

Even though learning to read was hard for me because I had undiagnosed ADHD—an experience I wrote about in *Focused*—books were always safe. In the library and in my local bookstore, I found stories about characters who were different, like me, in a back brace, which I explored in *Braced*. It also helped that in these special places there were always snacks.

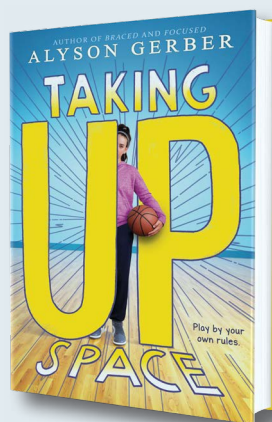
As a kid, I spent a lot of time comparing my problems to other people's struggles and convincing myself that what I was going through didn't matter, when in reality everyone deserves to get the help they need.

*Taking Up Space* is about what happens when the adults you rely on aren't always dependable. And how bad information about food and bodies can get twisted up in your mind until the wrong facts start to mess up the way you see everything—even yourself. This is happening to a lot of kids—almost half of American children want to be thinner. It's about how puberty can make you feel uncomfortable and also strong. Ultimately, this book is about learning to trust that you're worth believing in, even on days you don't win or get picked, and about finding the courage to love yourself and to stand up for what you deserve.

Love,  
**Aly Gerber**



**Alyson Gerber** wrote the critically acclaimed novels *Taking Up Space*, *Braced*, and *Focused* based on her own childhood experiences. She is a graduate of The New School's MFA in Writing for Children and lives in Brooklyn, New York, with her husband and daughter. Visit her at [alysongerber.com](http://alysongerber.com) and find her everywhere else at [@alysongerber](https://twitter.com/alysongerber).



**Ages 8–12**  
**Grades 3–7**  
**HC: 9781338186000**  
Also available as an  
ebook and audiobook

# Educator Resources for *Taking Up Space*

## Organizations

- **Action for Healthy Kids**  
[actionforhealthykids.org](http://actionforhealthykids.org)  
Action for Healthy Kids helps kids thrive by bringing families and schools together to ensure students have access to safe places to play and be active, nutritious foods, and healthy, supportive experiences.
- **Alliance for Eating Disorders Awareness**  
[allianceforeatingdisorders.com](http://allianceforeatingdisorders.com)  
The Alliance for Eating Disorders Awareness is a national non-profit organization dedicated to the outreach, education, early intervention, support, and advocacy for all eating disorders.
- **ANAD: National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders**  
[anad.org](http://anad.org)  
ANAD is the leading nonprofit in the U.S. providing free, peer support services to anyone struggling with an eating disorder, regardless of age, race, gender identity, sexual orientation, or background.
- **Child Mind Institute**  
[childmind.org/topics/eating-eating-disorders](http://childmind.org/topics/eating-eating-disorders)  
Child Mind Institute offers information to help body image issues, kids' eating habits, building children's self-esteem, and articles on kids' nutrition and treating eating disorders in children of all ages.
- **Eating Disorder Hope**  
[eatingdisorderhope.com](http://eatingdisorderhope.com)  
Eating Disorder Hope's mission is to offer hope, information, and resources to individual eating disorder sufferers, their family members, and treatment providers. The organization began with the help and advice of colleagues, professors, and other organizations specializing in eating disorders.
- **Feeding America**  
[feedingamerica.org](http://feedingamerica.org)  
Feeding America® is the largest hunger-relief organization in the United States. Through a network of 200 food banks and 60,000 food pantries and meal programs, they provide meals to more than 40 million people each year. Feeding America also supports programs that prevent food waste and improve food security among the people they serve; educates the public about the problem of hunger; and advocates for legislation that protects people from going hungry.
- **FNS: Food and Nutrition Service (US Dep of Agriculture)**  
[fns.usda.gov](http://fns.usda.gov)  
The FNS mission is to increase food security and reduce hunger by providing children and low-income people access to food, a healthful diet, and nutrition education in a way that supports American agriculture and inspires public confidence
- **FRAC: Food Research & Action Center**  
[frac.org](http://frac.org)  
FRAC improves the nutrition, health, and well-being of people struggling against poverty-related hunger in the United States through advocacy, partnerships, and by advancing bold and equitable policy solutions.
- **HAES: Health At Every Size**  
[haescommunity.com](http://haescommunity.com)  
Health at Every Size aims to help people recognize that health outcomes are primarily driven by social, economic, and environmental factors, requiring a social and political response. It also supports people of all sizes in adopting healthy behaviors.
- **MEDA: Multi-Service Eating Disorders Association**  
[medainc.org](http://medainc.org)  
MEDA provides education about eating disorders and their underlying causes to develop a compassionate community that promotes hopefulness and supports healing. They offer a variety of services to support individuals and loved ones through the various stages of their journey.
- **National PTA: Building Healthy Minds and Bodies**  
[pta.org/home/family-resources/health/Hunger](http://pta.org/home/family-resources/health/Hunger)  
National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) offers resources and webinars to engage and empower PTAs and parents, including issues of food insecurity and tips on how to reduce food insecurity within their schools and for their families.
- **NEDA: National Eating Disorders Association**  
[nationaleatingdisorders.org](http://nationaleatingdisorders.org)  
The National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA) is the largest nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting individuals and families affected by eating disorders, and serves as a catalyst for prevention, cures, and access to quality care.

## Instagram Accounts

- **@bodyconfidencecanada**  
Home of Body Confidence Canada Awards, National Campaign #SizeismSUCKS & Body Confidence Awareness Week founders.
- **@childmindinstitute**  
This independent nonprofit is dedicated to transforming the lives of children and families struggling with mental health and learning disorders.
- **@NEDA**  
The National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA) supports those affected by eating disorders.
- **@proud2bmeus**  
The National Eating Disorders Association online community for young people who want to change the way we talk about food, weight & body image.
- **@recoverwithmeda**  
Multi-Service Eating Disorders Association (MEDA) provides treatment, support, professional training, and education around eating disorders.