



Home for a While: Interview With the Author



The foster care experience can create feelings of uncertainty, mistrust, and inadequacy. Author Laura Kerstein wanted to show how respect, kindness, and understanding can help a child build resilience and recognize their strengths. We interviewed her about creating *Home for A While*.

You can purchase the full book with 20% off and free domestic shipping [here](#). Enter code MPKIDS20 at checkout.

Magination Press: What inspired you to write *Home for A While*?

Laura Kerstein: Hope inspired me to write *Home for A While*. For years, I worked with children in and out of foster care. They struggled to make meaning out of their worlds and of themselves. I wanted to write a book that not only paid homage to them, but also offered a way to help ALL children see their strengths. I longed to add some light to dark times, and highlight the incredible resilience and fortitude of the children with whom I'd worked. I also wanted to offer emotion regulation strategies that any child might embrace. Finally, I worked with wonderful, caring foster parents, and I wanted to show the positive ways a person can impact another. So... I hope this book gives children and families hope.

MP: Why do children need books about the experience of foster care?

LK: All children need to see all different types of families represented in books. As Dr. Bishop said, books need to be "windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors." Children need to not only see themselves in books, but also learn about the lives of other children. As authors, we have a responsibility to make sure all children are represented in literature. I wanted both the children with whom I worked to see themselves in a book, as well as other children to see a different type of family situation.

MP: Do you have experience with foster care—as a child, as a parent, or as a practitioner?

LK: For years, I worked with children in foster care, on the brink of foster care, or who had been in foster care in the past. The children with whom I worked were so incredibly resilient and strong. Calvin is a combination of all of those wonderful children.

MP: Tell me about Maggie, the foster mom. Who was your inspiration?

LK: I have had the opportunity to work with incredibly caring and committed foster parents. Just as Calvin is a combination of many different children, Maggie is a blend of many different foster parents. Fun fact: I chose the name Maggie because we had the most amazing, intuitive, sweet, and loving rescue dog named Maggie. She passed away, but her unconditional love will remain in our hearts forever.

MP: You included some calming strategies in the story. Maggie models breathing deeply, playing with clay, and going outside. She encourages Calvin to shoot some hoops as well. How did you choose those activities and what role does modeling play in helping kids learn these skills?

LK: I specifically chose these strategies because they combine sensory input and high interest activities. I also incorporated positive thinking, a strength-based approach, and cognitive-behavioral strategies, like flipping our thinking. In Calvin's situation, his negative thoughts led to negative feelings. His negative feelings led to actions that didn't always work the way he wanted. His challenges could've been viewed as "behavioral" problems, or they could've been viewed as Maggie did, through a strength-based lens. Each of the strategies I chose were activities that were based upon Calvin's interests and strengths. In addition, breathing deeply offered a way to diffuse the situation and help Calvin center himself so that he was able to access the strategies.

Helping children see their strengths is incredibly powerful. Modeling plays a critical role in helping children buy into strategies and believe in their effectiveness. The more children see a positive example, the more readily they'll adopt different strategies. We can all be superheroes like Calvin!

MP: What was it like to see your illustrator Natalia Moore's interpretation of your words? Was it your idea or hers to have Maggie and Calvin be different races?

LK: It was amazing to see Natalia Moore bring Maggie and Calvin to life. She added elements to the book that make it so much richer. She captured their personalities so beautifully. I always ask for my books to be culturally diverse. That is really important to me. It goes back to "windows, mirrors, and sliding doors." I believe the decision regarding Maggie and Calvin's race was ultimately Natalia's, but we all weighed in.

MP: What do you like to do when you aren't writing?

LK: I smiled when I read this question. I love writing so much that I write in almost all of my spare time. When I'm not writing, I love reading, taking baths, exercising, spending time with my family, and taking hikes or walks. I love gardening in the summer as well.

MP: Is there a fun fact about you that readers might not know that you'd like to share?

LK: I have a standing desk, but instead of working with two feet on the floor, I love working with one leg on the desk flamingo-style. It probably looks very strange, but it feels great to me.

MP: What was your favorite children's book when you were growing up?

LK: My favorite picture book was *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein. I remember listening to my third-grade teacher read it. As she read it, she cried. It was at that moment, I realized the power of books. I also LOVED reading *Pippi Longstocking*. I wanted to be as fearless and free as she was.