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TURN PERSONAL STRUGGLES INTO BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

By Laura Backes

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by Laura Backes, Publisher, Children's Book Insider, the
Newsletter for Children's Writers

Suppose you've just gone through a divorce and lost custody of your kids. Or a loved one has recently died of cancer. Or you struggled in school as a child because you have dyslexia.

Many writers turn difficult periods in their lives into books for children, hoping to help young readers through similar painful experiences. Here are some tips to keep in mind when creating and selling books based on real-life events:

Remember that you're writing a children's book, not a personal essay intended to purge your soul from a painful memory. Children want to read about how they feel. Many writers create a child character and tell the story through that character's eyes. Don't write in first person if the "I" is you, the adult author. Instead of explaining how bad you feel that your kids no longer live with you, show how a five-year-old character feels about only getting to see Daddy every other weekend.

Books for younger children (up to age eight) centering around a personal crisis are generally most effective if the author uses a fictional vehicle for imparting the information. If you want to stick closer to nonfiction, make sure the book focuses on the child in the center of the event, and is told in a narrative format with a beginning, middle and end. Older children can

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handle more traditional self-help books, with each chapter concentrating on a specific aspect of the problem. However, interspersing the advice with personal anecdotes from other children who have gone through the same thing will make the information more appealing and relevant to the readers.

Targeting appropriate publishers with these manuscripts is important. Look in subject index of Children's Writer's & Illustrator's Market under "Self Help" and "Special Needs" for publishers. Peruse the children's nonfiction section of a large bookstore, and read reviews in Publisher's Weekly, School Library Journal and Horn Book (trade magazines found in most libraries)

to see which publishers do similar types of books. Always send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to the children's editorial department asking for writer's guidelines before submitting your manuscript. You can also look at books written for parents to help their children cope with an illness, loss or divorce, and query the publisher asking if they'd like to publish a children's book on the same topic.

Though many mainstream publishers are interested in books that deal with special issues, some topics have too narrow an audience for a large house to market the book successfully. In this case, many authors have elected to self-publish. If you get several personal rejection letters from editors who praise the book but say the audience isn't broad enough, you might consider publishing it yourself. But self-publishing should be approached cautiously; color illustrations are essential for picture books, making them very expensive to produce. And you must be prepared to devote at least a year of your life to selling and distributing your book. Most self-published books are sold primarily through direct mail. Can you purchase mailing lists of parents with children who could benefit from your book? Stories on adoption, specific childhood illnesses, or those that might fit in a pediatrician's waiting room or hospital gift shop are examples of books with a very targeted audience. Dan Poynter's *The Self-Publishing Manual* (Para Publishing) and *The Complete Guide to Self-Publishing* by Tom and Marilyn Ross (Writer's Digest Books) are two good resources to check out before making the commitment to self-publish.

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Laura Backes is the author of "Best Books for Kids Who (Think They) Hate to Read" from Random House. She's also the publisher of Children's Book Insider, the Newsletter for Children's Writers. For more information about writing children's books, including free articles, market tips, insider secrets and much more, visit Children's Book Insider's home on the web at <http://write4kids.com>

Audio Books For Children

By Paton Jackson

Tired of looking for the solutions for stopping the "Are we there yet?" questions? Looking for an educative modern method that will make your children pleased? The solution might be audio books. Find out in the following article, the benefits and uses of audio books for children.

Audio books for children are actually audio versions of children's books. You may think of audio books for children as a perfect way to pass the time at home or when traveling. Your child may listen to the audio book using a mobile device as a CD player to listen to audio books on CD, an MP3 player to listen to downloaded audio books or a walkman to listen to books on tape.

The narration is done by the author or by a professional actor (In some audio books for children there are several actors). In some audio books there is music or sound effects. So what are the benefits of getting your child the latest Harry Potter audio book? Well, Listening to audio books broadens the vocabulary, teaches correct pronunciation, develops the imagination of your child, encourages the child to read other books of the author and more than all makes your child happy. Encourage your children to listen to audio books that they can not read yet - think of the audio books as an expansion of the old fashion books and as a substitute.

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