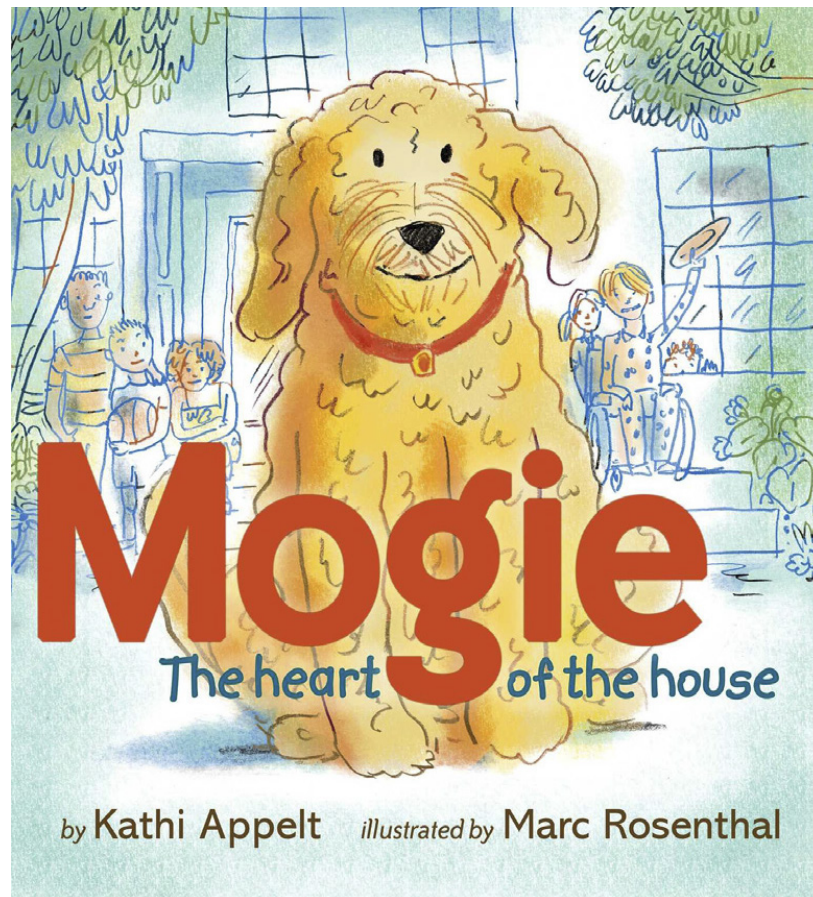


# DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR COUNSELORS AND PARENTS

Guide created by Martha A. Askins Ph D. and Katia Goga



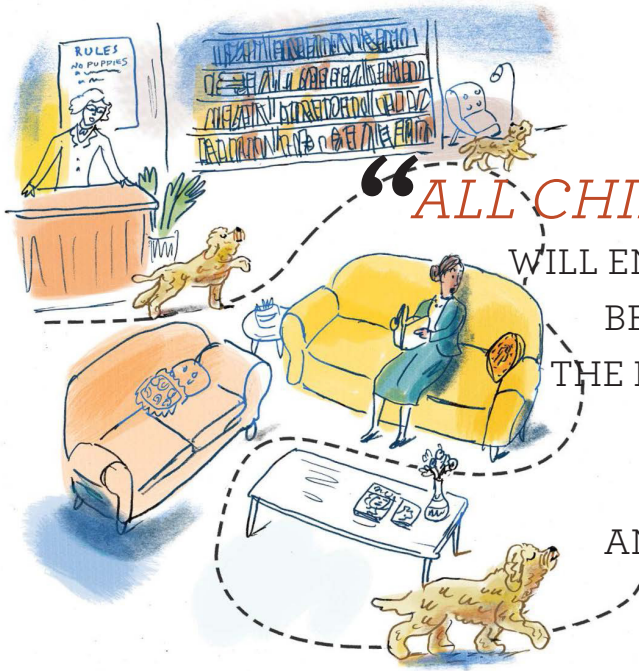
Kathi Appelt is an award-winning American author of books for children and teens. For the first time, her exceptional writing talents are paired with the impeccable, movement-filled drawings of celebrated illustrator Marc Rosenthal. Together, they present the wonderful, inspiring true story of *Mogie: The Heart of the House*.

Mogie - the “ball-chasing, tail-wagging, moon-howling pup,” finds his true calling in a special house in the big city that is modeled after the beloved Ronald McDonald Houses that serve as a home away from home for children with serious medical illnesses and their families. Mogie knows just what to do to bring comfort and cheer to children, like Gage - a “ball-chasing, race-running, and back-flipping” boy and Antonia - a “toe-dancing, jump-roping, and cartwheel-spinning” girl, who live in the special house while receiving medical care at nearby hospitals and clinics. With hopeful themes of perseverance and social support, the story provides encouragement for children and families facing medical treatment. All children will enjoy this story, because it gently presents the emotional subjects of coping with difficult life challenges and the important role of social support.

The storyline and valuable life lessons imparted in *Mogie: The Heart of the House* provide excellent conversation starters for teachers, counselors, health-care providers, and parents

to share with children. This guide was created to help facilitate meaningful discussions and activities about the happenings and characters of this heart-warming book. As children engage in critical thinking skills and introspection - with the exercises provided in this guide - they can be expected to develop:

- Enhanced comfort with talking about medical issues;
- Greater ability to identify, talk about, and manage their own feelings;
- Increased sensitivity to the needs and challenges faced by children receiving medical treatment;
- Pro-social actions they can initiate to help themselves, siblings, and/or friends with medical treatment; and
- An appreciation for the amazing, unconditional love shared between dogs (and other special pets) and humans and the power that such bonds have to foster happiness and healing.



“ALL CHILDREN WILL ENJOY THIS STORY, BECAUSE IT GENTLY PRESENTS THE EMOTIONAL SUBJECTS OF COPING WITH DIFFICULT LIFE CHALLENGES AND THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF SOCIAL SUPPORT.”

## DISCUSSION AND ACTIVITIES FOR THE SPECIAL HOUSE IN THE BIG CITY

**DISCUSSION:** Look at the two-page illustration of the special house.

- What makes the special house feel welcoming and inviting to children and families?
- Who are the guests of the special house?
- If you were a guest at the special house, what is the first thing you would want to do?
- The families who stay at the special house visit from all over the United States and all over the world. From which states or countries might they come from?

**ACTIVITIES:** Build a special house with your favorite building or craft materials. Add features, furniture, and/or activities that would make the house a fun and comfortable place for children and their families to stay. Use your imagination - the sky is the limit!

## DISCUSSION AND ACTIVITIES FOR MOGIE

**DISCUSSION:** Look at the illustrations of Mogie.

- How would you describe Mogie? What are Mogie's favorite things to play?
- What makes Mogie especially well-suited to help children and families? Do you think that Mogie found the best job for his talents and personality?
- Which jobs do the other puppies find? Which career or job would you like to have when you grow up?
- Does Mogie seem to be a happy, fun-loving dog? How might you be like Mogie?

Look at the illustrations of Mogie and Gage.

- What does Mogie do to help children? What did Mogie do to capture Gage's attention?
- Did Mogie ever give up on helping Gage? Did Mogie's patience and perseverance pay off? If so, how?

**ACTIVITIES:** Pretend that you could be Mogie for one grand day! Draw a picture and tell/write a story about being Mogie. Think about what you would play if you were Mogie and how you might help children.

Have you ever noticed the good feeling you get from spending time with a dog or special pet? How do you feel when you see the animal respond by wagging his tail or looking up at you? Spend some time with a friendly pet like Mogie, and describe what you enjoy about the experience.





## DISCUSSION AND ACTIVITY FOR GAGE AND CHILDREN WITH MEDICAL NEEDS

**DISCUSSION:** Look at the illustrations of Gage playing and building.

- What kinds of things does Gage like to play? What kinds of things do you like to play? How are your favorite activities similar or different from what Gage is playing in the story?
- How does Gage feel when he is playing? How do you feel when you are playing?
- Some people say “mojo” is an extraordinary energy that allows someone to be creative, successful and likeable. Why does the author say Gage has mojo? When do you feel like you have the most mojo? How might other people be able to tell that you have mojo?
- Everyone has wonderful, creative energy that helps them have fun while they are working and playing. Gage’s extraordinary energy is called “mojo,” and Antonia’s exceptional energy is called “cha-cha-cha.” What name might you like to give your special energy?

Look at the illustrations of Gage when he arrived at the special house in the heart of the big city.

- Why did Gage and his family go to the special house? How did Gage feel when he arrived at the special house?
- How can we tell when someone is feeling sad or has lost his or her mojo? What are things that we might do to help friends, brothers, or sisters feel better when they are sad? What helps you feel better when you are sad — what is the best way to get your mojo back?
- Why might Gage have needed a wheelchair? What can we do to help people in wheelchairs or those with other medical equipment/assistive devices? Do you think that people in wheelchairs always need help? Why or why not? What is the best way to treat people who are receiving medical care?



Look at the illustrations of Gage when he began to get better.

- How does Gage feel as he gets better? What likely helped his body heal?
- How was Gage inspired to find his mojo again - what special role did Mogie play in helping Gage feel better? Can feelings influence how our bodies feel?
- The day came when Gage was ready to leave the special house in the heart of the big city. How did Gage and Mogie feel when they said goodbye? Do you think that they will always remember each other - why?

Universally children with medical needs express the desire to be treated as normal. Whereas they appreciate acknowledgement of what they are going through as well as kind words and actions, they generally like to focus on playing with their friends and continuing important daily routines, as treatment allows. Community members’ efforts to include children with medical needs in activities and events are often very welcomed by families.



## ABOUT THE GUIDE CREATORS

### **Martha A. Askins Ph D.**

Martha A. Askins Ph. D. is a clinical psychologist and associate professor who has worked with children and families at the University of Texas MD Anderson Children's Cancer Hospital for over twenty years. She helps children, teens, and young adults and their families cope with the challenges of cancer treatment and enjoy a positive quality of life into survivorship. Dr. Askins publishes research in the field of pediatric psychology.

### **Katia Goga**

Katia Goga is an honor undergraduate student at The University of Texas at Austin who is studying psychology and premedicine. She is the recipient of the McNair Scholar Award. Ms. Goga has been inspired by her experiences with the children and families at the MD Anderson Children's Cancer Hospital and her research experience in children's imagination and cognition.