



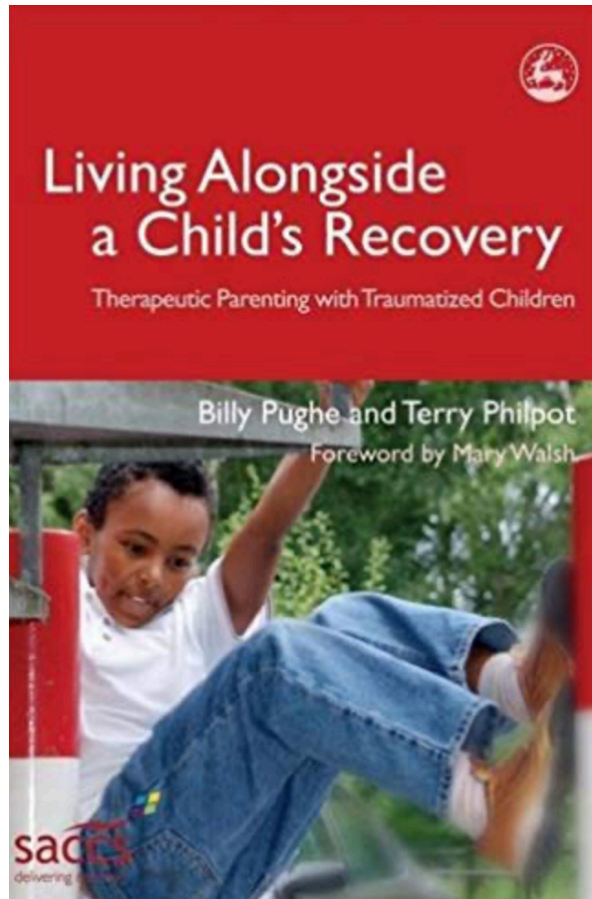
Life Story Work

'Practical' guidance



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Life Story Work: creating the context



- ‘the lack of a consistent adult to scaffold the child recalling and making sense of their experiences, together with often damaging and confusing events prior to and during care, leaves many young people in care with a damaged identity’

(Rose and Philpot 2006)

Life Story Work: who can benefit



- Children who are left behind
- Children in conflict with the law
- Children who migrated with or without their parents
- Children who experienced abused and are in the care of the state
- Children who live in conflict area
- Children who lost a parent
- Children whose parents are in prison
- Children whose parents suffer from mental illnesses or misuse substances



Life Story Work: definition & elements

Life work is the general term and one that incorporates many different elements, including life journey work and life story books. These are:

Adapted from 'The Joy Rees Model', 2017

gathering information

play, listen, observe

memory book & boxes

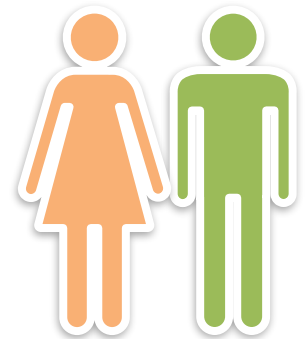
photos, dvds, media

life story book

Life Story Work: Child's voice

It is a true reflection of child's journey in life

- It works chronologically backwards rather than forwards (reinforces security and promotes attachment)
- It includes the positive present and hopeful future
- It is used to primarily encourage secure family attachments and a sense of permanency
- It enables the child make sense of their history, to feel secure when planning a safer future in the context of a supportive network



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Life Story Work: how does it work?

The practitioner starts by

gathering information

from all sources (professionals) that had any contact with the child and their family

The practitioner will then

play, listen & observe

the child in their environment and learns about child's attachment relationships and what sense they make of their own experiences



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Life Story Work: how does it work?

The **memory book & boxes** contains all letters, written documents which would keep alive the memory of the child as well as other objects that are significant in child's upbringing

The **photos, dvds & media** would go back to children's parents life prior to child's birth, and it continues with any footage capturing the moments from child's birth to the present time.

Life Story Work: definition

The life story book...

- Is a chronological record of a child's life
- It Integrates the past and present into the future to make sense
- Is an ongoing process that could be added on
- Is something the child can return to (e.g. exploring feelings)
- It increases the child sense of self and self worth
- It is structure for talking to children about painful issues
- It has a beginning, middle and end

Life Story Work: the beginning includes

The life story book

- A description of child's present life such wishes, feelings, thoughts, etc.
- The child is referred in the first person as 'I' whilst the professionals use the third person 'she/he' in this section
- Child's name, their school, their teacher, address; their age and DOB. Their likes and dislikes: food, colour, map, photos (themselves, school, etc), and more



Life Story Work: the beginning

The life story book

- Some activities that would contribute towards a positive start of the life story book could be on the following topics:
 - Different ethnicity and skin colour to the adopters
 - Passage of time and what happened at different ages
 - Understanding the vocabulary of feelings and to match words with emotional states

Life Story Work: the middle includes

The life story book

- A description of how we would tell the story what led to the adoption
- It could start with a discussion about a baby doll and meeting the baby doll's needs
- It could be a discussion about what love is since almost all parents say they 'love. their child
- This can go hand in hand with the later explanation of difficult stories linked with child's lived experience of abuse or trauma



Life Story Work: the middle

The life story book

- The structure of the discussion with the child could be:
 - Where would you like to start the journey?
 - I wonder how that was like for you
 - What would that look like on your timeline?
 - Where did the journey take you next?

Life Story Work: the end includes

The life story book

- A description of the activities that have been taken place since child feeling safer and right up to the present time
- It is a way of bringing the child back to where she / he belongs: family events, birthdays, holidays, etc
- More photos including those when the child felt safe
- The child projections for the future
- The aim is to ensure that the child is and feels safer at the present time



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In the end ...

Thank you!

Please visit childhub.org for more information
on how to **keep children safe**

