

# Baby steps.

A child development perspective of Life Journey work for children aged 0 to 6 years.

Brodzinsky, D (2011).

**IMPORTANT**  
Every child's age and development is different. This is a broad guide.



## Age: 0 to 4 years

During this period a child has no comprehension of terminology such as adoption, fostering or kinship care. A child's understanding is that family is the people who you live with.

An adoptive parent, foster or kinship carer's role is critical during this period by introducing the language of adoption or fostering. It allows the adoptive parent/carer to familiarise themselves with using terms such as adoption, fostering and birth parents etc. Perhaps more importantly it promotes an atmosphere of open communication within the home, so a child knows that they can ask questions and they will be answered. This is something to promote as early as possible. The key is repetition and continuing these conversations.

## Age: 4 to 6 years.

A child is in their ego centric stage of development which means that their understanding of the world revolves around them and their needs. This is a survival mechanism and an essential developmental phase. As a child approaches preschool age, he or she develops magical thinking. This is a natural phase in child play and magical thinking enables a child to play and have imagination. However, for children who have experienced a developmental trauma, the world of fantasy can be used to explain things, which the child cannot comprehend. This can lead to a child blaming themselves or making up incredible stories to fill in the gaps of their understanding.

At this age a child can be curious about where children comes from. A child will not understand the word and concept of adoption until they understand that they were born the same as other children and grown in a woman's uterus. A child is beginning to get a concept of time and space. At 4 or 5 years old the child begins to grasp the context of the past. And that people and places exist outside of their direct environment.

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## Parallel stories.

Parallel stories are simplified stories of your child's life which can be helpful at this age to help a child process their story. The story is written using third person characters. It is written in simple language and illustrated to reflect the story. A parallel story is used to help children become familiar with their own story in a very safe way which is one step removed. A parallel story can be used to help a child understand any difficult stories such as parental death, the reason for their adoption etc.

## Life Story book

A good life story book can grow with a child and it can also be a tool for an adoptive parent in terms of explaining some difficult subjects to a child but it should aim to be jargon free. Any jargon should be explained in clear language. A good book should give a child strong validating messages that they deserve a loving parent; that they are loveable and precious; that it is not their fault and they will have a good future. A child younger than 6 can look at the photographs and adoptive parents or foster carers can begin to introduce through every day conversations the language of adoption such as what is adoption, birth parents and foster carers.

## Other resources.

At this developmental age a child learns through play and imagination. So by using a creative approach this can help support a child's understanding of their story. This can be as simple as play, drawing and games. There are also many great books and films to explain adoption to a child. And there are some great resources for adoptive parents/foster carers and social care workers. Age appropriate films and TV such as 'Paddington Bear', 'Stuart Little' and 'Inside out' can be useful to talk about as a family.

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Resources to support the Life Journey conversations alongside the child's Life Journey materials.

## Useful websites and YouTube resources

- [National Adoption Service](#)
- [Resources \(beaconhouse.org.uk\)](#)
- [About us | Safe Hands Thinking Minds](#)
- [Therapeutic Life Story Work - Sharing Lives/Sharing Stories: Richard Rose – YouTube](#)
- [Dr Karen Treisman – YouTube](#)
- [Good relationships are the key to healing trauma | Karen Treisman | TEDxWarwickSalon – YouTube](#)
- [Oprah Winfrey & Dr. Bruce Perry in Conversation | SXSW EDU 2021 - YouTube](#)

## Resources for adoptive carers, foster carers and social care workers.

- A-Z of Therapeutic Parenting/Sarah Naish
- Attaching through Love Hugs, and Play/ Deborah D Gray
- Attachment handbook for foster care and adoption/ Gillian Schofield and Mary Beek.
- Bruised Before Birth/Joan McNamara
- Bubble Wrapped Children/Helen Oakwater
- Building the Bonds of Attachment/ Daniel Hughes
- Nurturing Attachments, Supporting children who are fostered & Adopted/ Kim S Golding
- Parenting with Theraplay/ Vivien Norris/Helen Rodwell

## Resources for children Aged: 0 to 6 years.

- Blanket bears by Samuel Langley-Swain and Ashlee Spink.
- Y Boked Wag by Eurgain Haf.
- We belong together by Todd Parr
- Delly Duck – Why a little duck couldn't stay with his birth mother by Holly Marlow and Suzy Garland.
- Love makes a family by Sophie Beer.
- The most precious present in the world by Becky Edwards.
- Nutmeg gets adopted by Judith Foxon.
- Elfa and a box of memories by Michelle Bell.
- The Teazle's baby bunny by Susan Bagnall. (English and Welsh)
- Finding a family for Tommy by Rebecca Daniel.