

Life Journey work ladder

How to use the Life Journey materials to talk to your child (Brodzinsky, 2011).

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



Later Life Letter -11 – 18 plus

At this stage a child should be aware of their story through conversations at home, their Life Story book, Memory box, Therapeutic Life Story work, photo album, letter box service, keeping in touch with your child's foster carers or direct contact. Life Journey work is a process over many years and not an event. In adolescence there is a natural search for self and a young person must find a way to integrated aspects of both families into their emerging identities. Therefore it is important that the young person's birth family is not spoken about in a derogatory way. This doesn't mean that you should shy away from the difficult aspects, but keep the information neutral, balanced and factual. And remember to have patience. Validate and support your young person throughout. A good understanding of age appropriate therapeutic parenting is important at this stage to keep the communication flowing. At 18 years old a child can access their records although the adopter will have a copy of the Child's Adoption Report, Birth certificate and other information given to them at the time of the adoption.

Life Story book and Later Life Letter - Age 9 – 11

At this stage an adoptive parent should make themselves familiar with the child's later life later. So if a child asks any questions the parent can answer this in an age appropriate way.. So by the time the child reads their later life letter NOTHING should come as a surprise for them as the adoptive parents have answered questions and talked about some of the difficult themes within the book and letter. The most important thing is that these conversations happen and the child is validated. The child's birth family needs to be talked about in a neutral way so a child does not feel blame or shame for the things that have happened to them. A good understanding of age appropriate therapeutic parenting is important at this stage to keep the communication flowing.

Life Story book and Parallel stories Age 0 – 11

A child younger than 5 can look at the photographs and adoptive parents can begin to introduce through every day conversations the language of adoption such as what is adoption, birth parents and foster carers. An age appropriate understanding of sex education is important at this stage for the understanding of this. For example, 'a birth mother and birth father make a baby. The baby is carried in the birth mother's uterus or tummy.' Parallel/Metaphorical stories which are simplified stories of your child's life are also helpful at this stage. A well written life story book should contain the different perspectives and explanations, so the book ages with the child. A child aged approximately 5 - 8 will be in the ego centric stage of development and will be looking at the book in terms of 'Where am I?' So pictures and photos are important. They also begin to understand that by gaining one family they have lost another family. At the age of 6 – 8 an understanding of biological connectedness begins so how they are related to the people around them. If required Therapeutic life journey work can begin from around the age of 7 years old onwards to 18 and beyond. Prior to this age it is the child's carers who are key to the child understanding their adoption story. Around 9 years a child begins to understand different perspectives and logic develops so they will be able to begin to understand the problems that their birth parents experienced.

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



Age 11 – 18

- Patina (Track) by Jason Reynolds.
- A sea of stars by Kate Maryon.
- Snow foal by Susanna Bailey
- My brother Booh has ADHD by Susan Yarney
- Dara Palmers Major Drama by Emma Shevah (Adoption from another country)
- Bravely Being Me - Brilliant Stories of Adopted People Sam Langley-Swain

Age 9 – 11

- Morris and a big bag of worries by Jill Seeney
- The huge bag of worries by Virginia Ironside.
- All birds have anxiety by Kathy Hoopman (Factual book about anxiety)
- Your fantastic elastic brain by JoAnn Deak and Sarah Ackerley. (Factual book)
- Sputniks guide to life on earth by Frank Cotterell-Boyce.
- The child of dreams by Irina Brignull. (The theme is unknown fathers)
- Paddington bear stories by Michael Bond.
- The last firefox by Lee Newbery. (An adventure book about a boy with two dads.
- Oli and the pink bicycle by Catherine Jackson (about Foetal Alcohol Syndrome)
- Long way Home by Michael Morpurgo

Age 0 – 9

- Blanket bears by Samuel Langley-Swain and Ashlee Spink.
- 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 rescue party (Tales from Percy's park) by Nick Butterworth.
- 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)
- Picnic in the park by Joe Griffiths and Tony Pilgrim.

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Other materials and publications to support the parents of adopted children.

This is just a sample of books there are many more to explore.



Age 11 – 18

- Courageous Parents - Becoming a good anchor for your children by Haim Omer
- My name is Why by Lemm Sissay
- The Unofficial guide to Therapeutic Parenting (the teenage years) by Sally Donovan
- Family wanted - Stories from adopters/birth families and adoptees by Sara Holloway
- Blame my brain – The amazing teenage brain revealed by Nicola Morgan
- Life Story Therapy with traumatized children by Richard Rose
- Life Story work for children who are fostered or adopted by Katie Wench and Lesley Naylor

Useful websites and YouTube resources

- [Resources \(beaconhouse.org.uk\)](https://www.beaconhouse.org.uk)
- [Children and Young People Service | Connect Cymru](https://www.connectcymru.org.uk)
- [National Adoption Service - Home \(adoptcymru.com\)](https://www.adoptcymru.com)
- [About us | Safe Hands Thinking Minds](https://www.safehands.org.uk)
- [Therapeutic Life Story Work - Sharing Lives/Sharing Stories: Richard Rose – YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)
- [Dr Karen Treisman – YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)
- [Good relationships are the key to healing trauma | Karen Treisman | TEDxWarwickSalon – YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)
- [Oprah Winfrey & Dr. Bruce Perry in Conversation | SXSW EDU 2021 - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

Age 0 – 11

- A-Z of Therapeutic Parenting/Sarah Naish
- Adopting a brother or sister/Heidi Argent
- Adoption at the Movies / Addison Cooper
- 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 the Theraplay Way - trauma through a child's eyes/ Peter Levine
- Parenting with Theraplay/ Vivien Norris/Helen Rodwell