

What is a Life Book and Why Should I Create One?

When a child is placed into foster or kinship care, there is a high probability that they have suffered huge loss and contact with their birth family. This can contribute to a loss of identity. No matter how compassionate, loving and nurturing you are, your child in care may still deal with issues caused by a lack of knowledge of where they come from.

Having a Life Book could help them put their life experiences in perspective and hold on to memories.

A Life Book is created to help your child build resilience and work through the trauma of separation. It gives your child some control over their story, an opportunity to process the events and changes in their life, and possibly set a foundation for the future.

What is a Life Book?

A Life Book is a collection of information that forms a coherent record of your child in care's life events and journey through foster care. It provides a place for memories and a connection to your child's past.

In addition to holding great sentimental value, a Life Book can also help your child in care understand their current situation and prepare them for a healthy transition to permanency.

Why should I create a Life Book with the child in my care?

Adults who have lived a part of their lives in foster care and have been adopted or who have aged out of care may ask themselves questions like:

- Who am I?
- Where did I come from?
- How did I get here?

- What happened to my family?

Life Books can help your child in care maintain a connection to the parts of their life that are disrupted when they go into care and as they move through the system to permanency.

Although placement into foster care was the result of a series of incidents or one incident that was unsafe or traumatic, there may still be memories of people and experiences they may want to hold on to. Additionally, as your child move through foster care, they will develop relationships and have experiences that will contribute to who they will become.

A Life Book could provide the answer to some of the questions about their early life and the period while they were in foster care that would otherwise go unanswered.

When should I start a Life Book?

If your child has a Life Book that is up-to-date, you can start from that point with information about their time with you and your family. If they do not have a Life Book, talk to your child about creating one. You can also talk with your child in care's Worker to obtain additional pertinent information. Whether or not your child already has a Life Book, it is never too late to get started.

What information should go into a Life Book?

A Life Book can include pictures and information about:

- The child's birth
- The child's parents and siblings, if any
- Other family members
- Days and/or events important to the

child's family

- Names and photos of friends, teachers and other people important in the child's life
- Letters and mementos
- The child's foster family, current and previous
- Changes in placement
- School information
- Recognition of the child's achievements

Remember, it is their story, historical and current, and they should have the right and opportunity to tell it.

If you need to purchase items, like high quality paper and ink to print photos, petty cash can be accessed by contacting your child in care's Worker as well. It is helpful to collect and organize information about the child as day to day events occur. If possible, plan to work on the Life Book on a regular basis. You can turn it into a family event!

If you have children in your home who are siblings, please remember that each of them should have their own Life Book. While much of the information for each child may be the same, there will still be events, achievements and people unique to a particular child's experience.

What happens to the Life Book when the child leaves my home?

The Life Book belongs to your child in care and should be with them wherever they go; whether they are going back to their parents, being placed with a relative or in a pre-adoptive home.

In fact, Life Books should be developed with your child's understanding that it is their own story book to keep.

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Creating a Life Book with your child is a great way to show your concern, love and respect for them as an individual and not just a product of circumstance.

Note: embrella has a limited amount of Life Books available at no cost for resource and kinship families. The Life Book is designed to encourage your child in care to record their memories, hopes and dreams. Visit embrella's website at www.embrella.org or call 800.222.0047 to request a Life Book.



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