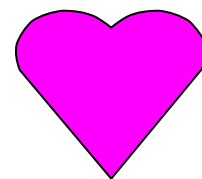


LIFE-BOOKS



Information is gold.

A Life Book is one of the **best gifts** in the world for a foster child.

A Life Book is an informal record of the people and events in the child's life while they are in your care. A Life Book is a book that presents a child's life story. **What child doesn't like being the star of his own story for an audience of his choosing?**

It highlights the child's successes, achievements, and gives the child a written record of their experiences in care. It is filled with pictures, drawings, certificates, poems, newspaper articles and anything else that holds significant meaning for the child.

Life Books give children a sense of **personal history** and **continuity**. Foster children **often** lose a lot of their history due to the system and legal issues. A Life Book can help the child come to peace with their past and provides a solid foundation for them to look towards the future. It also provides an opportunity to **create positive identity** and **ethnic identity**. Life Books can also help to reduce magical thinking and fantasy.

Children often rely on the memories of adults to help them identify with their pasts. But in the Foster Care system, many children do not have a stable adult to remind them of that time they received their Aboriginal name or lost their front teeth... and all the experiences we had as children and like to remember. You can give an adoptee/foster child a sweet childhood memory by starting a Life Book.

The child can take the Life Book with them when they move to a new placement, return home, or go on to independent living. Later in life, they might look back on it and be able to make sense of the time they spent in Foster Care and of the person they are.

The Life Book should be kept in a safe place by the foster parent. The child can look at it any time he wants, but it can't stay in the bedroom and cannot be looked at when the kid is angry at a parent or when the foster parent just has a feeling that it won't be treated carefully. Every child goes through periods when they are angry at their parents and will sometimes destroy mementoes that are kept in their room.

Perhaps if the child wants the book in their room, make a copy of the original for them to keep. Parents should never share the book without the child's permission.

Every child who is likely to remain in care for more than six months has a Life Book. It is jointly maintained by the child's social worker, the child and you. You will usually look after the

book. When a child leaves care, the Life Book is given to them. Some Foster Parents keep copies of the Life Books of children in their home, knowing that foster children can lose possessions as they move from placement to placement.

TIPS



The focus ought to be on natural family things if that's possible. The current foster family photos of people and other kids are next in importance. Photos of past foster parents are great to have, but are often lost in the shuffle.

Each photo should have the full names of the people written under the snap. Addresses written in under photos of foster homes can be helpful in later years if a child wants to reconnect with an old foster parent. You want to create a running record of every place the kid lived and dates to support the photo or written information.

Good information can be gleaned from the SW "snapshot" of the child. This snapshot always has a list of all the placements and dates that the kid lived in each home. When a foster kid becomes of age, they have a right to view everything in their file, but few of them do. This often means that the only accessible record for their use may be the Life Book that you prepare.

Many people like to **involve the child in creating their own Life Books, others like to manage it themselves. Making pages with a child can be a good way to promote attachment and build trust.** After all, this is his or her story. Grab crayons and markers, and find a quiet space. Younger children may enjoy dictating while you write; pretend they are guests on a talk show and interview them. Other kids may want to write down their own words, and have you transform them into neat, printed pages.

If you prefer to manage the book yourself, you can involve the child by having them hand over items of importance for when compiling the book. It might be worthy to ask the child once each month if they have anything they might like to have kept in the book for safe-keeping.

Sample items that might be included in a child's Life Book:

- photographs
- souvenirs
- names, addresses and pictures of the foster family
- report cards
- certificates of achievement
- letters from friends and relatives
- souvenirs from trips, concerts, sporting events and so forth
- badges and ribbons

- school products or projects
- positive quotes from teachers and foster parents, social workers, important people

Some titles that might be included in the Life-Book:

- Your Family Tree
- Your Birth Family Tree
- Being A Foster Family
- Back To Class
- The Home Study
- The Day You Joined This Family
- Meeting Friends & Family
- In Our Home
- Visitors - Special People Who Came To See You
- These Are A Few Of Your Favorite Things
- Your Room
- Your Name
- Your First Home With Us
- Family Members
- Special People In Your Life
- Our First Family Photo
- Your Milestones
- Day Care
- Visits To The Doctor
- Your Growth Chart
- Your Firsts
- Outings & Vacations
- Your Specialized Assessments
- Your Birthday

For further information about Life-Books, contact your resource worker, discuss ideas with other foster parents or check out these helpful web-sites:

<http://www.fafp.ca/fosterdoll/lifebook.html>

<http://www.adopting.org/adoptions/lifebooks-every-adopted-child-needs-one.html>

<http://www.adoptionLifebooks.com>

Visit this link for samples of pre-made and printable documents to include in your Life-Book:

http://www.scrapsahoy.com/content/articles/themed_albums/themed_album_ideas_-_life_books.html