

# Making History

*A Social Worker's Guide to Life Books*

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**A Social Worker's Guide to Lifebooks**

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To The Worker:

This book is for you. It's a collection of materials to guide you in making life books for foster and adoptive children. It will help you make a record of the places your children have lived; the people they've met; and the feelings they have experienced. There are lots of questions, however, this book won't answer.

It's meant to help generate those answers when working with your children.

We have organized this collection into two parts. The first part is a "how to" book, *Making a Life Book*. The second is a workbook divided into sections that are critical to cover in working with children. Each section includes an issues and techniques overview in outline form, as well as brief narratives and sample materials. Many of these materials will work well in more than one area, so feel free to use them where they seem appropriate.

All children who move through the foster care and adoption systems deserve to be given a sense of their history as well as help in sorting and expressing their feelings. Please regard this book as a point of departure. We're sure that once you've used the materials here, that you'll be able to tailor an approach to making life books that will work best for you and, most of all, for your children.

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# Thanks

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Jo Ann  
Elaine

# Making a Life Book

Written By

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JoAnn Harrison  
Penny G. Chumbley

# Introduction

After relinquishment for adoption, Sammy, 11, suffered severe feelings of rejection. He was constantly in motion, behaving impulsively and having frequent outbursts of temper. He was a terror at school. He talked frequently about his birth mother, making excuses for her and vowing that, when he came of age, he would find her. His social worker started a life book with Sammy, exploring with him his feelings about his history. Sammy's adoptive mother continued work on the book, recording with Sammy his insights about his life. In time, Sammy became calmer, learning to control his behavior and vent his anger appropriately. His school behavior and work improved. One day Sammy announced that his mother must have had a heart attack and died. His adoptive mother said, "If she's dead, how will you find her?" Sammy replied, matter-of-factly, "I guess I won't." The life book helped Sammy accept his situation and put to rest his feelings of rejection by his birth mother.

Foster and adoptive children need help understanding the major events of their lives. This book will help social workers, other child care professionals and parents learn to prepare life books for and with a child. A life book—a written record of a child's life history—gives a foster or adoptive child the same information concerning his social and physical history that most children have received from their families through conversation and through use of baby books and photograph albums. As a foster or adoptive child moves through foster care, much of the important information about him is lost. A life book recovers this information and helps the child in the task of forming an identity.

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*...a tool that helps a child deal with the significant conflicts of life...*

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Family disruption is a serious issue and a child must come to terms with his feelings regardless of his age. If a child can talk, he benefits from an explanation of what has happened to him. With a more sophisticated approach a life book can be as meaningful to a teenager as to any other child.

The life book is not an end product but a tool that helps the foster or adoptive child deal with the significant conflicts and crises of his life. Through it, the child understands what has happened to him and begins to lay to rest the conflicts preventing him from adequately adjusting to family life.

As you, the social worker, gain experience in producing life books with children, you will not only use the ideas presented in this book but will learn to generate your own techniques, tailoring solutions to meet the needs of the individual child. You will find that the life book can serve as a point of departure for the use of additional skills that will help a child resolve conflict, including using puppets and keeping charts.

A life book is useful with both children who will be placed for adoption and with children who will return to their birth families. In addition, the life book technique is equally applicable with children who have faced problems such as the death of a parent or sibling, the divorce of parents, a serious illness, or a move from one place to another.

# ground rules

Where do you start and what do you say? These suggestions will help you begin a child's life book.

**Be Prepared.** Get off to a good start by keeping your appointments with a child and having your materials ready. Make sure your information is as accurate as possible.

**Choose a Private and Comfortable Setting.** In working with a child, you should choose a setting where you and the child will be comfortable and can work without interruption. Because the material is private, work on the book generally should be done with the child alone. Sometimes, you and child might like to include a parent; but other children are usually distracting and inhibiting.

**Brothers and Sisters.** With brothers and sisters, it is helpful to work both as a group and with each child alone. Working as a group saves time and also encourages cooperation and communication between the children. Working individually allows each child to share what he does not want to reveal in a group. Individual work also helps when there are large gaps in age and ability, when the children do not get along, and when one child overshadows another. A good way to combine these approaches is to start as a group and then let some children work on individual projects while you work alone with one child.

**Build Trust.** The child needs to trust you. Nurture his trust by keeping your appointments and being on time. In addition, let the child know that you like him by showing

interest in the things he does. Talk with him without condescension. Respect his feelings by accepting rather than denying them. Respect his privacy.

As your work proceeds, issues will be raised that are difficult for the child to think about. Be prepared to push the child to deal with those issues he would rather avoid and also be aware of how far you can push him. You will need to assure the child that it is important and acceptable to discuss these things. As you get to know him, you will become aware of his attention span and his tolerance level. Gauge the length of the work sessions accordingly.

**Explain Your Role.** You need to let the child know why you visit him, what plans are being made for him, and the purpose of the book.

**Have Frequent Sessions.** Work sessions should be frequent enough to keep the child interested and involved. Start the life book as soon as you begin working with the child.

As with adults, a child needs time to adjust to major changes in his life, especially traumatic ones. It is unrealistic to expect him to absorb, understand, and accept the consequences of major changes in a few short weeks. Starting shortly before a move home or into adoption is better than not starting at all. Although it will give the child the details of his story, it will not give him time to resolve his feelings.

**Involve the Child.** For the life book to be productive, the child must be involved.

You can encourage his participation by giving him some control over the project. Put aside preconceived notions of how the book should progress and what it should look like. The child may want to direct the flow of the book by discussing certain topics before others. Responding to the child's imagination and spontaneity will keep him/her involved.

You also can encourage the child to participate by asking him to share experiences about himself that are unknown to you. Since information about foster and adoptive children is usually sketchy, the child often can make the book come alive with his unrecorded memories. One girl could remember the name of each pet she had including her favorite dog, "Funny Nose." It is wise to give the child the benefit of the doubt concerning these memories. After you and the child have worked together for awhile, you will learn when the child is making more of an experience than was there. It is best to

believe too much than to discount the child by believing too little.

**Encourage Parental Support.** Explain to the foster or adoptive parent the reasons for making the life book. A child confronts many difficult issues while working on a life book and he will release his emotions after you leave, especially if he trusts his parent and knows he has her support. A parent needs to understand these emotions and the resulting behavior changes and support what you are doing. In this way, both the parent and the child can cope with the child's past. Prepare the parent for some regression in behavior as difficult topics are covered. Although not a necessity, a parent who can help the child talk about his feelings will benefit him and also be an ally to you.

Stress to the parent that the book belongs to the child; it is for his use and he should have easy access to it.

# Writing a Life Book - What to include

Every child's life book should contain the significant facts of his history. The kinds of information will be the same for most children but the approach will vary according to the age and situation of the child and the purpose of the book. For example, a book used to prepare a child for return to his birth family will have a different approach from a book used to prepare a child for adoption. Most books have many common elements, including certain key issues that need to be clarified for the child. The child needs to know the role of foster care, the purpose of the courts and social workers, that he has rights to parents and that separation from his birth parents was not his fault. He also needs to understand why his birth parents placed him for adoption and why his foster parents did not adopt him. He needs to know about his right to input on the adoption and the fate of his siblings.

In talking with a child about the events of his life, be as compassionate and as nonjudgmental as possible in your explanation. It helps if you include as many positive statements as possible about the child and his caretakers, especially his birth parents. While being compassionate, you also need to be specific and present the information in a way that gives the child an accurate picture. You may need practice with this because it is easy to couch the information in such glowing and ambiguous terms that the message is lost. Although the child needs to

see the positive, he also needs to know and to accept what has really happened.

## **Birth Facts.**

A non-threatening way to start a child's life book is to start at the beginning of his life. Most foster and adoptive children know little of their infancy and delight in learning about it. As a guide, consider what you know about yourself as an infant and assume that the child may like the same information. Include such items as his date of birth, the time of day, the hospital, the city, county and state. Children like to know how much they weighed and what they looked like as newborns. With a tape measure, show the child exactly how long he was at birth.

Photographs of the child as an infant are invaluable. Children frequently do not have baby pictures but the photographs sometimes can be obtained from the hospital where the child was born. Include a copy of the child's birth certificate. In a few adoption cases, this may prove to be a breach of confidentiality. In most cases, however, the child will be old enough to know the names anyway. If a birth parent has died, include a copy of the death certificate. Such documents provide a wealth of information concerning the time, place and legal status of people and events. A death certificate provides emotional ties for a child who has never known

his parents and gives accurate answers to his questions. Children welcome this information.

You may want to include some of the feelings and concerns of the birth parents before and at the time of the birth. Most of the time you will not have specific information about these feelings. Often sound assumptions can be made about the parents'

concerns once you know the general circumstances of the birth. You can tell

the child, for example, that his birth mother was very worried about how she would provide for her new baby. Or, in some instances, you can assume that the child's parents looked forward to the birth of their baby.

Many children began moving through foster care when they were too young to remember what happened. The child should know what types of arrangements were made for him and why. Who took him from the hospital? Did he live with a relative, a family friend or a baby sitter? Who were these people? Where did they live? Why did he live there instead of with his birth parents?

### **Development.**

As you write, be as specific as you can about the child's development. In the absence of actual facts, you can again make reasonable assumptions. The child needs to know that he is like other children. To tie significant happenings to an understandable time frame, use developmental milestones and events such as birthdays. Use statements like: "Right after you learned to walk, your birth mother let your aunt begin caring for you. Soon after you were five, you went to live with Mr. and Mrs. Moore."

### **Disabilities.**

For handicapped children, you need to discuss the handicap. These children frequently feel different from other children. Since children assume responsibility for a move from their birth families, a disabled child may feel that his parents gave him up because of his disability.

This may be true. In any case, you should explore the child's feelings of being different and the effects

of his disability on his parent's ability to rear him. Find a way to stress the child's positive qualities, bringing out that the child is lovable, despite his disability.

### **Brothers and Sisters.**

Because children show great concern over the fate of their siblings, you should try to locate the siblings and let the child know what has happened to them. A map is a good tool to use in this instance. It comforts the child to know, for example, that a younger brother has been adopted and lives at a certain location which is marked on the map. Explore the reasons the child was separated from his siblings and the time of the separation. Also discuss his good and bad feelings about his siblings. Children sometimes need help in resolving negative feelings toward siblings. Children often feel anger, hurt, disappointment, and resentment towards their brothers and sisters. The resulting guilt amplifies when something happens to the other children because the child assumes it was his fault.

Many children assume the role of parenting younger brothers and sisters. These children especially need reassurance that the younger sibling is being taken care of. Get pictures of the other children. Siblings often can exchange

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*The child needs to know that he is like other children.*

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letters or visit, and you may want to pursue this for certain children.

### **Birth Parents.**

A child needs to know about his birth parents. You should include a discussion of the parents' problems, their strengths, weaknesses, interests, physical and mental health, physical description, education, background and their hopes and dreams. In short, the child needs to see his birth parents as whole people. He also needs to understand that he had two parents, both a mother and a father. You generally will not have all this information but as much information as possible should be given about both, even in situations where the birth father's involvement was limited.

It is crucial that the child knows the reasons his birth parents placed him for adoption, the events leading to the placement and his birth

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*...the child needs to know that she was placed because of her parents' problems, not hers.*

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parents' feelings about the placement. These matters should be explained to the child in simple terms that make sense to him. Since children assume the blame for their placement into foster care or adoption, the child needs to know that she was not placed because of something she did or did not do. The decision came because of her parents' problems. Avoid sweeping terms like "mommy was sick" or "your parents had a lot of problems." The child should know specifically that his mother was young, had no job or money, and felt overwhelmed at being responsible for a child. He needs to know if his birth parents could

not care for him because they drank too much alcohol. He also needs to know that this was his birth parents' problem, not his.

Answers that gloss over the situation do not satisfy the child. The common explanation that "your mother couldn't care for you, but she loved you so much that she gave you up for adoption" simply creates a nagging doubt in the child's mind, and suspicion that something wrong must have happened that others wish to keep secret. One adult adoptee admitted to being haunted as a child by the question, "Did my birth parents really love me?"

Although it is necessary to be specific, you may hesitate to write down some problems explicitly because they elicit negative feelings in others. You may feel that writing these things in the book will violate the child's privacy and create a problem for him should he wish to share the book with others. Because of this, you may choose to be less specific in writing than in telling. Many problems can be explained satisfactorily by concentrating on underlying causes. By doing so, you can give the child concrete reasons for his parents' behavior without writing a negative comment. In an explanation for child abuse, for instance, you may say that the child's parent did not know how to treat children because she was mistreated as a child. Because of this, the child's parent mistreated him. You can omit from the written account the specific abuse but you would discuss it with the child.

If you and the child have started on the life book after the child's removal from his birth

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*...answers that gloss over the situation do not satisfy the child.*

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home but before termination of parental rights, you need to keep the child up-to-date on the proceedings. You can let the child know that the same problems leading to his removal from the home and still present.

The child needs to know the kind of planning his birth parent was able to do for him even if it was limited. It helps the child if he knows that sometimes when parents are unable to care for their children, they feel so badly about it that they are unable to ask that someone else take the responsibility for the child's care. This is when the court steps in.

### **Courts and Social Workers.**

Once the child's family becomes involved with the court, a social services agency and social workers, the child needs an explanation of the role of each. The depth and type of information given will vary considerably according to his age, the plan for him and where he is in the process. Since many children fear courts and judges, you will want to explore the child's feelings and knowledge of them. A child needs to understand that the courts were established for protection as well as for punishment. He needs to be told that the judge's job is to decide what is best for children and parents. You can say that the judge can decide that the best thing is for the parents to get help so that they can become better parents. Other times, when the parents can no longer care for their children, you can tell the child that the judge will decide that the best thing is to find new parents for the children-parents who can give them the love and protection that they deserve.

Again, the child needs to understand and accept the situation. He will have difficulty with separation if he sees his parent as a hero or as a helpless victim of the court. The child needs to realize that his birth parents were given a fair chance.

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*He will have difficulty with separation if he sees his parents as heroes or helpless victims of the court.*

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As social worker, you will also want to

explain your role to the child. Most children do not understand what a social worker is or why they have one. Asking a child what a social worker does can be very revealing. One child said "Social workers tell people what to do." Tell the child that a social worker helps the court make sure that he receives care. It sometimes helps the child to know that his birth parents also have a social worker to help them solve their problems. You may discuss other things workers do. If the child is to return home, you can tell the child that you will help him and his parents live together again. When the plan for the child is adoption, you need to tell him that it is your responsibility to find a suitable home for him to grow up in. Tell the child that you will help him move and learn to get along in his new family.

Many children feel that they are bad, that they caused their parents to give them up and that something is wrong with them, making them unattractive to parents or undeserving of them. Address these concerns and make it clear that the child was not at fault and that every child, himself included, needs and deserves permanent parents.

### **Foster Care.**

A foster child needs to know that foster care is intended to be temporary until a permanent

plan can be made for him. He should understand that foster parents are not permanent parents, but parents who care for children until arrangements can be made for the children to go to a home in which they will grow up. Since many children spend considerable time in foster care, some explanation needs to be made of this. Concerning foster parents, the child needs to know with whom he has lived, when he lived there and the reason he moved if for a reason other than adoption. Be as specific as possible. Time becomes more concrete if you can tie moves to events rather than to dates. You could say, for example: "From the time you were three until you were six, you lived with Momma and Papa Caudill." Include the

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*It is understandable to feel happy and sad at the same time....*

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exact dates. These will be unimportant to a child of seven, but important to him when he is sixteen. Give this information to the child for every situation he has lived in, be it foster homes, children's home or temporary shelter. As much specific detail should be given as possible about these living arrangements. You should use pictures and as many mementos that he has from the home such as birthday cards and school papers.

Since children frequently grow attached to foster homes, special care should be given to why the child was not adopted by the foster parents. This job is easier if the child understands the role of the foster parents and if the foster parents explain their reasons to the child. However, many children, especially if they have been in the foster home a long time, view leaving a foster home as a personal rejection, just as they did leaving their birth parents.

You need to be able to sensitively explain the move to the child. Many explanations will be simple, such as those that have to do with the foster parents' age, illness, death, and status as foster parents rather than as adoptive parents. If a move from a foster home clearly is because of the child's behavior, you need to cover that also. You may say, "Amy was very sad and very angry that she moved from Momma Gordon's home and because of this she acted up and had a hard time getting along with Mr. and Mrs. Brown. Mr. and Mrs. Brown didn't know how to help Amy and felt that she did not want to live with them." The child needs to understand that he is not, by nature, a bad person. It is most important that foster parents explain the move to the child. Many foster parents find this a difficult, if not impossible, task. Often foster parents need your help so they know how to tell the child he is moving in a way that minimizes the child's feelings of rejection. It also helps if you, the child and the foster parents discuss the move together after the foster parents have talked with the child.

### **Going Home to Birth Parents.**

When the plan is for the child to return home, his hopes and fears can be explored through the life book. Tell the child what to expect and when to expect it. Discuss what the child's birth parents have been doing since the child left, what the child has been doing, and how things are different. Talk about his feelings about leaving the foster family. Children often need assurance that it is all right to love their foster family and that it is understandable when they feel sad and happy at the same time about leaving. You may want to ask the child what he would like to happen differently when he goes back. You should let him know that he will visit his birth parents more frequently before he goes home.

## Adoption.

When you know or strongly suspect that the child will be adopted, you need to begin preparing the child. After defining adoption, you should discuss its emotional, social and legal aspects. The child needs to know how adoptive homes are different from foster and birth homes, and that he will find out about his adoptive family before he meets them. He needs to know that adoptions sometimes do not work. You should approach the child with “we hope that this will be the home that you will grow up in.” He needs an explanation of how placements are done and how visitation works. One five year old boy could not understand why pre-placement visits were necessary until it was explained that it takes time to get to know and like a new family in the same way it does to, get to know a new friend.

An often overlooked but necessary part of the adoptive preparation is the child’s input and consent to adoption. As a result, they have a great deal of anger to vent. John, four years old, threatened to hurt his social worker when she came to take him to meet his new family. If the child feels he was placed for adoption against his will, he will have a harder time adjusting to his new home. It is best that the child request to be adopted or, at least, agrees that it is a good plan. It is necessary for the child to have input as to the family he wants. In this way, he feels he has some control over himself and his life. Children at first may seem unreasonable in their demands when asked for suggestions, but they frequently are willing to make compromises. Approach compromises concerning his future parents in the same way you would if you were discussing his Christmas list.

Have him list by importance his wishes. You want the child to keep his hopes and dreams but to temper them with reality.

Along with the child’s right to some choice comes her responsibility to an adoption. She needs to know that making a family is hard work. There will be compromises. It also helps for her to know some of the things families do to solve problems. These may include learning to listen to and talk to one another, venting feelings, participating in counseling, and making and keeping records of personal changes.

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*...she needs to know her responsibilities, that making a family is hard work.*

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If an adoption fails, you should cover this in the child’s life book also. Information and photographs of the adoptive parents should be entered if they are not already there. Adoption disruption should be included and clearly stated so that the child can refer to it. Let the child write his version of the disruption in the book. Include information on the difficulty of the adjustment or the sign of the disruption to the child as well as letting the child know that this does not mean that he is undesirable. He should understand that relationships are two-sided and see the role of both himself and his parents in the disruption. Other meaningful information should be included such as mementos and an account of his activities.

Some children have ample background information in their records, while others do not. Many are missing large segments of their background history. Whatever the information available, it is still very important for the child to have a clarification of the major issues in his life. Throughout work on the life book, you will help the child explore and deal with his feelings as well as clarifying his history. Helpful techniques to use in this process will be discussed in the next chapter.

# Resources

## Techniques, Materials, and Sources of Information

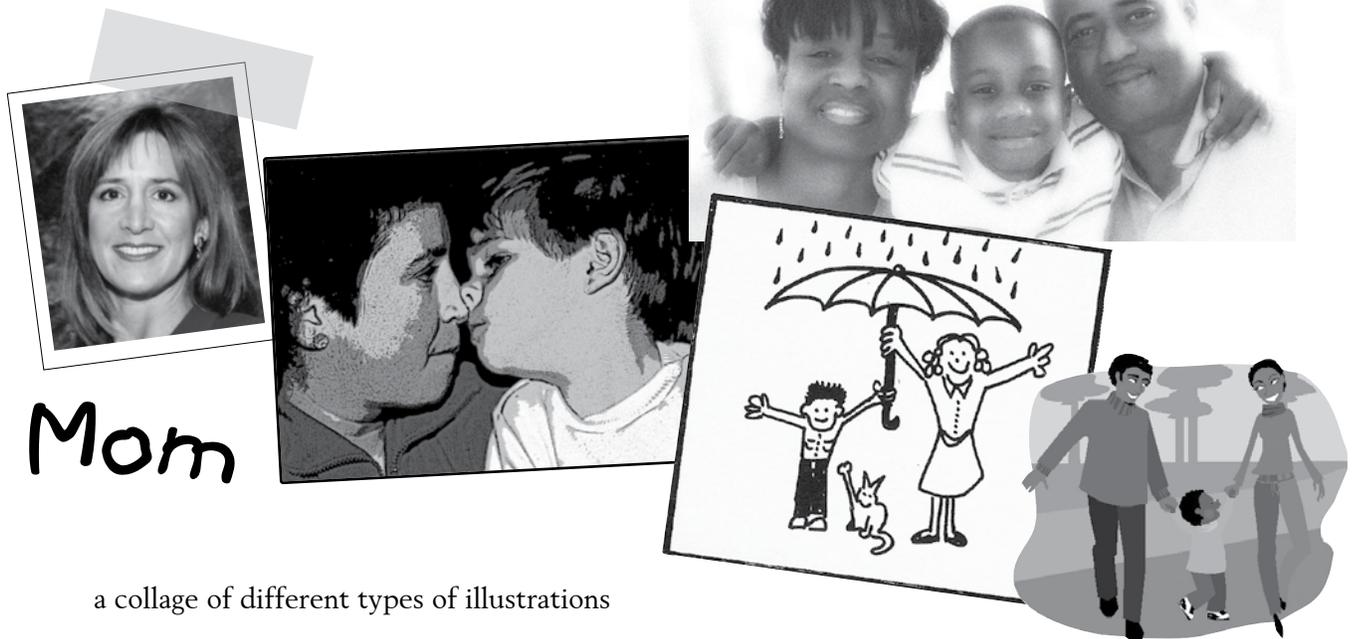
While working with a child on his book, not only will you cover the significant information of his life, but you also will deal with the child's needs, hopes, feelings and fears. A number of techniques can help you address both the factual information and the child's feelings, encouraging him to unlock, sort out and express his emotions.

### Writing the Book.

You may find that with school age children, you will most often share the writing. The child will participate as his skills and desire allow him. You may write whole passages, especially complex ones or those involving information uninteresting to the child now but of interest in the future. Or, write the story, leaving gaps where the child can contribute ideas,

facts, or feelings. Ten year old Helen made her story interesting and unique when she added the names" of her pets, favorite games and schoolteachers. Her verbal pictures of people and places gave color and feeling to her book.

A child's involvement in the writing will depend on his age, ability, emotional state, or academic skills that frequently are not on a par with his age. For children who are very young, hyperactive, emotionally disturbed, or who have short attention spans, write the story in advance, getting the child's opinion as much as possible. A collage of different types of illustrations can be a good tool through such activities as pasting in pictures or doing role-play. The child's involvement determines the effectiveness and the benefits of the life book.



a collage of different types of illustrations

## Illustrating the Book.

The best way to illustrate a life book is by using photographs of the child at different ages and photographs of people and places significant to him. Some children come with photographs. For those without them, you can often gather photographs from those who have cared for the child, or take them yourself. Photographs are important to all children, but they are especially useful in working with younger children because they are tools that make abstract ideas real.

To get more photographs, you can take the child to visit places which are special to him, photographing each place. This also gives the child a better sense of history. Visiting works well if the child has lived most of his life in the same area. Let the child plan the stopping points: the hospital where he was born, schools, houses where he has lived or places where friends lived. You can mark the places on a map for the child. Thirteen-year-old Wayne, usually angry and sullen, became proud and excited when he showed his social worker the places he had lived and recounted stories about people he knew in the neighborhood.

In the absence of photographs, you can use magazine pictures in the Life book to represent significant people. You can pre-cut pictures and let the child paste them in or, you may let the child choose and cut his own pictures. As another alternative, you may want to Xerox copies of drawings from children's books. These drawings can be of people or families engaged in family activities. Using a drawing is an especially good idea for younger children because the drawing is clearly only a symbol. Young children often cannot tell the difference between a photograph and a magazine picture. They may assume that the magazine picture represents an actual person in their lives.

You can also illustrate the book with cartoon figures cut from the funny papers. To explore such topics as separation from loved ones, ask the child to draw pictures in his life book. The child might draw friends, caretakers, houses where he has lived or anything else of meaning. Draw a picture frame and let the child draw in his family portrait. He may also draw different periods of his life, connecting them with a narrative. As well as documenting people and events, drawings can encourage the child to express his feelings. Ask the child to draw himself when he is angry, sad, or happy and ask him to include what makes him feel that way. For a younger child, you might draw a smiling face and ask "What makes Peter happy?" For other expressions, you might ask, "Why is Melinda sad?" or "What makes Stacie mad?" To help keep the child's attention, vary the drawing materials.

## Collages.

Making collages helps document the child's history and encourages him to express feelings. The collage may include certain themes or periods in the child's life. For example: my family looks like this; these things make me happy; I am afraid of these things; this happened when I was four; I feel this way about my mother; this is how separation from my birth family makes me feel. Many children will enjoy cutting out their own pictures, although younger children will need pre-cut pictures from which to choose. The activity can be varied somewhat for the older child who may want to make a poster rather than a collage. Let the child choose the materials with which he prefers to work.

## Story Telling.

Another good way to get a child to express feelings is to prompt her with a story telling exercise. Give the child a situation and let her

construct a story around it. "Bill is moving to a new house. What happens to Bill?" "Sandy is going to live with her birth mother again. What is she worried about?" A teenager can apply her creative skills to her own story. Ask

*...a good way to get a child to express feelings is to give her a storytelling exercise — give her a situation and let her make up a story.*

her to construct her story based on a theme in her life. These may include: What bothers me? What has made me happy? How I would like my life to be; how my feelings have changed about my birth mother. This activity may be easier and more interesting for the teenager if she can use a tape recorder instead of writing.

### **Lists.**

A child's concerns, feelings and fears are usually tightly entangled inside him and, without help, he has no way to clarify and segregate his feelings so that he can address them.

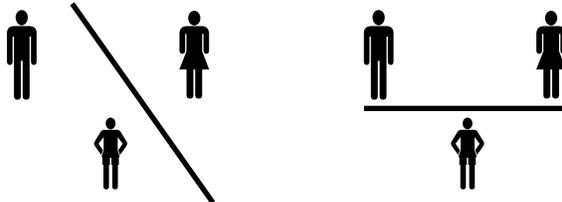
Making lists encourages a child to sort his feelings about issues. You may pose a question and get the child to answer in his book with a list of items. For example, you might ask: What does it mean to be adopted? How do you have to change? What makes a good family? What makes you afraid, worried, or angry? How can you show your feelings? You can explore different roles and lifestyles by asking "How do families do things differently?" or "How do mothers or fathers do things differently?"

A similar technique is a fill-in-the-blank exercise. You supply the sentence to be completed and the child supplies the answer to such sentences as "When I am sad I ," "What makes me feel alone is," or "What I like best about my family is ." Each sentence can be illustrated by a drawing.

Listing exercises stimulate discussion between you and the child. In this way you learn of the child's concern and give him the reassurance he needs.

### **Diagrams.**

As another tool to aid discussions, make simple diagrams or sociograms of family relationships. Talk about how different family members relate to one another including what they expect from each other. With a diagram a child can show you how he expects a family to work. Children and parents often have very different expectations of the same situation.



Two simple diagrams. The left describes a child's view of his alignment with dad, against mom. The right is a social worker's diagram of a more healthy alignment.

### **Letter Writing.**

Book making will stir up many feelings the child has buried or dared not express. Another technique, letter writing, gives the child a way to express these feelings. Before doing this exercise, consider sending the child a letter. Since many children do not receive mail, this would acquaint him with communicating through letters. Then, ask the child to write a letter to someone important to him and tell that person how he feels. This is an opportunity for the child to vent his feelings, both good and bad. A child who is angry at his birth parents for not keeping him could write them expressing his anger. A child who is going home could write

his birth parents a letter expressing his hope that things will work out. A child who is afraid his adoptive parents will not keep him could write a letter to them about his concerns. Assure the child that he decides whether to mail the letter. Most letters will be kept in the life book.

## **Puppets.**

For a child with more than the average difficulty understanding his feelings, puppets are often useful. It is helpful to have the child's puppet represent the child and your puppet represent a person with whom the child is having problems. The two puppets then interact. The child or you can role play along the lines of an issue that is a problem. It is sometimes revealing for child to be the person he is having difficulty with. Or the child can use both puppets and become two people in his life. Puppets also help children vent feelings otherwise difficult to express. The child can more easily make a puppet be angry and fight than to admit anger himself. This technique helps him identify his anger and fear. Puppets can also teach children to accept praise from others. It is less threatening for one puppet to accept praise from another than it is for a child to accept praise from others. You can use information from the puppet activities to design specific exercises for the life book, addressing concerns exposed during the puppet play. Or, puppets can be used to prompt work on other life book activities. In addition to puppets, other toys can be used. For very young children, you can use toy cars, trucks or people to act out what is actually happening to the child. Or let the child act it out. The possibilities for techniques are unlimited. Each situation will lend itself to various approaches, according to your ability and the needs of the child.

## **Materials.**

You will find in compiling the life book that you have at your disposal a number of materials that are readily available, easily used and conveniently stored. Keep on hand a small supply of paper, crayons, pens, pencils, magic markers, paste or glue and scissors. Magazines can be kept for making collages and posters. Story books provide a good source of pictures as well. Instead of using paper for all projects, substitute scraps of fabric. For making posters or collages, you will need a cheap backing such as poster board, thin cardboard, newsprint or freezer paper. Many printing companies will give scrap material free. Puppets can be made from an assortment of materials-everything from popsicle sticks to clothespins to old socks. Attach cardboard faces to popsicle sticks, sew faces on old socks or draw faces on the back of plastic spoons. Puppets made from the cardboard tubes from toilet tissue are simple and quick to make. A brown paper sack makes an interesting puppet-the fold in the flattened sack becomes a mouth. The eyes and nose could be a cut out.

While working on the book, other simple toys such as dolls trucks, cars or day may be used. At some time you may also use a camera, maps, tape recorder, or copying machine.

Finally, to assemble the life book, use a photo album, a loose-leaf binder, or folder with pockets, choosing one that can be expanded or taken apart and reassembled as needed.

## **Sources of Information**

As well as the case record, the child's memory or the parents' account of the child's life, you can use other means to learn about the child's life history, his personality and his unresolved emotional issues. Most additional information will come from other people who have known

the child: hospital personnel, teachers, day care workers, neighbors and temporary shelter personnel. Also consider getting the help of previous adoptive or foster parents, older siblings, relatives other than the birth parents, and church schoolteachers.

Frequently, more than one social worker has known the child and there is more information about the child's family than that in the case record. Ask the other social workers more about the family's history, placement details and their successes and failures with the child.

The developmental history of most foster children is sketchy. These other people may provide missing information about a child's development, his likes and dislikes, and their perception of his needs.

Often other people are willing to write letters to the social worker, the adoptive or foster

parents, or the child concerning their memories and feelings about him. One foster mother was able to explain in her letter why Becky had to be moved. This meant more to Becky than any other information. Receiving letters gives the child a way to stay in touch with important people, as well as encouraging a positive self-image. Before the child corresponds with others, get the approval of the foster or adoptive parents.

Many times social workers hesitate to ask others for more information, feeling that none is available or that the request will be an imposition. Most people are quite willing to help by rechecking a record or relooking for old pictures. One foster mother contributed not only a picture of her family for the child's life book but also pictures of two of the child's previous foster families. The occasional rebuff is the exception and not the rule.

# A child's development

Children's interests and abilities develop as they do. Since children vary considerably in their development, select the appropriate technique according to the maturity, interests and abilities of each child. Many techniques can be adjusted to several ages. This chapter describes the characteristics of each developmental stage and describes, in chart form, the techniques that work best with different aged children.

## The Eighteen Month Old.

At 18 months, the child is no longer a baby; he has become a toddler. In his eyes he is all important, unable to see other children as people. The toddler is self-willed and unable to share. He has a limited use of words. Fascinated by picture books, he turns pages by groups and identifies pictures. At 18 months, a child can sit at a table and pay attention when addressed. He can perform simple tasks such as handing familiar items to an adult upon request. Eighteen months is a contradictory age: the child needs emotional support from familiar adults, yet often resists authority.

## The Two Year Old.

Language is a major developmental area for the two-year old. He shows interest in conversation and talks to himself continually. He also learns sentences and how to express wishes and feelings. The two-year old can name familiar objects and obey simple commands. He likes to talk about pictures. He enjoys hearing stories, especially those about himself; but,

because of his short attention span, the stories must be simple and brief.

While playing, the two-year old imitates the actions of adults. He is possessive of toys and does not play with other children. The child demands attention and likes to stay active. He will follow simple directions. The two-year old is sometimes sure of himself but at times clings to familiar adults. Like the toddler, he resists authority and throws temper tantrums. He can also be demanding and persistent.

## The Three Year Old.

Unlike the two-year old, a three-year old tries to please and to conform. He shows love towards parents and siblings and does not always insist on getting his way. The three-year old is more secure about himself and his relationship with others. He tries to be independent but occasionally reverts to less mature behavior. Sometimes he has to test his limits. With his increased maturity comes a longer attention span. The three-year old will tolerate group activities and actually enjoys playing with others. He can also share and wait his turn. The three-year old child needs someone to understand and respect his feelings.

A child this age engages in dramatic play. Sometimes, he has imaginary friends or plays make believe games. He likes to tell stories, ask questions and just listen to himself talk. He also enjoys hearing his favorite stories. The three-year old asks the questions: "What?",

“Where?” and “Who?” He can briefly explain what he is doing and what happened in the past.

The three-year old enjoys drawing and painting and can draw simple shapes, including a person. He uses crayons, chalk, collage materials, clay and play dough.

Children from 18 months to three years old play with child size furniture, telephones, dishes, cooking utensils, play tools, dolls and doll furniture.

### **The Four Year Old.**

Physical activity characterizes the four year old. He is developing good motor control and proficiency at tasks requiring hand-eye control. In drawing a person, for example, he is able to include a head, legs, arms and a trunk. He can cut on a line with scissors and make designs.

The four year old's body and mind develop rapidly. He talks continually, using correct grammar. He is curious about the meaning of words and sometimes uses adult words out of context. He also loves hearing and telling tales and occasionally confuses fact and fantasy. The four year old shows signs of a developing sense of humor; he is loud and giggly. His intellectual skills include classification, reasoning and concepts of number, size, weight, color, position, distance and time.

A child this age is more aware of his peers; he argues with other children but needs their companionship. The child plays roles by himself or in a group. He needs to feel important and to receive praise, as well as to exercise freedom and independence.

The four year old also likes to paint and experiment with color. He may even plan an activity

before he begins. In play, he will build, play dress up, or use props.

### **The Five Year Old.**

A five year old is a more secure, stable, accommodating and reliable child. With increased self-respect, he becomes more sensitive to the needs and feelings of others. He chooses his own friends and participates in group activities. The five year old is highly creative if encouraged; he plans a project in detail and is patient and enthusiastic about completing his work. Encourage his drawing, painting, cutting, pasting and working with clay or play dough. When drawing a person, he will probably include a trunk, head, arms, legs, and features. He colors pictures carefully.

The five year old's intellectual skills include: collecting and classifying, thinking through and solving problems. He enjoys hearing stories and later acts them out with friends. He can explain the meaning of concrete nouns by usage and asks what abstract words mean. The child has a clearer concept of himself and his role in the family, and to some extent, his role in relation to other people.

### **The Six Year Old.**

The six year old is becoming more like an adult than a child. Although he cannot reason in an abstract, adult way, he can explain how things differ and how they are alike. He is eager to try something new while also being demanding, stubborn and sometimes unruly. He often wants to win at games.

Toys for children ages three to six include dress-up clothes, puppets, dolls, stuffed animals, village sets, trucks, cars, planes, and construction sets. Children

in this age group also enjoy playing roles such as teacher or store clerk.

### **The Seven Year Old.**

The seven year old may prefer to watch rather than to do. Sometimes he tries to take on too much. He is often moody, likes to be on his own and has spells of intense learning that alternate with periods of forgetfulness. The seven year old loves to draw and will draw a person with originality. He can give the opposite meanings of words.

### **The Eight Year Old.**

Independent and explorative, the eight year old wants to learn about his environment and be on his own. He believes no task is too difficult to handle.

He is concerned about other people's opinions; making new friends is important to him. He can make judgments involving generalizations

and abstractions. He understands and can tell time and distinguishes between similar objects.

Toys for children six to nine years old include: housekeeping toys that do something, building sets, tools, masks, store play sets, doll houses and furniture.

Toys for nine to twelve year olds include: handicraft sets, model kits, complex puppets and make-up kits. Children over twelve enjoy complex handicraft sets, kits for staging plays, and cameras.

For more information about developmental characteristics, see *Child's Body: A Parent's Manual by the Diagram Group*. New York: Bantam Books, 1979.

## TECHNIQUES BY AGE

	18 mos.-2 yrs.	3 yrs.	4-5 yrs.	6-8 yrs.	9-11 yrs.	12-on
Pre-written story with photographs	X	X	X			
Use dolls, cars, small people to tell story	X	X				
Ask concrete questions about past and present		X	X	X	X	X
Tell simple stories using the puppets		X	X			
Make collage			X	X	X	
Draw or paint		X	X	X	X	
Work with clay or play dough		X	X			
Role play with dolls, puppets, etc.			X	X		
Make up a story			X	X	X	
Write own story (use a tape recorder)				X	X	X
Make lists				X	X	X
Visit significant places				X	X	X
Write letters				X	X	X
Discuss defenses and fears				X	X	X
Make a poster					X	X
Role play without props					X	X
Use photographs to supplement narrative	X	X	X	X	X	X

# Building a Family

Dealing with the past is a continuing process and feelings from significant times in the past will resurface, especially on meaningful occasions such as birthdays and holidays. At some point, however, the child's efforts turn from the past to the present and to becoming a member of a new family. This chapter explores how families learn to get along. The life book is an especially practical tool to aid in a child's adjustment and in the family building process because it enhances his self-image, helps him communicate, marks the progress of the placement and serves as a format for his self expression.

Because family building involves the entire family, the caretakers' involvement is vital to the process of change and adjustment. Many of the exercises require prompting from a parent. Some are best done by a parent.

People sometimes do not believe children can understand the dynamics of human relationships. Experience has shown that children are able to understand how relationships work and how to make them work better. Some children are amazingly perceptive in this area. When confronted with failure, ten year old Bryan denied his feelings by saying, "I don't care." After his social worker explained what he really meant when he said that, he was able, a week later, to use this information to understand his feelings about failure. Your ease in discussing the issues and your faith that the child can understand are necessary if the exercises are to

work. Just as the child deserves an explanation of his past, he also deserves to be given the tools to make a success of the present.

**Start with Feelings.** To begin, help the child understand his feelings, concerns, fears and hopes about the permanent family. He needs to understand and accept himself before he can deal with others. Working on adoption issues and a life book can give him a good sense of what has happened to him, but he also needs reassurance that it is normal to feel angry and afraid. Children incorporate messages through repetition, so review the life book frequently. This will help the child learn to identify his emotions for himself and it will give you the opportunity to assure him that these emotions are normal. Also assure him that most people would respond as he did if given the same situation. You may further this process by using techniques outlined earlier in this book: drawing, making collages, letter writing, story writing and using a tape recorder.

**Communication.** The life book can help the child learn good communication techniques, which are essential to his adjustment. He needs to express his feelings clearly and constructively. If the child learns to express his feelings by saying, "I feel angry" or "I feel afraid," he takes responsibility for his own feelings and communicates his need rather than accusing others or acting out his impulses. Practice communication by using puppets.

For more information on effective communication skills, refer to *Parent Effectiveness Training* by Dr. Thomas Gordon. New York: New American library, 1975.

**List Making.** Once the child is aware of his feelings, one simple way to clarify both feelings and related issues is to use a listing exercise. Either before placement or after, pose the question “What does it mean to be adopted?” This is a good way to clarify certain key points such as, “Your adoptive parents will become your legal parents,” “Your birth parents are no longer legally your parents.” Cover lighter issues also. For example, children are frequently fascinated with getting new grandparents and with the concept of inheritance.

Once the child has been placed, you can do listing exercises dealing with such questions as “How is adoption easy?” “How is it hard?” “How is my new family different than my other family?” These questions work well because they allow you to explore differing values and life styles with the child. In this way, you can give your approval of the new situation and your assurance that this family’s differing values are acceptable.

**Diagrams.** For a child confused about his place in the family, a simple diagram of a family is helpful. Include a short discussion of what is expected and what usually happens in brother-sister, father-son, husband-wife relationships. This works well with the child who disrupts his family by placing himself between the parents or by acting as parent to one of the siblings. Draw how he has placed himself inappropriately between family members. Then discuss with him the dynamics of his behavior and its impact on his family and on himself. The child’s understanding of his behavior must be the first step in change. The life book can help parents and children work on changes together.

Since children suffer feelings of rejection from birth parents, many children behave so that adoptive parents will reject them in the same way as their birth parents did. Children who have had multiple placements are more likely to behave this way. Rejection creates a cycle that feeds upon itself. Fear of rejection elicits feelings of insecurity followed by testing and misbehavior. This misbehavior makes it difficult for the parent to like the child. The child is aware of the parents’ displeasure and becomes more fearful and insecure, thus starting the cycle again. This concept is difficult and drawing it in a circle outlines the idea so that the child can understand.

**Developing Relationships.** If the child is having trouble with one family member, work on that relationship in the life book by defining it and have the child list what he likes and does not like about the relationship. To make it easier to express himself, he can use puppets. He can think of things that he might do to improve the relationship such as expressing affection, doing something nice for that person, or asking that person to do a fun activity with him.

**Controlling Behavior.** After a child understands his feelings and his behavior, he will still need help using this knowledge to control the way to reacts. He needs to know what to change and how. The child can use a chart to record the changes in his behavior. Children will need a parent’s assistance to do this. The chart can be kept anywhere, but the life book provides privacy. A chart for a child who has problems with his temper might look like this.

When I get angry, I:

- (1) Vent my feelings in an acceptable way:  
 (a) punching a pillow (b) exercise (c) \_\_\_\_\_ ?
- (2) Take time out to think about why I am angry.
- (3) Take time out to think if I am being fair.
- (4) Talk to my parents.
- (5) Look for another way to solve the problem.

Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.

The child can put a check if he succeeds with each aspect of the problem. The parent can reward the child for the desired behavior. This activity is self-rewarding because as the child becomes more skilled in each area, he will have the checks to remind himself of his progress. His growing sense of accomplishment and control will improve his self-image.

**Success and Self-Image.** Other ways to improve a child's self-image include a calendar of his successes such as earning an A in spelling, making a new friend, or learning to ride a bicycle. The child can list the things he likes about himself and you can list the things you like about him. Or, give the child a task in which he will do well and afterwards record his success.

**Reaching Out.** Those involved in an adoption can gain by extending themselves to each other as if they already loved one another. Have the child write a letter to his new parents expressing his hope for the relationship. The letter can

be given to the parents or kept in the life book. One nine year old who was given to temper tantrums, could not tell her parents that she loved them, but was able to write a letter telling them what she felt and leave it where they would find it.

A list of ways in which one person can show interest and caring for another can be helpful. If everyone is comfortable touching, hugging, and showing affection, this should be taken advantage of. Sometimes, extending oneself in this manner may appear dishonest. However, the intent is to express a hope for the relationship rather than to give a false show of affection.

A parent can help his new child feel wanted by making a family tree. Together the parent and child can draw or-paint a family tree, including grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, parents, new brothers and sisters, and the child. Draw family members on the tree or paste on small pictures of each member.

# getting unstuck

Working on a life book can be difficult for you and the child. Barriers may arise due to your attitudes or the child's, or from the child's emotional problems.

**The Child Who Will Not Talk.** The first barrier you may encounter is a child's unwillingness to talk because he is anxious about working on the book. To counter this, help the child relax with an activity like playing a game or eating. These activities help build trust between you. Plan activities that are appropriate for the child's age. Vary the activities to make the time more interesting. As you work with him, have him repeat what was said to be sure that he understands. Because he is already uncomfortable, avoid increasing his anxiety by working too long or covering too much material. When you begin, let the child know how long your sessions will be. Tell him exactly what you will be doing and why.

Encouraging the child's involvement in the project will also stimulate his participation. One reluctant eight year old became very excited about his book after he found a number of old pictures of his birth family that his grandmother had tucked into an old wallet she had given him. This gave him something he could contribute to the book.

**The Disinterested Child.** Another problem is a child's apathy. Before you begin, try to determine why he does not want to work on the book. He may not realize its purpose.

Explain what you hope to accomplish and in what ways the book will be valuable to him. More than likely, the child's apparent disinterest is to avoid talking about personal topics. As you work, you will discover the painful topics. Reassure him that it is normal not to want to talk about these things but that it is necessary to discuss them. As with the child who will not talk, encourage the child's involvement. It also helps to start each session by contracting with the child for the length of the session and stick to your agreement.

**The Child Cannot Write.** When working with a child who cannot write, write for him as you go along. For a child with a short attention span, have the story written beforehand. If the child has some writing skills, you and the child can share the writing. Assure him that grammar and spelling are not as important as the expression of his ideas. If the child is comfortable with talking but not with writing, try using a tape recorder. But before you begin, put him at ease by familiarizing him with the equipment. Many children who cannot write are comfortable with drawing. A child's life story could be told in a series of drawings which the worker could tie together with a narrative.

**Problems with Materials.** As limited writing skills hinder a child, so does his inexperience with art supplies. To overcome this, let the child experiment with some of the materials by doing some enjoyable exercises. Enlist the help of foster or adoptive parents to relax the

child. You also can show the child some simple examples. He might like to see how other children have done their life books. Assure the child that the book belongs to him and that it is not a graded assignment.

**Getting to Know Him.** As the worker, you may encounter personal hindrances in doing a life book. Not knowing the child presents a problem. Before working on the life book, get some information about the child from a teacher, a friend or the foster or adoptive parents. Find out what the child can or cannot do. For your first session, get acquainted by doing some neutral activities such as playing a game. A good tool to use in getting acquainted is *The Second Anti-Coloring Book* by Susan Striker and Edward Kimmel. New York: Hold, Rinehart and Winston, 1979. Each page of this coloring book starts the child on a creative approach to a topic. Some of the topics are whimsical, others serious.

**Inexperience and Intimidation.** If you feel inexperienced, begin by looking at examples of other life books. If none are available, look through local libraries for children's books. These will give you clues as to tone, illustrations, story content, and children's interests. To ease your feelings of inexperience, remem-

ber that the book is the child's and not a reflection of your artistic abilities. You will feel more comfortable once you have done a life book.

Often you will feel intimidated by the child's complaints that he is bored or by his lack of enthusiasm. A child can make you feel inadequate and incompetent. He can add to your frustration by implying that he has nothing to gain and you may fear that you are doing emotional damage to him. This pressure may be strong enough to tempt you to abandon the project. But do not become easily discouraged or allow the child to control the situation. The child who appears bored or disinterested usually is the one who needs the most help.

**Your Commitment.** Before the life book can work, you must be convinced that you can use it to help the child. Keep in mind that children need you to explain what has happened to them and they also need a way to tell their story. Working on a life book will bring up painful memories and the immediate results may be difficult to live with. But, long term, it will stabilize the child and develop his sense of identity. Since the life book provides an excellent means of discussing feelings, it can make the therapeutic aspect of your task easier.

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*...to ease your feelings of  
inexperience, remember that  
the book is the child's and not a  
reflection of your artistic abilities.*

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# other problems other uses

This book has shown how a life book can give a child a sense of his history and prepare him for adoption or for return to his birth family. Life books can also be used effectively with children who are not separated from their birth families but who are experiencing other serious disruptions in their lives, such as the death of a parent or sibling, the divorce of parents, a serious illness, or a move from one place to another. In any of these disruptions the life book will give the child an understanding of the problem, assure him that he did not cause it, allow him to express his feelings and give him a tool to cope with the situation.

When a loved one dies, the parent should explore the child's understanding of death, including how people get sick, what death is and that death is permanent. The parent should identify the specific cause of the death, pointing out that it was not the child's fault. The parent might use puppets or other exercises to explore the child's feelings including those of guilt or abandonment. The child could also write a letter, poem, or story expressing his love or his sense of loss. Include mementos in his life book. Encourage the child to list memories of good and bad times so that he can remember the person realistically.

A divorce requires ongoing work, especially when there is visitation between the child and the parent who leaves. Both parents can use the life book to give specific reasons for the divorce and to assure the child that he did not cause the breakup. Update plans that pertain to the child, especially visitation plans. Explore feelings such as the child's sense of loss through life book exercises. Explain changes in family structure including the parents' new way of relating to one another, perhaps by drawing diagrams. Parents can also use the life book to explore the child's fears and concerns when either parent begins to date.

When a child is seriously ill, use the life book to describe the illness, to explain how people get sick and to prepare him for medical treatment. Use the book to let him vent his feelings. When he is confined to bed, the book can be an activity book for the child, easing his boredom and stimulating him through games or puzzles.

The life book can also help prepare a child for a move. Give him his new address and a description of his new neighborhood. Use maps to show the distance between the new and old homes, and the location of his new home, school, and church. For his records, do the same for the old neighborhood. Include a map of interesting places to explore in the new city.

The life book is a good place to keep pictures and addresses of playmates. The child may also want pictures of the old house and school or similar mementos.

Use a life book to deal with any loss or disruption. Whatever the issues, the parent is best suited to work with the child but there

are others who can effectively work with him. In time of family crisis, it is difficult to deal with issues thoroughly. Life books give parents and children a tool to go beyond a superficial look at the problem, thus insuring that the child resolves it and is able to continue building his life.

Workbook

# talking about the birth family

## I. ISSUES:

- (A) Birth Information
- (B) Feelings of Birth Parents About Child's Birth
- (C) Description of Birth Family
- \* (D) Why the Child Was Placed Into Foster Care or For Adoption
- \* (E) The Child's Placement Was Not His Fault
- (F) Involvement of Court
- (G) Involvement of Social Worker
- \* (H) Fate of Siblings

## II. TECHNIQUES:

- (A) Use information sheets, maps, documents, to give information.
- (B) Discuss and write a description of D, E and H.
- (C) Write letters to vent feelings.
- (D) Use puppets and role play to talk about feelings.
- (E) Use dolls, puppets, toys and cars to act out what happened (for preschoolers).
- (F) Tell stories and make collages around themes.
  - (1) What I liked about my mother.
  - (2) What about my life made me sad, happy, angry.
  - (3) When I lost my family, I felt
  - (4) I am afraid when
  - (5) The worst/best thing that ever happened to me.
- (G) Use a tape recorder as an ice breaker and story telling tool.
- (H) Make a time line — a chronological list of life events.

\* critical issues

# TALKING ABOUT THE BIRTH FAMILY:

## Birth Information

Birth is usually heralded as a singularly significant event in each child's life, including children in foster care. However, many foster children do not have the benefit of real history, family legend and continuity to have a fixed beginning as a part of their identity. Some process is needed to help the child coming into care to gain a sense of who he is. One of the most effective ways to do this is to let the child share and work through his past and present life in a book that the child can take with him as he moves. Each child in care deserves to have a life book, regardless of the plan for him.

At some point in helping a child make a life book you will deal with his beginning. The bare statistics, which may seem dry to a worker, are usually of much interest to the child. A birth certificate can yield an interesting story. Birth parents, relatives, those who have worked with the child and the child's memory will add still more.

This important event can usually be assumed to be a happy one. Care should be taken to put special emphasis on the positive aspects of the child's birth date. Assume as much as you can while utilizing information, i.e. "Jimmy's parents wanted a little boy and were very happy when he was born." "The day Jimmy was born was a special day for Jimmy's parents." "A very important date for Jimmy's parents was April 10, 1973-that was the day Jimmy was born."

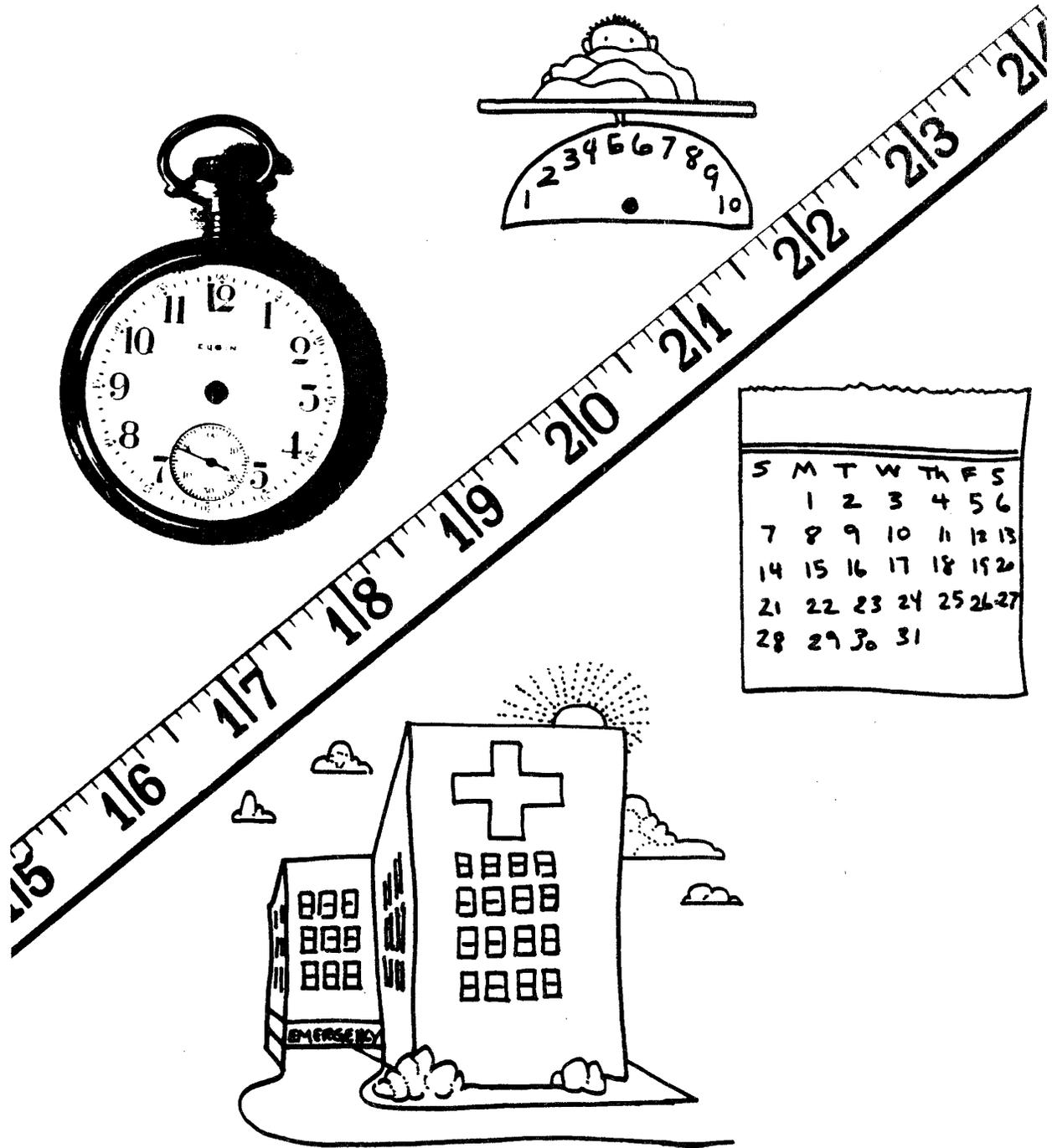
Illustrations and pictures give the child a pleasant, positive feeling about his beginning as you put in time, date, measurements, and information while talking with the child. Your affect will be an assurance that getting born was an important and meaningful time for Jimmy.

You might include something about his name, "Jimmy was named after his father and grandfather." You could say how handsome he was with pretty eyes, beautiful long fingers, etc. Jimmy needs to know he did all the regular things that babies do-he cried, burped, kicked, cooed, laughed.

# Your Birth

You were born \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_,

(State) \_\_\_\_\_ hospital. What a dear, sweet baby you were.



# I Was Born

On \_\_\_\_\_ (date)

at \_\_\_\_\_ (place)

\_\_\_\_\_ (city)

I weighed \_\_\_\_\_ pounds, \_\_\_\_\_ ounces

and was \_\_\_\_\_ inches long.

I was born at \_\_\_\_\_ (time)

in \_\_\_\_\_ (hospital)



I went home with \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I moved because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

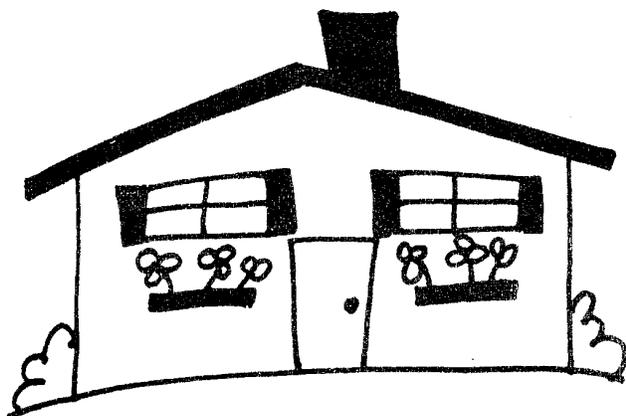
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I lived there until \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



# MY ORIGINAL BIRTH CERTIFICATE

FORM VS NO. 2-A  
(Rev. 9/82)

## COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT FOR HEALTH SERVICES REGISTRAR OF VITAL STATISTICS CERTIFICATE OF LIVE BIRTH

116

SAMPLE

Registration District No. \_\_\_\_\_ Primary Registration District No. \_\_\_\_\_

<b>CHILD</b>	1. CHILD—NAME FIRST MIDDLE LAST John Q. Anybody	DATE OF BIRTH (MONTH, DAY, YEAR) 2a. August 28, 1972	HOUR 2b. 4:08A.M.
	2. SEX 4a. Single	IF NOT SINGLE BIRTH—BORN FIRST, SECOND, THIRD, ETC. (SPECIFY) 4b. h/a	COUNTY OF BIRTH 5a. Jefferson
	3. CITY, TOWN, OR LOCATION OF BIRTH 5b. Louisville	INSIDE CITY LIMITS (SPECIFY YES OR NO) 5c. yes	HOSPITAL—NAME 5d. Our Lady's Help Hospital
<b>MOTHER</b>	6a. MOTHER—MAIDEN NAME FIRST MIDDLE LAST Jean Louise Everybody	AGE (AT TIME OF THIS BIRTH) IN U.S.A., NAME (COUNTRY) (SPECIFY YES OR NO) 6b. 22 Kentucky	SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER 6d. 000-00-0000
	7a. RESIDENCE—STATE COUNTY Kentucky Jefferson	CITY, TOWN, OR LOCATION (ZIP CODE) 7c. Lyons	INSIDE CITY LIMITS (SPECIFY YES OR NO) 7d. YES
<b>FATHER</b>	8a. FATHER—NAME FIRST MIDDLE LAST Ralph Q. Anybody	AGE (AT TIME OF THIS BIRTH) IN U.S.A., NAME (COUNTRY) (SPECIFY YES OR NO) 8b. 23 Kentucky	SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER 8d. 000-00-0001
<b>CERTIFIER</b>	9a. INFORMANT Jean Louise Everybody	RELATION TO CHILD 9b. mother	
	10a. REGISTRAR—SIGNATURE Joan Q. Person	DATE SIGNED (MONTH, DAY, YEAR) 10b. August 29, 1972	ATTENDANT—M.D., D.O., MIDWIFE, OTHER (SPECIFY) 10c. M.D.
	11a. REGISTRAR—SIGNATURE SAMPLE	MAILING ADDRESS (STREET OR R.F.D. NO., CITY OR TOWN, STATE, ZIP) 10b. 1320 Chestnut St., Louisville, Ky, 40202	DATE RECEIVED BY LOCAL REGISTRAR (MONTH, DAY, YEAR) 11b. Sept. 6, 1972

### FOR MEDICAL AND HEALTH USE ONLY

12. RACE MOTHER (if S White, Black, American Indian, etc.) (Specify)	13. RACE FATHER (if S White, Black, American Indian, etc.) (Specify)	14. BIRTH WEIGHT 6lbs. 2oz.	15. LEGITIMATE (SPECIFY YES OR NO)	16. MOTHER MAILING ADDRESS Jean L. Everybody 123 Seventh St., Lyons, Ky.	
17. PREGNANCY HISTORY (Complete each section)		18. EDUCATION MOTHER (Specify only highest grade completed)		19. EDUCATION FATHER (Specify only highest grade completed)	
LIVE BIRTHS (Do not include stillbirths)	OTHER TERMINATIONS (Specify terms and trimester)	Elementary or Secondary (10-12)	College (14 or 5+)	Elementary or Secondary (10-12)	College (14 or 5+)
17a. None living	17b. Stillborn	12	0	10	0
Number: 0	Number: 0	20. DATE LAST NORMAL MENSTRUATION BEGAN (Month, Day, Year) Dec. 12, 1971		21. MONTH OF PREGNANCY PRENATAL CARE BEGAN (Month, Day, Year) Second	
None	None	22. COMPLICATIONS OF PREGNANCY (Describe or write "none") none		23. PREMATURAL VISITS (Give number if none reported) eight	
DATE OF LAST LIVE BIRTH (Month, Year) n/a	DATE OF LAST OTHER TERMINATION (Month, Year) n/a	24. CONCURRENT ILLNESSES OR CONDITIONS AFFECTING THE PREGNANCY (Describe or write "none") none		25. APGAR SCORE 1 min: 9 5 min: 9	
26. COMPLICATIONS OF LABOR AND/OR DELIVERY (Describe or write "none") none		27. CONCURRENT ILLNESSES OR CONDITIONS AFFECTING THE PREGNANCY (Describe or write "none") none		28. UMBILICAL MALFORMATIONS OR BIRTH DEFECTS OF CHILD (Describe or write "none") none	

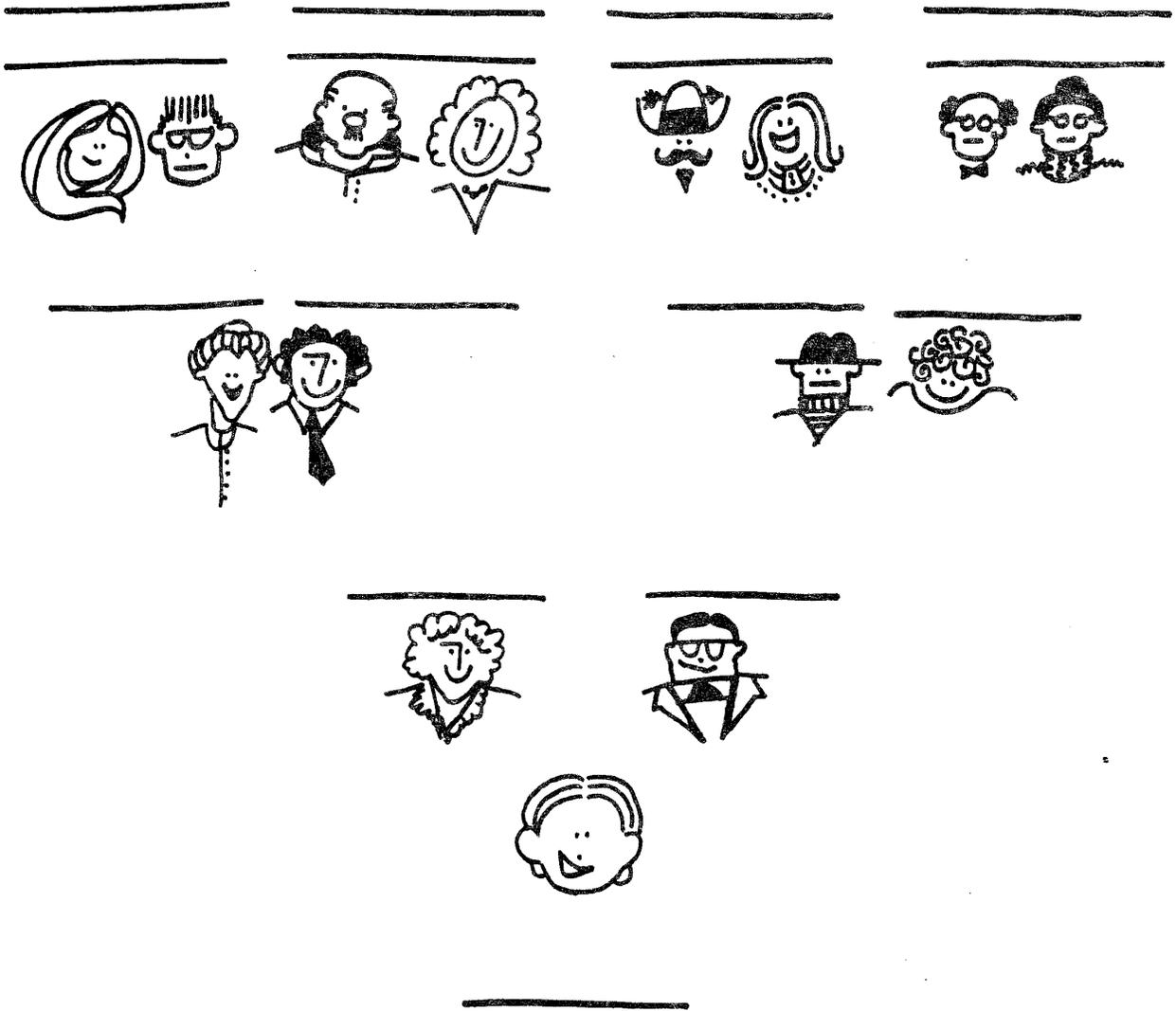
DEATH UNDER ONE YEAR OF AGE  
Enter Local File Number of death certificate for this child

MULTIPLE BIRTHS  
Enter Local File Number for multiple child

LIVE BIRTHS

FETAL DEATH(S)

# My Family Tree



# Growing and Learning



Held my head up \_\_\_\_\_

Turned my head from side to side \_\_\_\_\_

Turned over \_\_\_\_\_

Smiled \_\_\_\_\_

Laughed \_\_\_\_\_

Discovered hands \_\_\_\_\_

Reached for an object \_\_\_\_\_

Got my first tooth \_\_\_\_\_

Sat alone \_\_\_\_\_

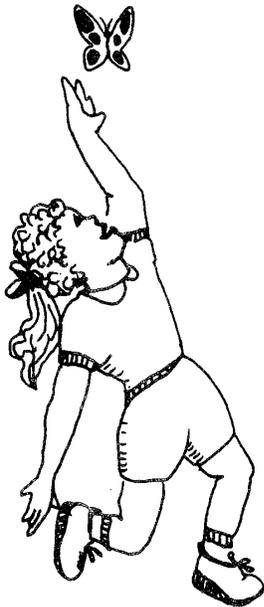
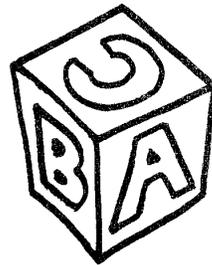
Crawled \_\_\_\_\_

Stood alone \_\_\_\_\_

Walked \_\_\_\_\_

Went down steps \_\_\_\_\_

Went up steps \_\_\_\_\_



Said a word \_\_\_\_\_

Said a sentence \_\_\_\_\_

Fed myself \_\_\_\_\_

Helped dress myself \_\_\_\_\_

And \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# How I've Grown



Age

Weight

Height

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# Health Record

Medical Number \_\_\_\_\_

## Childhood Diseases and Illnesses:

Type	Date	Duration	Remarks

## Immunizations:

	Date Boosters Received	Series Completed		
DPT:				
Diphtheria	_____			
Whooping Cough	_____			
Tetanus	_____			
Polio	_____			
Mumps	_____			
Measles	_____			
Typhoid	_____			
Rubella	_____			
Smallpox	_____			
Others:	_____			
	_____			

Tests:	Date	Reaction
Schick	_____	_____
Tuberculin	_____	_____
	_____	_____

# talking about the birth family

As you talk to the child about his beginning, you will find it necessary to begin working toward resolving the child's feelings about his birth family. The child's biological heritage has been established by his birth parents and care should be taken to give him as accurate a picture of his ancestors as possible. Be as detailed as you can about dates, events, ages, statistics and health records. If there is a lot of information, you will be lucky. As you work with the birth family, jot down information and take pictures for future use.

Nurture the idea that parents have a responsibility toward their children to give them a home, shelter and food. We all have responsibilities and sometimes we cannot meet those responsibilities.

Leaving a birth home is a very traumatic event. Children often feel confused, angry, helpless and humiliated. Memories are unclear; traumas are often spawned from this single event. Understanding what led to this loss is a difficult and slow procedure but extremely important if the child is to proceed with a healthy mental and emotional life.

Children view the events that happen to them as their fault. Children feel guilty because they believe they are the cause of family failures. Children generally are immature and self-centered believing they cause the day to day things that happen to them. Usually they will center on whatever behavior or feeling they are having at the time. If Jimmy cries because he was frightened by the argument mom and her boyfriend were having the night the police removed him, Jimmy later may feel it was all his fault because he cried.

Deal honestly, but gently, with feelings, concerns, and events. Helping the child to see realistically what has happened to him without making the birth parents appear to be ogres is difficult. Workers often have feelings of their own that have to be dealt with prior to helping the child.

It helps to remember that sometimes telling a story in its' simplest terms can be the answer. For example, if Jimmy's mom is a prostitute, Jimmy needs to understand that his mom had needs of her own. She may have made poor choices more times than not and especially where her boyfriends were concerned. The boyfriends were not always nice to her, and depending on the circumstances, got her into trouble with the law or they were mean to Jimmy.

Your Mom and Dad were friends for awhile.



This is my \_\_\_\_\_ (Father, Mother, friend, home).

A Mom and Dad care for their children by doing:



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My Mom and Dad did:

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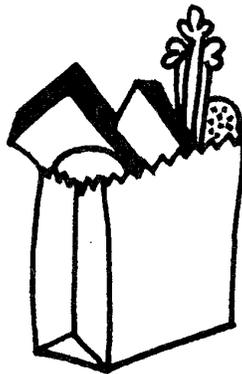
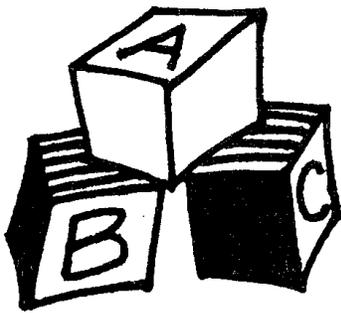
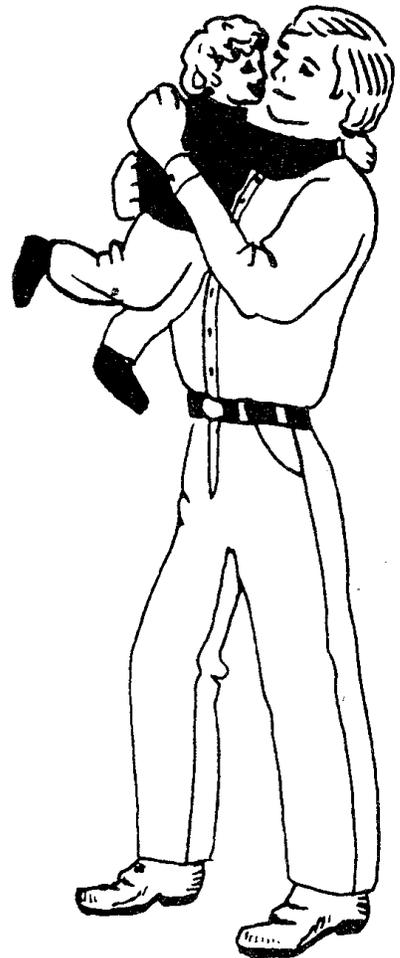
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# Growing As I Go

Dates of events

Life events

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**Fill in the blank sheet for child's placement.**

When you were \_\_\_\_\_ your \_\_\_\_\_ began to have serious problems.

She \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

It was very hard for her to work these things out for herself and take care of you too. You needed all the things that all children need and she began to worry that she would not be able to care for you.

One day \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

This was a hard time for your mother. She felt sad and mad and confused about your leaving. In her heart, she did not want you to go. But she also felt good that you would be getting good care and the things you needed.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## **Sample Description Of Five Year Old's Separation From Parents**

When you were five years old and your mom was twenty, she began to have some serious problems. She was very young for a mom and had to depend on others to give her and you the things you both needed, a place to live and food. She had no money, no job, and not enough education. She had a hard time taking care of a little boy and trying to get these things too.

Because of this, she didn't feel good about herself. When people don't feel good about themselves, sometimes they don't make good choices about the people they spend time with or the things they do. Your mom had trouble making good choices and got into trouble with the law. This made her feel even worse about herself.

By this time, your mom was feeling pretty desperate. That is a strong feeling people have when they don't know what to do or don't feel they can do anything to help themselves. She was very worried about what would happen to you. She felt she could not take care of you and give you the things you needed and also give herself the things she needed. This was a very hard time for her. She had a lot of sad, mad and confused feelings. She wanted you to have the things you needed, a stable home and food. Because of this, she asked the social worker to help find a good home for you.

## **Sample Description Of Ten Year Old's Separation From Parent**

You lived with your mom and dad until just after your tenth birthday. Sometimes there were very happy times *and* sometimes there were very sad times. Your dad had a hard time growing up and his parents had mistreated him and sometimes they hurt him. Because of this, he didn't know how to treat his own children. Sometimes he expected them to act like grownups rather than like children. He wanted to be a good dad to you but he didn't know how to do it. Because he had been hurt, he sometimes hurt you. This made both of you very sad and you were very afraid.

Now, your mom hadn't had a good time growing up either and she was very afraid of your dad too. Sometimes he hurt her also. Because of this, she was unable to protect you.

Now, it is every child's right to grow up safe from harm. It is one job of the courts to make sure that children are safe. The courts ask social workers to help them make sure children are safe. Because you were in danger, the social worker found a safe place, a foster home, for you to live until your mom and dad could learn how to take care of you without hurting you. Your little brother and little sister also came with you to foster care.

## **Sample Description Of Fourteen Year Old's Separation From Parent**

Now, we both know that you and your mom had been having a hard time of it. Even though she loves you very much, she had a hard time knowing what to do with kids. She wasn't very regular about telling you what to do and how to do it. She let you stay home from school more than was good for you. Even though you love your mom very much, it was hard for you to know what she wanted you to do. It was confusing because sometimes things were one way, sometimes another. You got used to deciding what to do on your own and often did things your own way even when your mom told you differently.

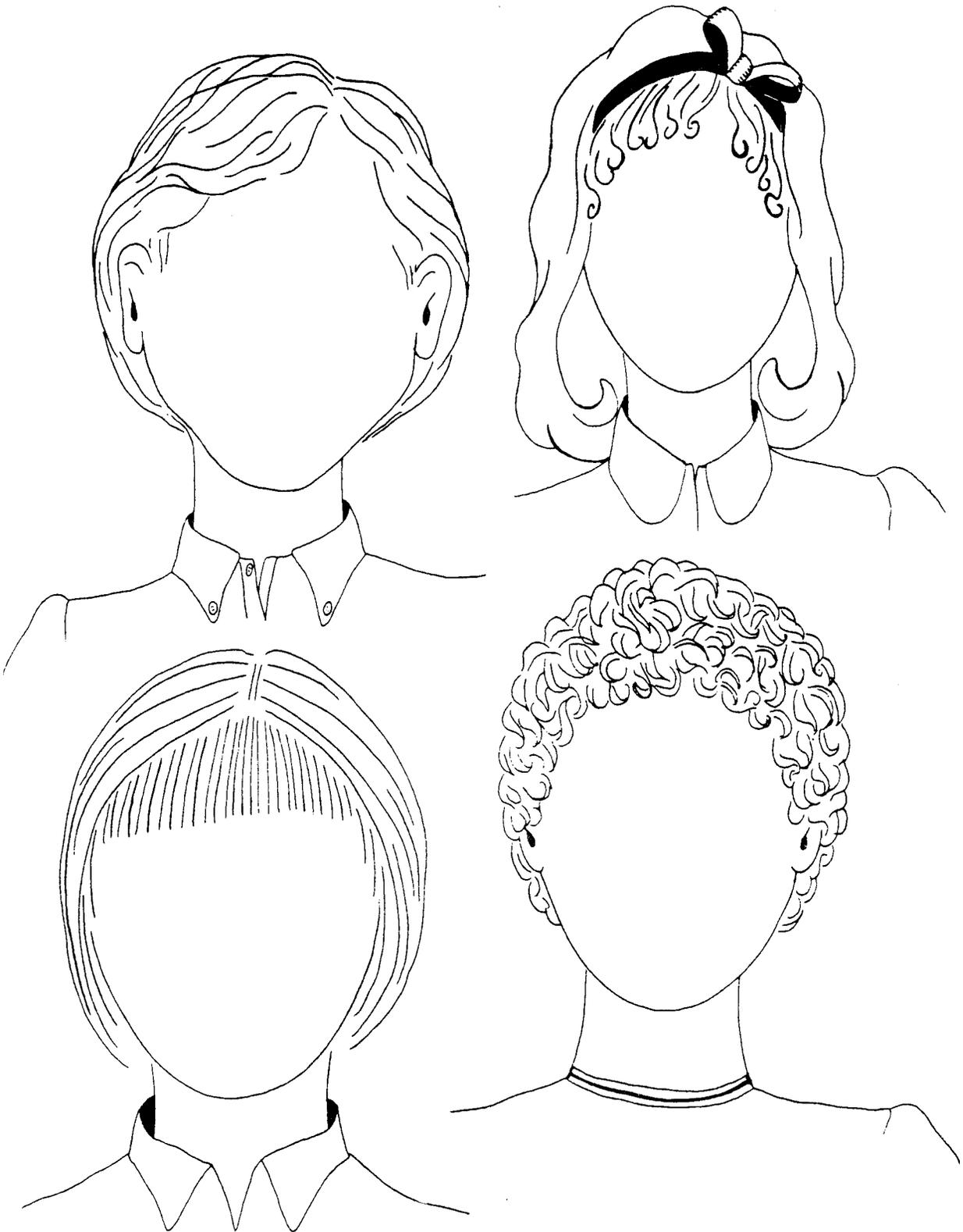
This was very hard for both of you. Both of you had mixed feelings -strong feelings of love and anger all together. Sometimes you fought. This became very hard for your mom because she didn't know how to help you anymore. She felt she couldn't control you and this made her very afraid. She thought you might hurt yourself or someone else and that she could do nothing to protect you.

Because she was so afraid, she went to the court to ask for help.





# Brothers and Sisters



# placement into foster care

## I. ISSUES:

- (A) What is a Foster Home?
- (B) List the Homes the Child has Lived in: Names, Dates, Reasons Moved, Special People, Activities and Developmental Stages.
- \* (C) Why the Foster Parents did not Adopt Him.

## II. TECHNIQUES:

- (A) Use Information Sheets, Maps, etc. to Give Information.
- (B) Use a Tape Recorder as an Icebreaker and Story Telling Tool.
- (C) Write Letters to Vent Feelings.
- (D) Use Puppets to Act Out Events, Explain C, and draw out feelings.
- (E) Discuss and Repeat Critical Points.
- (F) Make Collage or Life Stories Based on Themes:
  - (1) The hardest thing about leaving my foster family is \_\_\_\_\_
  - (2) When I move, the thing I will miss most is \_\_\_\_\_
  - (3) Special times I will always remember.
  - (4) Things that made me angry about my foster family.

\*Critical Issues

# Placement Into Foster Care

The attachments a child forms in foster care and other placements are very important. For a child who has been poorly treated in his first home, seeing him attach in another setting is a very good sign that he has some feelings of self-worth and sense of identity. As with attachment in the first home and resultant loss and leaving, he will suffer loss when leaving the foster home well. Many of our children have had numerous placements in foster homes and child care facilities. Each placement must be dealt with individually and constructively as you work toward return home, adoption, or other plans. Walking a child from one placement to another can be like walking through a mine field with eruptions of feelings and emotions on every side.

The worker needs to study the record, get all background information possible, enlist foster parents, therapist, and social workers to give assistance, information and pictures to help guide the child.

One aspect of foster parenting is the foster parent's role in carrying out the decision of the court as to what is in the best interest of the child. While foster parents understand their role technically and intellectually prior to and during placement, they are like workers and birth parents -they are caring, feeling, needing, loving people. Helping the child to see the role the courts play while relating to the foster family, and guiding foster parents through their attachment and loss is a monumental task. Talking often with foster parents and enlisting their active participation in helping the child understand the process can be a real advantage to both worker and foster parents.

**Fill in the Blank Sheet About Why Foster Parents did not Keep the Child**

Now, we both know that \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ are your foster parents and that foster parents keep children for a time until the children get a lasting family. You may be wondering why \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ did not try to keep you always.

They \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Now \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ care about you and they told the social worker they wanted you to have a lasting family that would be there for you always. They told the social worker they would help you get ready for this family.

We know that getting ready for this new family is difficult for you. It is a sad time for all of you. Because they loved and cared so much about you, their feelings were all mixed up inside. They knew they would be sad when you left but they knew they would be glad for you to have a keeping family.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Homes I Have Shared

Substitute Parents:

Mom \_\_\_\_\_

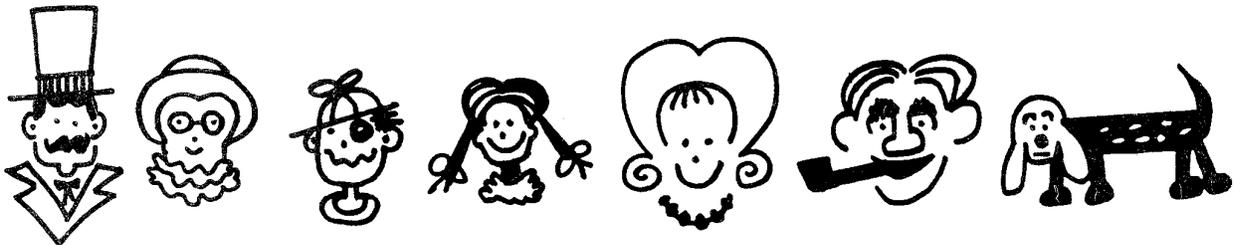
Dad \_\_\_\_\_

Brothers and Sisters

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Favorite Friends

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



I lived here from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

I moved because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Where I Am Today

I am living at \_\_\_\_\_

I live with \_\_\_\_\_

They are my \_\_\_\_\_

I am in \_\_\_\_\_ school.

I am in the \_\_\_\_\_ grade.

I have lots of friends \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



# Moving on

## I. ISSUES TO COVER:

- \* (A) Every Child has a Right to Parents.
- (B) The Emotional, Social, and Legal Aspects of Adoption.
- \* (C) The Child's Contribution to His Own Adoption.
- (D) His Adjustment to a New Family
- (E) The Child's Return to His Birth Family.

## II. TECHNIQUES:

- (A) Discuss all Critical Issues.
- (B) Use Repetition to Reinforce Critical Issues.
- (C) List by Priority His Wishes About an Adoptive Family.
- (D) List How New and Old Families are Different with Values Clarification from Worker.
- (E) Make a Col/age or Story Built Around Themes:
  - (1) How my new family is different.
  - (2) How I feel when my new mom tells me to do something I don't want to do.
  - (3) How I would like my life to be.
  - (4) How I would help my new family to be.
  - (5) Ways to help my new family help me.
  - (6) What I Fear Most in Going Home.
- (F) Discuss or Make Diagrams of Family Dynamics.
- (G) Write a Mock Letter to Past People to Express Feelings.
- (H) Use Puppets and Role Play to Work Through Problems.
- (I) Write Letters to the New Parent to Express Hopes and Dreams.
- (J) Use Tape Recorder as Icebreaker and Story Telling Tool.

\*Critical Issues

## Moving On

The child needs to work through attachment and loss and toward reattachment or new attachment regardless of how many or how few placements he has known. The child who has been removed from his birth home, spends a few months in foster care, and is able to return home needs to understand the dynamics of what happened that caused his removal. He should know that it is not his fault, that he has the right to a family and that he and his family will try to live together as a family again. The above will remain essentially the same regardless of whether the plan is to return home, adoption or long-term foster care.

Children need to understand that returning home or being adopted does not mean there will be no problems. It means that everyone will try to make it work out.

Children who move usually have trouble blending the value systems of two very different families. Values clarification can be done with the child by helping him to sort out what is different about the families, what is essential in making a good family and if those elements are present in both the new and old family. See the attached work sheet.

# Looking at Values

## How Families Are Different

Family I

Family II

<hr/>	<hr/>

What do all families have to have to be good parents?

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Do both these families have these qualities?

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How can families be different and still be good families?

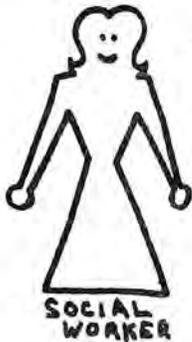
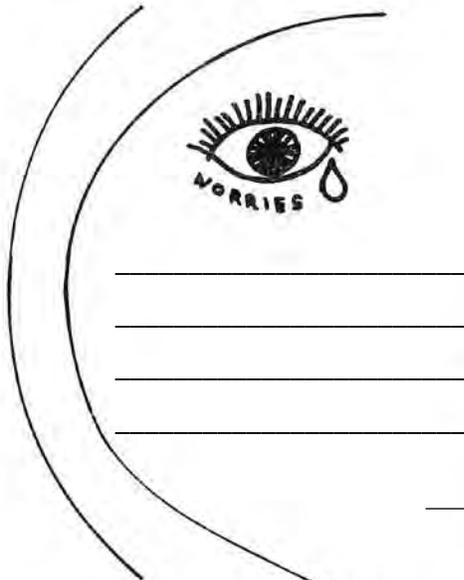
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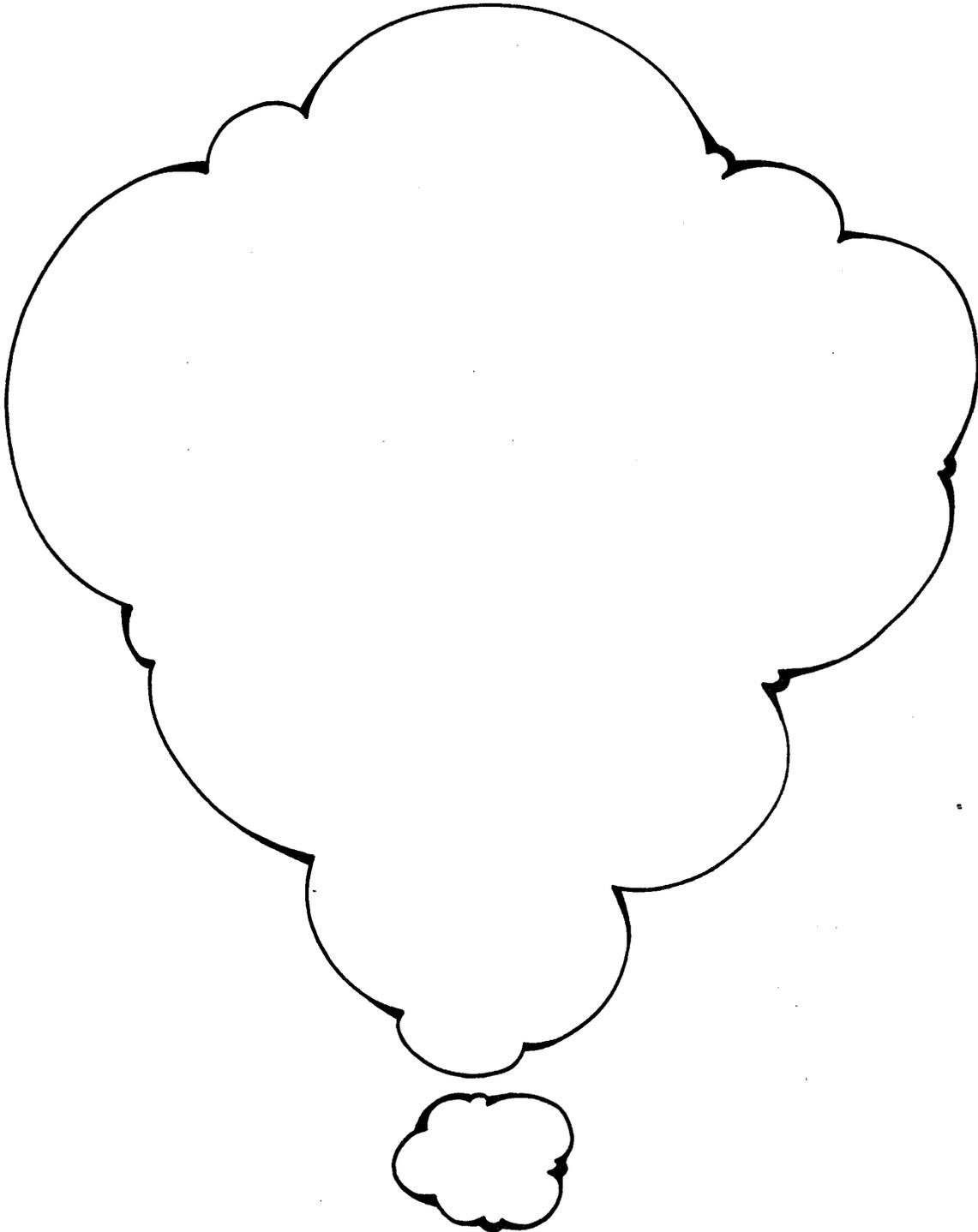
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# My Personal Path



This is what I dream about,  
when I dream of being adopted.



# Special needs and self-concept

## I. ISSUES TO COVER:

- (A) Feelings.
- (B) Handicaps — the Handicap's Role in Placement — the Child's Feelings About Being Handicapped.
- (C) Self Image,

## II. TECHNIQUES:

- (A) Discuss and Repeat the Special Need's or Handicap's Role in the Child's Placement, and identify that as the Parents' Problem.
- (B) Make Stories or Collages Around Themes:
  - (1) My special need makes me feel
  - (2) With my special need I can accomplish  
(Story or collage with positive encouragement from worker)
  - (3) How I want my life to be.
  - (4) Being placed for adoption is (happy, sad, angry, etc.)
- (C) Write Letters to Parent to Express Feelings.
- (D) Use Role Play or Puppets Around the Handling of Everyday Social Situations that are Difficult for Handicapped People.
- (E) Use Step-by-Step life Planning with Goals (for teens).
- (F) Use Attached Sheets to Compile General Information About the Child to Give a Sense of Who He Is.
- (G) Identify Feelings (how child knows he or someone else is afraid, confused, angry, happy, sad).
- (H) Use a Tape Recorder as Icebreaker and Story Telling Tool.
- (I) Make a Collage of "What makes me what I am."
- (J) Materials from This Section can be Used Throughout Work on the Life Book to Help Children Understand Their Feelings.

\*Critical Issues

## Special Needs — Self Concept

Children in placement always have some special area of need. A particular physical handicap, emotional and physical handicaps as a result of neglect or abuse, a serious illness, the death of someone close, and loss of parents, may cause the self concept to be greatly altered. Children may not only feel they are in some way responsible for what has happened, but that they continue to cause traumatic events where ever they go. Or they may feel all is hopeless and they have no control over their life events. Regardless of the way the special need is manifested, the child has a great feeling of emptiness tied to the particular trauma suffered.

It is good to listen carefully to what the child is saying, or not saying, so that you make sure you touch all areas of need. Don't be overly concerned that you or the child become repetitious in doing the life story. You may deal with the same areas more than once in the same way or in a slightly different way. The life book is for the child. If he needs to repeat, hear him. Generally he will absorb what he needs and what he does not need, he will not hear.

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*...they may not only feel responsible, but that they continue to cause traumatic events wherever they go.*

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# I Am A Person, I Have Feelings.

When I am angry I show it, I \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

When I feel sad I show it, I \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

When I am happy, you'll know it. I will \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Sometimes I am proud. I \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Another time I may be jealous. I \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Sometimes I worry. When I worry my face looks \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

When I am embarrassed I \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I have been disappointed by \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I am shy when \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

One of the saddest feelings I have is loneliness. When I am lonely \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Yes, I am a person and I have lots of feelings.

# My Feeling Page

One of my feelings is \_\_\_\_\_

The reason I have this feeling is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

When I get this feeling \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What I would rather do when I have this feeling is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

When I want to make this feeling go away \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The last time I had this feeling was \_\_\_\_\_

I did \_\_\_\_\_

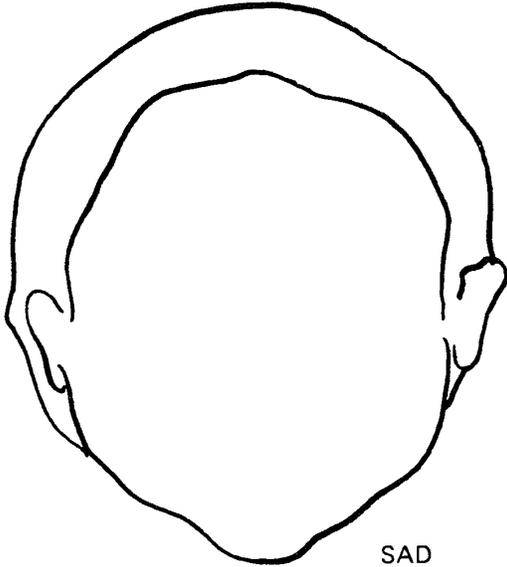
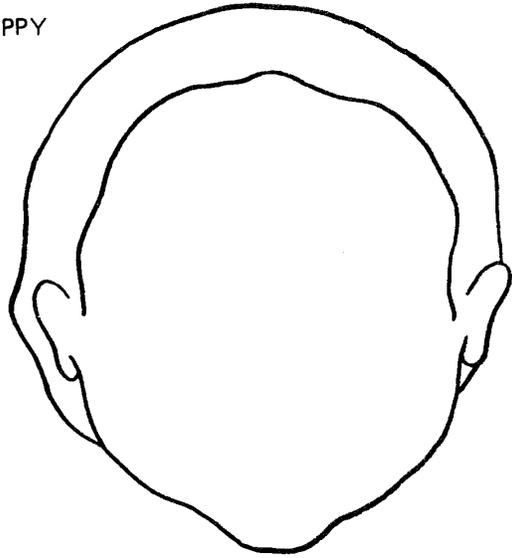
\_\_\_\_\_

The next time I get this feeling I plan to \_\_\_\_\_

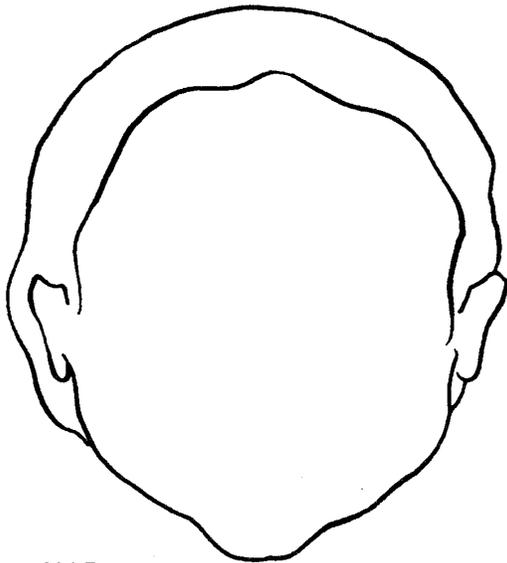
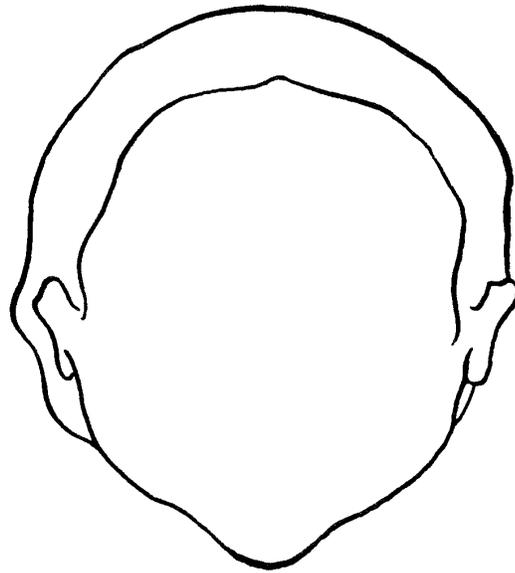
\_\_\_\_\_

# I Show My Feelings On My Face

HAPPY



SAD



MAD

This is me when \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The hardest thing I ever had to do was \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

I pulled my future out of a fortune cookie. It says \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

I cried my eyes out when \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

I blew out my birthday candles all at once. I wished for \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

If I could do anything, I would \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

Superman is coming to rescue me. He is saving me from \_\_\_\_\_

---

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When I hear my favorite tune, it reminds me of \_\_\_\_\_

---

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## Mistakes

*A mistake is just a mistake — nothing more*

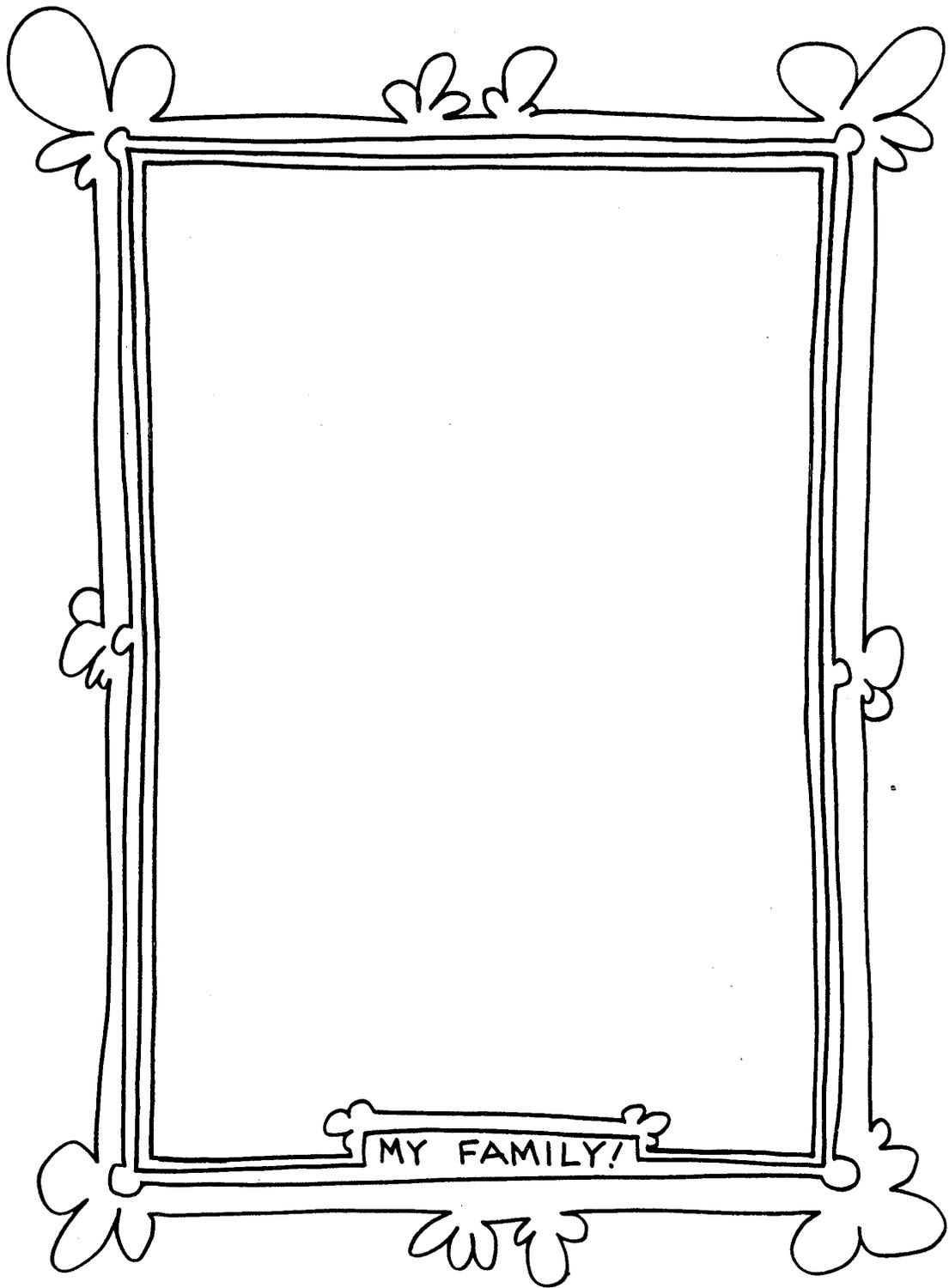
*A mistake's a mistake — we don't keep score*

*You can learn from mistakes -everyone can, even me*

*Mistakes help you learn to do old and new things differently*

---





# Growing Up

I will go to school until \_\_\_\_\_

I will be \_\_\_\_\_

I want to live \_\_\_\_\_

I want to take my vacation in \_\_\_\_\_ so

I can see the \_\_\_\_\_

I will have \_\_\_\_\_ people in my family someday.

Their names will be \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I want my family to be \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I look forward to growing up because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I will never \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Dear :

This book is all about you. It is a record of the places you have lived and the people you have known. I know there are many questions about your early life this book will not answer; but it is my hope that it will answer the really important questions for you. In the time I have known you and been your social worker, I have collected pictures and information to help you understand about yourself when you grow up. This is not a fancy book, but I trust that you will take good care of it and use it to better understand yourself. As you grow older, please remember that I cared for and valued you as a person very much and that I always wish for you the very best things in life.

Sincerely,

Your Worker

## Additional Resources

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