

The following reviews of BAAF publications have been written by members of the Post Placement Support Service (Vic) Inc (www.pps.org.au), an organisation which has been established to provide early intervention support and training to anyone who has a personal or professional connection with permanent care, adoption, long term foster care and kinship care.

LIFE STORY WORK: A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO HELPING CHILDREN UNDERSTAND THEIR PAST

Tony Ryan and Rodger Walker

BAAF, 2007

Any parent or guardian of a child in home based care, such as foster care, kinship care, permanent care and adoption, should read *Life Story Work*. It is a creative and comprehensive book outlining the importance of, and ways to record, information concerning the life of a child.

Children are entitled to accurate knowledge about their birth family, together with the events that led up to their separation from birth parents and siblings. It is vital information that contributes to a healthy sense of identity and it is the basis of forming their self-worth and self-esteem.

The authors suggest that life story work is a *process*, rather than simply the completion of a life story *book*. This work can be done in a variety of ways and these are clearly and comprehensively covered in the book – for example, through use of audio tapes, videotapes, books, computer files, and interactive CD ROM packages.

The book also includes chapters on working with groups, as well as working with children who have particular needs – for example, children with a disability, children who have been sexually abused, and children with a life threatening illness.

The authors assume that social workers will have an important role to play in assisting life story work and in accessing resources. However, this may not be the case in Australia where agencies may not have sufficient resources to undertake this work.

Life Story Work is a comprehensive and inspirational book. However, from the perspective of a busy parent who may have children from more than one birth family, achieving all that is suggested may well be unrealistic in terms of time and resources for many families.

The challenge is to grasp the concepts presented in the book and translate them into a manageable form that will provide a child with information and an understanding of the journey they are on through life

REVIEWED BY:

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ATTACHMENT HANDBOOK FOR FOSTER CARE AND ADOPTION

Gillian Schofield and Mary Beek

BAAF, 2006

Gillian Schofield and Mary Beek have produced a comprehensive and powerful handbook addressing one of the most significant issues affecting children and families involved in home based care.

The book is primarily written for social workers dealing with children and families in this sector and would make an invaluable resource text for students and those currently working in the field. Additionally, it is accessible and highly relevant to the carers and adoptive parents of these children.

The book is organised into three sections:

- Theory – the first five chapters examine the development of secure and insecure attachments, with a chapter devoted to each of the three different types of insecure attachment (avoidant, ambivalent and disorganised).
- The middle section is devoted to an analysis and description of a framework for ‘therapeutic parenting’. The authors describe, in separate chapters, the five dimensions for providing a ‘secure base’ to enable secure attachments. The work is detailed and provides examples and suggestions for carers to assist them to support children in a sensitive and balanced manner.
- The third section focuses on the role of the professional in supporting both children and carers in a manner that is sensitive to, and cognisant of, attachment theory and practice.

The authors advocate principles of respect, broad-mindedness and sensitivity, arguing that it is possible to apply the same values and practices whether you are supporting the child, biological parent or carer. Each chapter ends with a point form summary of the important considerations of the chapter.

This is a well written and very readable text which presents a consistent, practical and common sense approach for carers and professionals working with children who are emotionally and developmentally vulnerable. It is highly recommended.

REVIEWED BY

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www.baaf.org.uk

In Australia, many BAAF books are available through St Luke's Innovative Resources:

www.stlukes.org.au/resources