



A Carer's Guide to **LifeTales**

Welcome to Life Tales...

What is Life Tales?

Life Tales is a series of therapeutic children's books created to support children living in out-of-home care and the adults who care for them. Each story follows a child navigating experiences that many children in care face — big feelings, change, trust, belonging, identity, and connection.

The books are designed to gently open conversations about difficult experiences in a safe and supportive way. Through storytelling, children can see parts of themselves in the characters and begin to understand that they are not alone in how they feel.

Life Tales recognises that children in care often carry complex histories. Rather than focusing on problems, the stories focus on understanding, *safety*, *healing*, and *connection*. They highlight the powerful role that caring adults play in helping children feel *secure*, *valued*, and *understood*.

At the heart of Life Tales is a simple belief: Every child deserves to have their story seen, heard, and held with care.

Using Stories as a Therapeutic Tool

Life Tales books are designed using principles of Play therapy and bibliotherapy, as well as other relationship based approaches.

Play Therapy:

Through providing many elements of Play therapy such as permissiveness and reflection of feeling — Life Tales books offer children a safe, symbolic space to explore feelings, experiences, and worries without needing to talk about them directly.

Bibliotherapy: Through relatable characters and stories, Life Tales uses bibliotherapy to help children understand emotions, build language for their experiences, and feel less alone in what they are going through.

Bibliotherapy allows children to approach complex topics indirectly, which often feels safer than talking about their own experiences straight away.

A child may say, "That's how the character felt before they are ready to say, "That's how I feel."

This gentle distance can make powerful conversations possible.

Overall the books can help children:

- Understand their feelings
- Build language for difficult experiences
- Feel less alone
- Explore coping strategies
- Develop hope and resilience

How Carers Can Use Life Tales

Life Tales books are not meant to be read once and put away. They are tools that carers can return to many times as children grow and their understanding develops.

Carers may use the books to:

- Create safe conversations about feelings and experiences
- Help children make sense of confusing situations
- Normalise big emotions such as anger, fear, sadness, and worry
- Model supportive and responsive caregiving
- Strengthen connection and trust through shared reading time

While reading, carers might pause and ask open questions such as:

- "I wonder how the character might be feeling right now?"
- "Has anything like that ever happened to you?"
- "What do you think helped them feel safe again?"

There is no pressure for children to share. Simply listening and being present is often the most important part.

Supporting Carers Too

Caring for children who have experienced trauma is incredibly important work — and it can also be challenging.

Life Tales was created not only to support children, but also to support carers.

The stories model therapeutic responses from caring adults.

They show ways adults can:

- respond to big emotions with empathy
- stay calm during challenging moments
- help children regulate and feel safe
- build trust slowly over time

Many carers say that stories can help them see situations through the child's perspective, which can make difficult behaviours easier to understand.

Life Tales also connects carers to additional resources, information, and training so they can continue building confidence in therapeutic caregiving.

Celebrating the Role of Carers

Children in care heal through relationships.

The everyday moments carers provide — sitting beside a child who is upset, listening to worries, helping them feel safe at night, celebrating small wins — all matter deeply.

Life Tales recognises and celebrates the extraordinary role carers play in children's lives. These books acknowledge the patience, compassion, and dedication it takes to support children who may have experienced loss, uncertainty, or trauma.

Carers are not expected to have all the answers. What matters most is showing up with consistency, care, and willingness to understand.

A Bridge to Understanding

Life Tales is more than a series of books. It is a tool for connection.

The stories help children explore their feelings and experiences, while giving carers a gentle way to start important conversations. Together, they create opportunities for understanding, healing, and growth.

Every child's story matters.

And every caring adult who walks beside them is helping to write a stronger, safer next chapter.

How to Read Life Tales with Children in Care

Children who have experienced trauma sometimes respond to stories in unexpected ways. A story may bring up strong feelings, questions, or memories. This is normal. The goal is not to “teach a lesson,” but to create a safe space where children can think, feel, and talk if they want to.

Here are some helpful ways carers can use the books:

Go slowly

Take your time when reading. Pause to look at the pictures, notice what the character is doing, and allow the child to absorb what is happening in the story.

Follow the child's lead

Some children will want to talk a lot. Others may stay quiet. Both responses are completely okay. Let the child decide how much they want to share.

Talk about the character first.

It is often easier for children to talk about the character before talking about themselves. You might say:

- “I wonder how the character is feeling here?”
- “What do you think they might need right now?”
- Notice feelings and behaviours

Help children connect feelings with actions.

For example:

- “It looks like he is really angry. Sometimes anger can happen when someone feels scared or hurt.”

Keep the conversation gentle

Avoid pushing for answers. Curiosity and patience are much more helpful than trying to get a child to explain their feelings.

Be prepared for different reactions

Some children may become quiet, change the subject, or even act silly. Others may become emotional. These reactions can be a sign that the story has touched something important.

Come back to the story later

Children often understand stories differently over time. Re-reading the book weeks or months later can lead to new conversations and insights.

Most importantly, remember that the connection between you and the child is what matters most. Sitting together, reading, and sharing a calm moment can help children feel safe, valued, and understood.



Helpful resources and websites

Australian Childhood Foundation

Provides training, resources, and therapeutic support focused on childhood trauma and healing for children in care.

Website: www.childhood.org.au

Emerging Minds

A national organisation focused on children's mental health. Offers excellent resources for parents and carers supporting children who have experienced adversity.

Website: www.emergingminds.com.au

Raising Children Network

A trusted Australian parenting website funded by the Australian Government. Includes practical advice on behaviour, emotions, trauma, and development.

Website: www.raisingchildren.net.au

Berry Street – Berry Street Education Model

Provides trauma-informed training and resources that help adults understand and support children affected by trauma.

Website: www.berrystreet.org.au

CREATE Foundation

Australia's national organisation representing children and young people with experience in the care system. Their resources help children understand their rights and build connections.

Website: www.create.org.au

Kids Helpline

A free 24/7 counselling service for children and young people aged 5–25. Children can call, chat online, or email for support.

Phone: 1800 55 1800

Website: www.kidshelpline.com.au

Lifeline

Provides 24/7 crisis support for adults who may need help or someone to talk to.

Phone: 13 11 14

Website: www.lifeline.org.au

Beacon House

Beacon House is a team of psychologists, psychotherapists, drama-therapists, family therapists and occupational therapists who all share one thing in common: we believe in the healing power of connection and relationships following trauma and ruptures in early attachment.

Website: www.beaconhouse.org.uk

First Nations Organisations and Cultural Resources

Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care also means supporting their connection to culture, community, and identity. The following organisations provide culturally informed resources and support.

SNAICC – National Voice for Our Children

SNAICC is the national peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. They provide resources, research, and guidance on culturally safe care and strengthening children's connection to family, culture, and community.

Website: www.snaicc.org.au

Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care State Secretariat (AbSec) – NSW

AbSec is the peak organisation for Aboriginal child and family services in New South Wales. They advocate for the safety, wellbeing, and cultural rights of Aboriginal children in care.

Website: www.absec.org.au

Healing Foundation

A national organisation focused on healing from the impacts of intergenerational trauma and the Stolen Generations. Their resources help carers better understand historical and cultural contexts affecting Aboriginal families and children.

Website: www.healingfoundation.org.au

13 Yarn

13YARN (13 92 76) is a national, 24/7, free, and confidential crisis support service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Website: www.13yarn.org.au

Therapeutic Approaches for Children with trauma

- PACE by Daniel Hughes
- Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics (NMT) developed by Dr. Bruce Perry
- Attachment and Bio-Behavioral Catch-Up (ABC) by Mary Dozier
- EMDR- Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing
- Conscious Parenting by Dr Shefali
- DDP- Dyadic developmental Psychotherapy
- Circle of Security
- Play Therapy
- Theraplay
- Therapeutic parenting

www.ourlifetales.com.au

