

Stacy Gehringer ([00:05](#)):

Hello. Welcome everyone. Thank you for tuning in to the CASCW Podcast Channel. My name is Stacy Gehringer and I am the Outreach Director at the Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare. We're excited to share our latest podcast series with you. The series is titled It's the process, not the product: Supporting Therapeutic Lifebook work for kids youth and beyond.

Speaker 2 ([00:28](#)):

Hi there I'm Keely Vandre and I coordinate CASCW's Permanency and Adoption Competency or PACC Program, which is a cohort based training that enhances permanency and adoption competence for professionals working across child welfare and mental health settings statewide. While we discuss Life Books as a practice tool throughout our curriculum, the research bears out that there is a significant underuse of life book and life story work across child welfare and therapeutic spaces. Even though it is evidenced to be a highly effective and flexible practice tool for foster and adopted children and youth. And I've heard the same challenge echoed by PACC therapists and child welfare workers who want to engage Life Books as a tool in their practice, but may struggle with knowing where to start or how to carve out the space for this important work.

Stacy Gehringer ([01:20](#)):

We hope that this mini podcast series can demystify and streamline life story approaches that can help any practitioner center and support children, youth, and even adults in knowing and telling their stories as an integral part of their permanency and or adoption journey. Please be sure to subscribe to our channel for future episodes. We thank you for listening and take care.

Keely Vandre ([01:49](#)):

Kendra Morris Jacobson is joining me today from Oregon and Kendra oversees the Oregon Post Adoption Resource Center and the Oregon Adoption Resource Exchange and is certified in Therapeutic Life Story Work or TLSWI. She was a supporting contributor to Dr. Redmond Reams recently published article in Adoption Quarterly titled, "Life Books in child welfare. Why isn't a great idea used more often?". So Kendra, would you be willing to share a little bit more with our listeners about your background and what drew you to Life Book and TLSWI work?

Kendra Morris Jacobson ([02:27](#)):

Thank you, Keely. Thanks so much for hosting me today. When I reflect on nearly 30 years in the field with all my very roles, mental health recruitment, post supports advocacy, there's two salient themes, connecting and storytelling. And ultimately all I am as a professional is a collection of those stories that I'm honored to witness hear, hold, or celebrate. And that's really the appeal of Therapeutic Life Story Work and Life Story in general. If we share stories with one another and take even brief time to connect, what we share resonates with more authenticity and for hurting of children that we're working with, that's an acute need, especially if we're trying to support them. And here we are today, Keely getting to become part of one another's stories and in many ways, part of your listeners as well, which is exciting in terms of therapeutic life story work itself. We discovered Richard Rose, probably back in 2014 and I lay out the tale of our introduction in a meandering chapter. I wrote for his 2017 book, innovative life story work, and he really captured our attention.

Keely Vandre ([03:41](#)):

It was really great to be able to learn more about him and you, you introduced me to him. It was great to listen in on one of his webinars. Well, to get more into today's topic, I think it would be helpful context for our listeners to hear a little bit more about the history of Life Books as a practice tool. Can you talk a little bit about that?

Kendra Morris Jacobson ([04:03](#)):

Yeah, so Lifebooks in their simplest and most familiar form are a book of photos, descriptions, mementos of both a child's history prior to care, at least in terms of what's known. And then their time in care, you know, somewhat of a modified baby book or scrap book with child welfare records woven in. And they've been in some form or another within child welfare for decades. They varied widely from a literal scrap book to more of a narrative with notes, records. And today some have evolved even to physical containers and now, you know, video or digital forms, but in the United States, it's pretty common knowledge that Beth O'Malley foster care adoptee and social worker herself most famously called our collective attention to the relevance of life books in the early 2000's. But it's Joy Rees in the United Kingdom, who in the nineties had started to explore more of the therapeutic structure and purpose of life books as a scaffolding for healing, you know, as in life books being not just a product for the child, but unfolding as an intentional and dynamic process with the child. And regardless of the form, life books are sometimes the only records a child will have of pieces of their childhood. So they can be a priceless tool.

Keely Vandre ([05:19](#)):

That's something interesting. I've heard that even just a few lines, can be, can constitute someone's experience of a Lifebook and having just a little bit of information can still feel very grounding for people who have experienced out of home placement or time in care. So that makes a lot of sense. So then can you tell us more about the purpose of using Lifebook specifically in a child welfare setting?

Kendra Morris Jacobson ([05:46](#)):

Yeah, so traditionally child welfare has used life books as a way to share the child's records with them and with their future caregivers, since one of the absolutely deleterious destructive effects of being in care is children lose so much of that continuity on the foster care or adoption journey. And then of course the life book moves forward with the child as they leave the system. But over time, you know, as with Joy Rees and her approach, the field started to discern that there was even greater value and potential in involving the child in an age appropriate fashion in creating the book and even the format of the book in order to help them better grasp their identity, their roots, as well as their future. So essentially it was an evolution from just a, you know, pretty keepsake album to more of this interactive and growth experience and the reasoning around that and the value of it being more of a personal process really lies in attachment theory and models or interventions like Darla Henry's 357 TBRI,

Kendra Morris Jacobson ([06:53](#)):

Trust Based Relational Intervention or Richard Rose's Therapeutic Life Story work. And they all focus on giving a child safety. So they find their voice and likewise helping them find their voice. So they feel safe. Delaware based attachment therapist Jessica Sinarsky refers to the concept of safety blindness, where kids in care are perpetually preoccupied with keeping themselves safe. So they don't even have time to truly digest, you know, where they are, who they're with, let alone where they've been, and they need all of those pieces to create a cohesive narrative and understanding around it. And so ideally the process of life books or life story work, help a child pause just long enough to feel safe, even if briefly, and take

stock in what's been happening in their life and reclaim their voice. And if folks want an instant crash course in feeling safe, one of my absolute go-tos is the Pocket Guide to Polyvagal Theory by Dr. Steven Porges. It's amazing. And his work is also delightfully synthesized and summarized by therapists authors like Dr. Mona Delahooke or Bonnie Badenoch.

Keely Vandre ([08:03](#)):

Wow. What great resources. Thank you so much for adding those in. I think that the idea of safety is really, it reminds me of some of what Dr. Richard Rose was speaking to in the webinar. I was able to join him with last week that the co-creation or the storytelling of the child, youth and care can sometimes be a moment that can be triggering. You know, I think it's interesting to think about how we hold space for that and encourage them to share their stories, but also honor the fact that sometimes sharing the story can be really hard. Also, something we see in our classrooms is the interdisciplinary silos that maybe a therapist feels that they can kind of enter into that work, but not necessarily a child welfare practitioner. So is it therapeutic necessarily to do that and delve into things that can bring up trauma and attachment?

Kendra Morris Jacobson ([09:02](#)):

I think you could even argue that any relational moment is therapeutic for these children. Any time an adult is interacting with these kids who come into care or really any child for that matter, in whatever role they are. It's an opportunity. It's a time where we can model how to connect, how to share a story with one another, even if it's just a passing moment, because then that is what helps each of us feel safe, Robyn Gobbel, she's an attachment trauma therapist and she talks about slowing it down. Not that you're slowing down moments in time, physically, but more emotionally, relationally where you, where you create a little bit of an intentional space around how to story share with someone else, in particular these children, in order to create that safe space, which is then what allows them to process through some more difficult moments, but yet without feeling too dysregulated.

Keely Vandre ([10:11](#)):

Right. That's, that's helpful. So at the beginning of our conversation, I mentioned the way I actually found you Kendra was reading Dr. Redman Reams article titled, "Life Books and Child Welfare: Why Isn't a Great Idea Used More Often", and that really seems to be echoed. It alludes to this notion that I've heard that life books are an underutilized or almost kind of mystical tool. What does the literature say about that? Is there a need for more research on life books and life story work?

Kendra Morris Jacobson ([10:48](#)):

So the research on life books specifically is pretty sparse. And plus if you're gonna study life books, you have to determine, well, what are the measurable areas of impact you even suspected to have? And that's where Oregon's psychologist and attachment expert, Dr. Redman Reams, as you mentioned, who's also an adoptive parent himself comes in and Dr. Reams was looking at, you know, what I call the woefully understudied area of transitions from foster care to adoption and noting the inconsistencies and barriers around this really impactful time in both a child and a family's life. And we're not just talking one family, but multiple families are impacted and being the brilliant and astute mind that he is. He suspected that when it came to transitions factors, such as whether a child transitioned with a life book or not probably had implications far beyond just, you know, the existence of a lovely gingham book.

Kendra Morris Jacobson ([11:40](#)):

So he's written multiple articles on his findings from the transition study. But in this case, you know, he was looking at the variable of life books specifically, and what he found was striking. He sums it up beautifully in his article. So I'd encourage folks to go straight to the source rather than relying on me. But if you really parse and distill it down into a single golden nugget of wisdom, his collective transitions research and the Life Book Study show this, when people around a child connect with one another and come to a common understanding of that child's life story, things unfold better for the child. And I wanna repeat that, cuz it's really significant. When people around a child connect with one another and come to a common understanding of that child's life story, things unfold better for the child. And this makes a real strong case for life books and other related tools, being a pretty urgent area of both study and practice. And anecdotally, without a doubt, there's people listening to this podcast who know how complex transition times are and how there can really be sort of dangerous moments when they can go away and the life book or life story work can really factor in just for a transition. And so then if you extrapolate that to my goodness, what could that mean long term.

Keely Vandre ([13:07](#)):

Mm-hmm <affirmative> Well, I think, I think about multiple transitions and how many of the children in care experienced, maybe more than one. And so just even kind of multiplying the impact of having that thread, that story that continues with them, that that could become even more important.

Kendra Morris Jacobson ([13:28](#)):

Absolutely. And that's not even thinking about involving the child in creating the book, that's just the existence of the book itself. So when you start to think about it in that way, it's really striking and sort of opens up a whole new world of thinking around it. Now, granted, you know, some critique of life books in their original form goes back to what Joy Rees was on earthing and what therapeutic life story work expert Richard Rose highlights, which is that while life books are valuable and can even be critical lifelines for kids to their past. It's also that perhaps we can do more like as child welfare or other types of professionals, you know, we can do better than a one sided process where we adults, you know, just hand a child or caregivers, a book, or, you know, where the sharing in the book is not age appropriate.

Kendra Morris Jacobson ([14:21](#)):

You know, we can use a little more ingenuity to find opportunity to include the child in the scripting of their story, connecting with them more deeply and getting them the information that feels relevant to them rather than making assumptions. And you know, you touched on this a little bit from a different direction, Keely, you know, the whole conundrum for kids who come into care is that there's all these different role players. We've got the therapists, the case workers, foster parents, CASA's, attorneys, et cetera. And we're all only getting or digesting disjointed pieces of that child's story that fit or serve our specific role. You know, we don't take time to read all the other notes. We're just sort of looking for what's relevant to our role. And even if we, as the adults put those pieces together, you know, are they accurate?

Kendra Morris Jacobson ([15:10](#)):

I think we can all acknowledge freely that child welfare records have errors, subjective reports and not just child welfare, right? All the different role players. And are we all really taking into account the assorted experts, you know, birth family members, other important historical witnesses who were there when we all weren't. And then of course, most importantly, and first and foremost, the child. I have a

quote I'd love to share from foster adoptee. Dr. Jaiya John, I think he just captures it beautifully. All of his books are treasure, but Reflection Pond is my confessed favorite. And he writes, how many times has a child tried to express something to us? Her story, how many times has our reaction had the effect of saying to her go rewrite the script? What she has to express can have no editors, only listeners and interpreters.

Kendra Morris Jacobson ([16:11](#)):

And I think that's really capturing it. You know, if the adults around a child don't even have a common understanding of a child's story, and this goes back to Dr. Williams' story, uh, his study, how on earth can kids construct their own cohesive narrative and feel rooted in an identity that gives them purpose? Which takes us back to that whole circular idea of connection and safety. I can't feel connected and safe to others in the world around me if I don't know who, where and what I am, but I can't know who, where and what I am if I don't feel connected and safe enough to accomplish that.

Keely Vandre ([16:44](#)):

Yeah. I think that's reminding me of something that comes up in our classrooms quite a bit about the truth and that we need to be able to share the true story of what has happened in a child's life. That there is really no age at which the truth is not something that children should know or be have access to. But that, we also find ways, I think like what you're talking about as adults to sometimes question the truth that children are telling us. And I think this work could also help us enter a more reciprocal, creative space with the kids that we're working with. I'm just thinking about that as you were mentioning kind of that safety and that sharing of you know, listening to them and really honoring their story. And I guess I'm wondering, yeah. How often do we get hung up on the truth? What does that even mean? Really, when you're thinking about a child's experience, who might have been through a lot of different placements with so many different carers and adults in their life?

Kendra Morris Jacobson ([17:53](#)):

Exactly. I mean, I think you've hit it right on the head that a child's truth is their truth in that moment in time. And that truth may even change. Right. And in addition, you know, even as adults, like my description of this podcast to someone else will absolutely vary at least to some extent from your description or another person who's listening, because in this moment, it's our story and our truth. And we're all just each made of these different stories that form a composite and a child needs space to move from one truth to another, to another, as part of understanding their story, which is really child development as well.

Keely Vandre ([18:41](#)):

Kendra, would you be willing to speak to a question about like, if a story really changes drastically, like between six month periods or if a story is really, really sad or hard? I took that away from the webinar. I listened to that. Dr. Rose seemed to say, that's what we put. We put the hard story. We put the difficult stuff.

Kendra Morris Jacobson ([19:07](#)):

Well, it would probably depend on the context. So for instance, when he's doing the life story work, it really is guided by the child and what they're seeking to understand, like, so maybe an example, which of course isn't, gonna necessarily be perfect is like we as the professionals or maybe me as a therapist might feel like, Ugh, the abuse that that child suffered in this particular environment, you know, from

this neighbor is really the driving force between all of the challenges and the behavioral issues and the emotional turmoil this child is experiencing. But if we step back and we actually build relationship and look for the cues, what we might learn is what's really driving this child is preoccupation with wondering if their birth mother is safe in prison, or is their little brother okay. In his adopted placement because those adopted parents didn't stay in contact.

Kendra Morris Jacobson ([20:05](#)):

Like they said they would. And this child is really, really, really, really, really worried about that. And we might find that's really more where the resolution needs to occur rather than this. You know, what we feel is this horrendous experience that this child went through and live through and is still here today and surviving. So it's really around context. And are we talking about, you know, an All About Me Book, a Life Story Book, are we actually doing a process where the child is taking space with a safe person in a safe environment, you know, to delve into that in Therapeutic Life Story Work, you might be tracing lightly or deeply on a child's past, depending. And of course we know developmentally over time, what we need to know or want to know changes, you know, what that child needs to know or wants to know at age 13 is probably gonna be pretty different down the road. So we don't wanna leave things out, but we also don't wanna over include and overshadow the child's truth with what we think is the truth. And what Richard often reminds us is write down or document the stories of everyone so that the child can then determine what is their truth. Dad said, this grandma said this, the social worker said that the nurse said this. Hmm. And then we let the child come to their own conclusion, age appropriate of course development.

Keely Vandre ([21:45](#)):

So Kendra, how does your training in therapeutic life story work really support the framework that we're talking about here today? We've used a couple of different terms, Life Books, Life Story Work, but can you talk a little bit more specifically about the Therapeutic Life Story Work Model?

Kendra Morris Jacobson ([22:07](#)):

I can definitely attempt <laugh> all of these tools definitely blur together and blend to some extent, which is also part of the universality of them. So we know that humans thrive on story and on play in all forms, right? I mean, just look at Dan Seigold, Bruce Perry, Dr. Stewart Brown, I mean even Shakespeare and so many types of narrative or biblio therapies, art therapy, play therapies, even Lego therapy, they're all absolutely worthwhile therapeutic life story work or the rose model as it's starting to be called is a specific honed approach, you know, pioneered by him as an international trainer, social worker and adoptee in the UK. And it helps the child first and foremost, go into a safe space by firmly documented, documenting the present, and then moving backwards to trace lightly or deeply through their generational past, you know, not just through their past, through their generational past, but lingering only on the pieces that are most meaningful and top of mind for them.

Kendra Morris Jacobson ([23:17](#)):

And then extrapolating about how that translates to a healthier future. Now with his quaint British accent and melodic pro-city Richard Gross can describe it far more eloquently than I, as he does in his books and his trainings. But it essentially the approach blends elements of attachment theories and play in art therapies with trauma sensitive person-centered interventions that create room for a child to wonder about the stories that make up their story, and then come to their own conclusion. As you're saying, Keely, instead of us just handing them our interpretation or what we think they should be

thinking about their own story and, and therapeutic life story where proper takes place over a nine month process where the child and a helper adult literally illustrate their story, whether words, drawing, pictures, whatnot, and the collecting of the stories of those around them on a wallpaper like tapestry, but that can then also be condensed into a life book of sorts. And there's other creative ways to adapt the approach. So it's less cumbersome, but, you essentially get the best of both worlds, right? You get the process and then you also get the product at the same time.

Keely Vandre ([24:37](#)):

Kendra, one of the things you were just talking about is that, you know, this could be a really long and involved and artistic process. That sounds really amazing. But there are ways that this process can also be simplified and potentially shortened that work more in the caseload frameworks that a lot of our practitioners have to that's their reality. In Minnesota, we don't actually have a formal policy or practice regarding life books for children in care. They are required under certain agency contracts. And they're often mentioned as a great resource to use, but that's not as formal or as consistent as what it sounds like the state of Oregon is doing. On the website, I noticed that there's the phrasing that ODHS Child Welfare has taken the bold and exciting step of adding All About Me Books into procedure for all children experiencing care. Could you talk a little bit about how Oregon has implemented this process into the child welfare system? That sounds incredibly hard and huge.

Kendra Morris Jacobson ([25:45](#)):

<laugh> Yes. And very aspirational, right? Which is how I think some of the most important movements in child welfare gets started, you know, it has to start as aspirational. We have to set lofty goals and standards that we, you know, we try to reach. And of course, you know, some of that will be fulfilled. And some of that won't so, you know, Oregon is working really hard and like, you know, other states, counties, districts, they have the usual barriers of funding and time. And so they realized that, you know, trying to roll out some sort of a nine month piece of work was, was simply not feasible. So the first step was, well, how can we just share and train on the concepts, concepts that any adult spending time with a child, all of the ones we've been talking about, therapists, case workers, parents, attorneys, even educators could implement.

Kendra Morris Jacobson ([26:36](#)):

And the, you know, the principles that we've been talking about that sort of hold up that approach are, you know, reiterating that the child's perception of their story and themselves matters most. And then two that there are countless, but intentional expressive tools and games that can be used to build genuine relationship with kids. And then three, if we remain curious and observant, the kids give us the clues and teach us how to better understand and support them and Richard Rose's books list, countless ideas of those games and tools, many of which, the children that he works with, um, thought of themselves. So once Oregon was familiar with the concepts and some of those tools, which is an ongoing process, right? Like we're constantly reinforcing and reiterating momentum built around, well, what could we do? And that's where the All About Me Books came in and we are fortunate enough in Oregon and so grateful to have supportive director level child welfare leadership along with very effective and enthusiastic key state advocates.

Kendra Morris Jacobson ([27:37](#)):

So I really wanna call a shout out to Francine Florendo and Alli Faschulz. And then in Oregon, we also have the advantage of being centralized. Like we don't operate as different counties, we operate as a



state. And so there was really a lot of celebration around, okay, how can we really support kids in a simple way? That's not costly that most of us can do. And so the All About Me Books are really just a simple PowerPoint booklet with a theme chosen or personalized by the child. And they're designed with prompts to help a child establish all that we've been talking about, you know, where they are, who the people are around them, where they've been, and perhaps most importantly, like who they are today, as in literally, what are their favorite foods, activities, friends, school challenges, culture, as well as, you know, dipping their toe into any unanswered questions they might have or wonderings.

Kendra Morris Jacobson ([28:33](#)):

And they are the child's expression like listening to Dr. Jaiya John, you know, they're not our edited note taking. So the child really owns the book and any child, I mean, any adult cannot only help the child do a book, but adults can do the books too. So it goes back to that original concept of the mutual relationship building and story sharing, which is what helps kids feel safe. And Oregon has books for families, parents, and even workers, so that when a permanency worker goes out to visit with a child or meet with a child for the first time, they can show them their book, which immediately is starting to story share in a safe way with a child. And so it's starting to build that relationship.

Keely Vandre ([29:18](#)):

Yeah. That really struck me in Dr. Rose's training, when he talked about that strategy of having the worker work on one at the same time as the child, or, or share one, because I think that so much of the work that we do is clarifying our role. And so many of our, the kids that we see have seen so many different grownups in their lives and it's, it's really confusing. So I think that is a way to establish trust and relationship. But like you're saying that everybody has a story, you know, we're all starting from some story together too, when we come, come together. So I think that could be really powerful really at any stage, regardless of role. So I think that we could talk a little bit more about how you see specifically the impact of the, All About Me pages with children in adoption and foster care. Maybe a little bit about how easy it is, how long does this typically take, is it a session? Is it something that goes on? And I mean the specific page itself every six months, can you talk a little bit about that?

Kendra Morris Jacobson ([30:33](#)):

Yeah. So the beauty of the, All About Me Books is there's lots of flexibility. You know, there's no mandates or specific rules around how they're implemented. Some kids might wanna churn out a whole book in one setting during a visit with a worker or sitting down at the table with a resource or foster parent, whereas another child might need more relationship building. And they might only be able to get to a few pages at a time. And because they're a PowerPoint template, there's lots of flexibility around that. And pages can be taken in, taken out substituted or new ones created. If there aren't even enough to cater to what a child is interested in doing the idea of doing them every six months is again, quite aspirational and will probably take Oregon a long while to get to. But if they are done every six months or even close to it, you actually start to get a life book that's created, but by the child.

Kendra Morris Jacobson ([31:39](#)):

And it encompasses all of those little details about their life that are really hard for the adults around them to capture when they're moving between placements and going in and out of care. So if you were to put all those together, like say a child were in care for four years, I mean, you would have literally hundreds of pages to help them document in their own writing or in their own pictures. You know, who they were at that time, which is also more reinforcing for them in terms of their own identity, because



it's not someone else saying, oh, Sally was like this, or this was how Jimmy behaved at school. It's like, these are my own memories. And unlike other children who are with a single caregiver who can remind them about all of those little things, you know, these children almost need themselves to have a firmer grasp on where they were and what they were doing since they don't have that consistency around them to be helping create that narrative.

Keely Vandre ([32:43](#)):

I have a question with the notion of doing that fairly regularly. How important is it to have a handwritten aspect? I know that Dr. Rose said that that's his preferred way is to there's something about the written experience. Um, but like, how are they stored? And if they are done on the computer, how does the child have them? And then what do you do when kiddos would like to have photos or pictures? Um, and maybe they can't have the book look the way they want. That's kind of a specific question.

Kendra Morris Jacobson ([33:24](#)):

Well, since they're digital versions and they can be hand printed out or not, can't print it out, but computer printed out and then worked on, you can essentially blend the two. You can have a child work on a physical version, whether they're drawing or writing or whatever they're adding. And then you also still have the digital file so that you can actually add photos or copies of whatever you like. And then you can even scan the pages or scan the pictures and put them together. Because of course, some kids maybe particularly teenagers would rather do it all online, where they can, you know, grab more things off the internet and play. So the idea is if you have both the physical book, but because it is a PowerPoint, it is also a digital computer copy. You're kind of able to capture both sides and that it can be easily stored.

Keely Vandre ([34:16](#)):

Kendra. I'm wondering how these tools and frameworks can honor the many kinds of identity intersections of children in care across abilities, race, culture, sexuality, and gender expression, to name only a few. How do the All About Me Pages and Life Story Work, make space for all those kinds of identities.

Kendra Morris Jacobson ([34:40](#)):

The books themselves are designed so that kids can not only choose their own template, but as we're saying, you know, modify them. And the preexisting templates not only include a wide variety of inclusive graphics for each of the themes, but then there's pages of extra graphics. If the kids or adults don't have time to search for more, that they can actually go and swap in and out, there are existing pages that ask about culture and race and assorted needs. So as to create space for the child to, you know, to ponder or describe or ask questions about their culture, race, and identity, and then the booklets are already translated bilingually into a variety of different languages. So that even if a child doesn't necessarily speak a language, they can still connect with that culture or make their book accessible to a relative or someone else who does speak that language. The parent pages are listed neutrally so that the child has the freedom to select whomever. They want to list as a parent. You know, they're not limited by gender, or they're not identified with a foster, you know, biological adoptive guardianship identity. So there's, they're really meant to be open ended to fulfill whatever the child needs them to fulfill.

Keely Vandre ([35:58](#)):

That's that's really great. I like thinking, especially about the diverse, translation or language options, I think that's, you know, really exciting to think about honoring the family culture and background that children may be wanting to link with in telling their story and who they might want to share this with at different stages. Talking now a little bit more you've been open, and this is something we all know that aspiration might look different than practice. We know that can be hard to even interpret policy and move it into our practice. So how has that looked so far in terms of rolling out the All About Me practice? Do you know how successful that's been and is there evaluation about outcomes for kids with that new process?

Kendra Morris Jacobson ([36:53](#)):

Well, it's pretty early in Oregon. You know, this really has just happened within the last year and, you know, is the workforce challenged, to roll it out? Well, you bet. I mean, haven't met a state yet where there isn't a child welfare workforce, who's feeling pretty challenged. Um, but I think we've found that the workers who have been able to dive in are finding it so rewarding, even just for them, like, even if you keep the kids out of it, just for them, which of course is great for burnout, right. And retention, and for relationship building with kids, which of course then translates into better outcomes for kids ultimately. But anecdotally, we're also hearing stories of how the books are changing lives for kids. Again, anecdotally of course not, evaluatively. Workers are using them. I mean, workers got really creative themselves and they're using them as reunification tools, you know, tools to do with a biological parent birth parent, original parent there's different terms people use to describe that relationship and for the children, as they're transitioning home or just transition tools when they're moving between placements or the foster or resource families, as they're called here in Oregon, can use them as introduction tools.

Kendra Morris Jacobson ([38:08](#)):

Like here's our family book, you're new to our home. Let's look at our books together. Or the workers are finding that they're just learning about the children in ways. They never would've by virtue of doing the book. In fact, the little girl who I really was essentially the first book, the first child's book done in Oregon and her book was an absolute goldmine of clues about her emotional state, about the topic she was most concerned about one of which involved her biological mother and her culture and her race. And then there were all sorts of other fun facts woven in that the team around her would never have known. And she ended up getting opportunities and attention around some significant issues that really needed to be tended to as well as some fun stuff. Like she got to go to a concert because everyone learned that she loved country music. And that one of her dreams was, you know, to go to a country music concert. And if it hadn't been for the book, you know, she and the worker would never, never have gotten there in just a conversation. It actually took that book making magic in order to open the door.

Keely Vandre ([39:20](#)):

It seems like what you, the quote, I can't remember the exact language, but that the story was unfolding better for that child, right. There was more room, there was more information about who she was and what she, maybe couldn't just share during an, you know, get to know you conversation with the next worker that she was meeting with. So that's what it makes me think of.

Kendra Morris Jacobson ([39:49](#)):

Exactly, Well, let's let Dr. Jaiya John say it again. He has this gorgeous relational sounding, quote, "her own storytelling empowers and heals her as immediately as a loving embrace." And she and her worker, she and this worker ended up super close also because of that experience and they built a stronger relationship, which of course also then adds another drop in the bucket of that child's healing.

Keely Vandre ([40:18](#)):

That is beautiful imagery for the listeners to think about. Would you be able to share any favorite Life Book resources with us before we end today's conversation?

Kendra Morris Jacobson ([40:30](#)):

<laugh> oh gosh. How to hold me back on this one? Well, first of all, you know, as I know Keely, you've already discovered on our parks all about me and life story pages. We've got essentially all of our favorites on there, including, you know, scientific articles and studies links to Beth O'Malley, Joy, Rees of course, links to Richard Rose's Therapeutic Life Story Work site itself, and his books along with some beautiful video projects that are being done by Blue Cabin in the UK. Um, both in the UK and Australia, they've been doing a lot of work rolling out Therapeutic Life Story Work in a variety of different ways, but you know, ultimately, you know, personally Richard Rose himself, I know it sounds silly, but he, he is just an incredible resource. If anyone ever has a time, you know, to hear him to watch him, there are some videos out there, he almost brings Therapeutic Life Story, Work to life by virtue of how he shares and trains. You know, he's really sort of the epitome, the, the epitome expression of sharing stories and sharing lives, which is something that he often says,

Keely Vandre ([41:48](#)):

I did want to make sure that I'm correct. That Dr. Rose is also an adult adoptee. PACC really strives to center the voices of those with lived experience and almost all of our curriculum is co-created by adoptees. And so I think that's really powerful in terms of understanding life story work for this population. And it seems like that's something Dr. Rose has lived experience with too.

Kendra Morris Jacobson ([42:15](#)):

Absolutely. Yeah. He is an adoptee and he actually started working in social work at the age of 17. So he has spent a long time in the field, both with lived personal experience as well as the professional experience. And does he have stories to tell

Keely Vandre ([42:34](#)):

<laugh> well, Kendra, it has been such a delight to talk with you over the last several weeks, but especially today, I've learned something from the stories we've shared together and all of the resources that you have have shared with us. So thank you so much. I look forward to continuing the conversation.

Kendra Morris Jacobson ([42:53](#)):

Well, thank you so much, Keely. It's been exciting also to be learning about what Minnesota is doing, and frankly, it's really energizing to know that there's other states out there with as much and an individual such as yourself with as much passion and interest around this topic. I mean, it's, it's really one for all of us.

Stacy Gehringer ([43:14](#)):

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