

# Making Sense of Fragmented Lives... Therapeutic Life Story Work

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That truth is that monsters are real, and ghosts are real, too. They live inside us, and sometimes they win”



King, S (1977) The Shining

‘The value and power of the life story approach to reconstructing and reconnecting a child using personal narrative cannot be underestimated’.

Perry, B (2012) Life Story Therapy with Traumatized Children



# Aims and Objectives

- To utilise the Therapeutic Life Story Approach to provide a healing process to traumatised children
- To give the children an opportunity to explore and engage in direct work around their history/current difficulties
- To give carers and other professionals the opportunity to consider, reflect and contribute to the identity task





## What happens before we start?

Before we begin Life Story, your Life Story worker will talk to people to find out a little about your life.

Some people may have a different story, but that's okay, because everyone is different, and everyone will have different things that they remember. Your Life Story worker will also have a chance to say things to make sure that they understand the stories that they have.

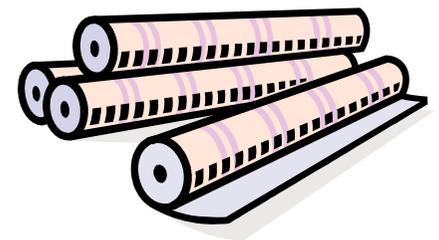
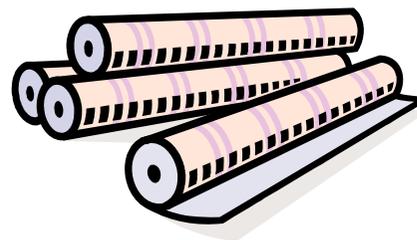
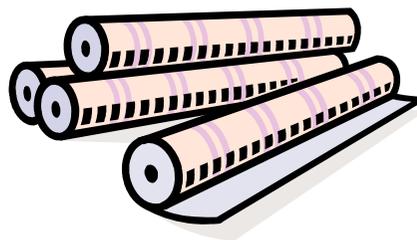
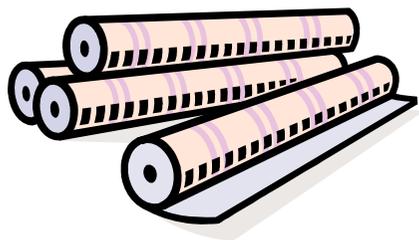


## How do we work together?

We won't start Life Story straight away, as we need to get to know each other, that means we can play some games and begin to think about the feelings we have and how we can talk about them.

When we start Life Story, we can meet every other week with your main carer. We will meet on the same day at the same time, in the same place so that we can become confident that the meetings will happen.

In Life Story we can work on wallpaper, this can be rolled out for every session and rolled away at the end. We also have lots of art materials that can be used to help tell your story on the wallpaper.

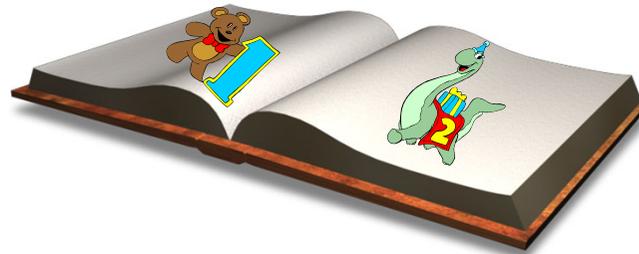
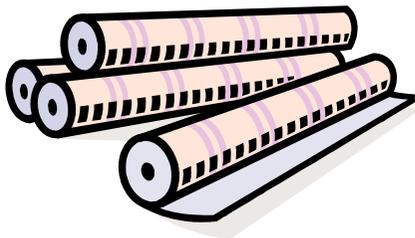


## Working on Wallpaper

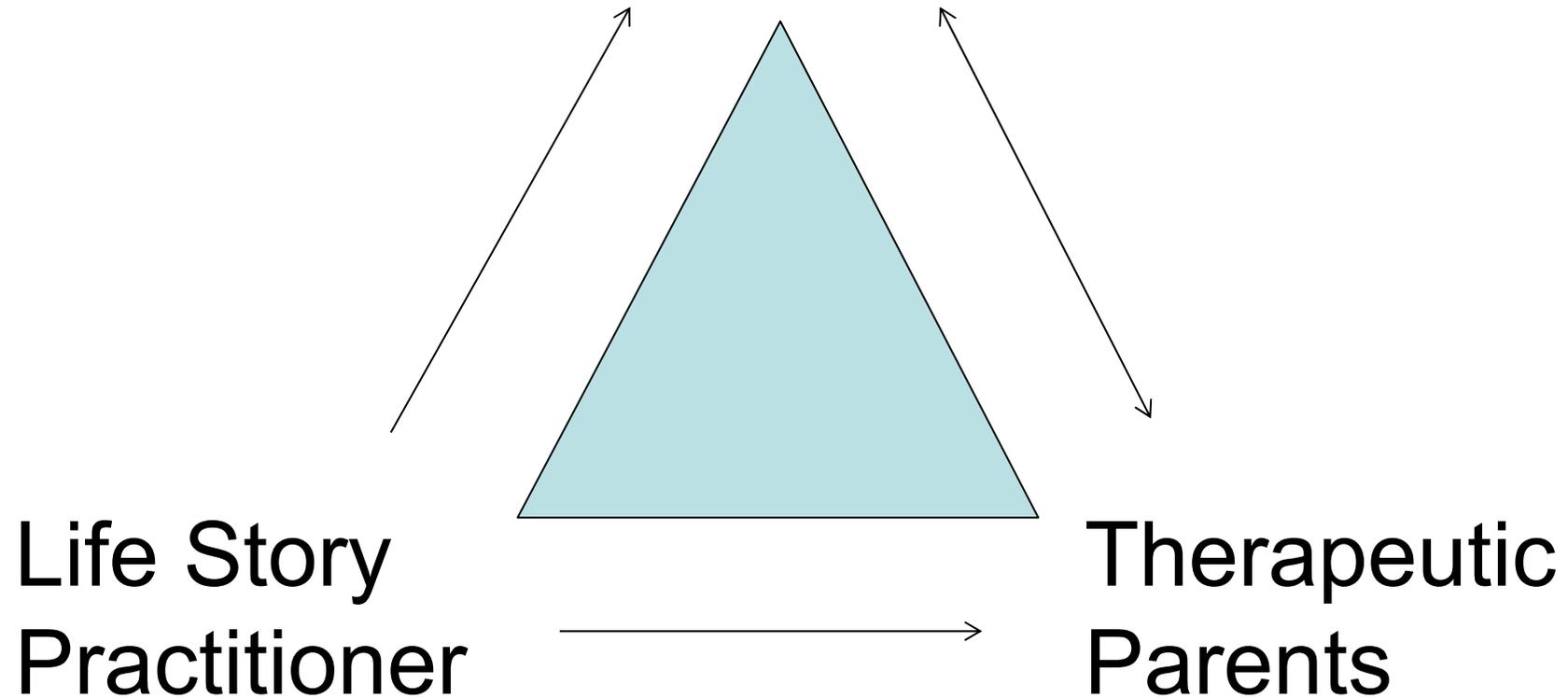
As well as working on the wallpaper we will be able to think about the work going into a book, that you will be able to take away with you.

Your book will have all the work that you thought about that is on the wallpaper.

You can use your book to help you remember things about you and if you want, you can share it with those who you think should know about you.



Child/Young  
Person/Adult



Life Story Work is dependent on us understanding our own life, values, ethics and morals. It also requires us to consider unconditional positive regard and the need for us to become narrators and facilitators and avoid the concept of judgement.



Once upon a time, there was a woman named Abigail who was in love with a man named Fred. Every day she would cross the river, which was filled with Piranhas, by a footbridge to see Fred. One night a storm came up and the bridge was washed away. So Abigail decided to ask her neighbour Sinbad for help. Sinbad told Abigail he would help her by taking her across the river in his boat, but only on one condition....that she sleep with him. Now Abigail didn't know what to do. If she tried to swim the river she would be eaten alive, and yet she did not want to sleep with Sinbad. She went to her mother for advice on this, and her mother told her, "Abigail, I reared you to make your own decisions on matters such as this, and I won't tell you what you should or should not do." Abigail desperately wanted to see her lover, so she gave in to Sinbad's conditions.

Once she got across the river to Fred's, she felt so guilty she told Fred what she had done. Fred got furious and threw her out of the house. Abigail was crushed and didn't know what to do until she remembered Fred's neighbour Slug. Upon hearing Abigail's story, Slug got furious with Fred for the way he had treated Abigail. He ran up to Fred's house and beat him up. When he got home, he told Abigail he had always loved her and asked her to marry him. She accepted.



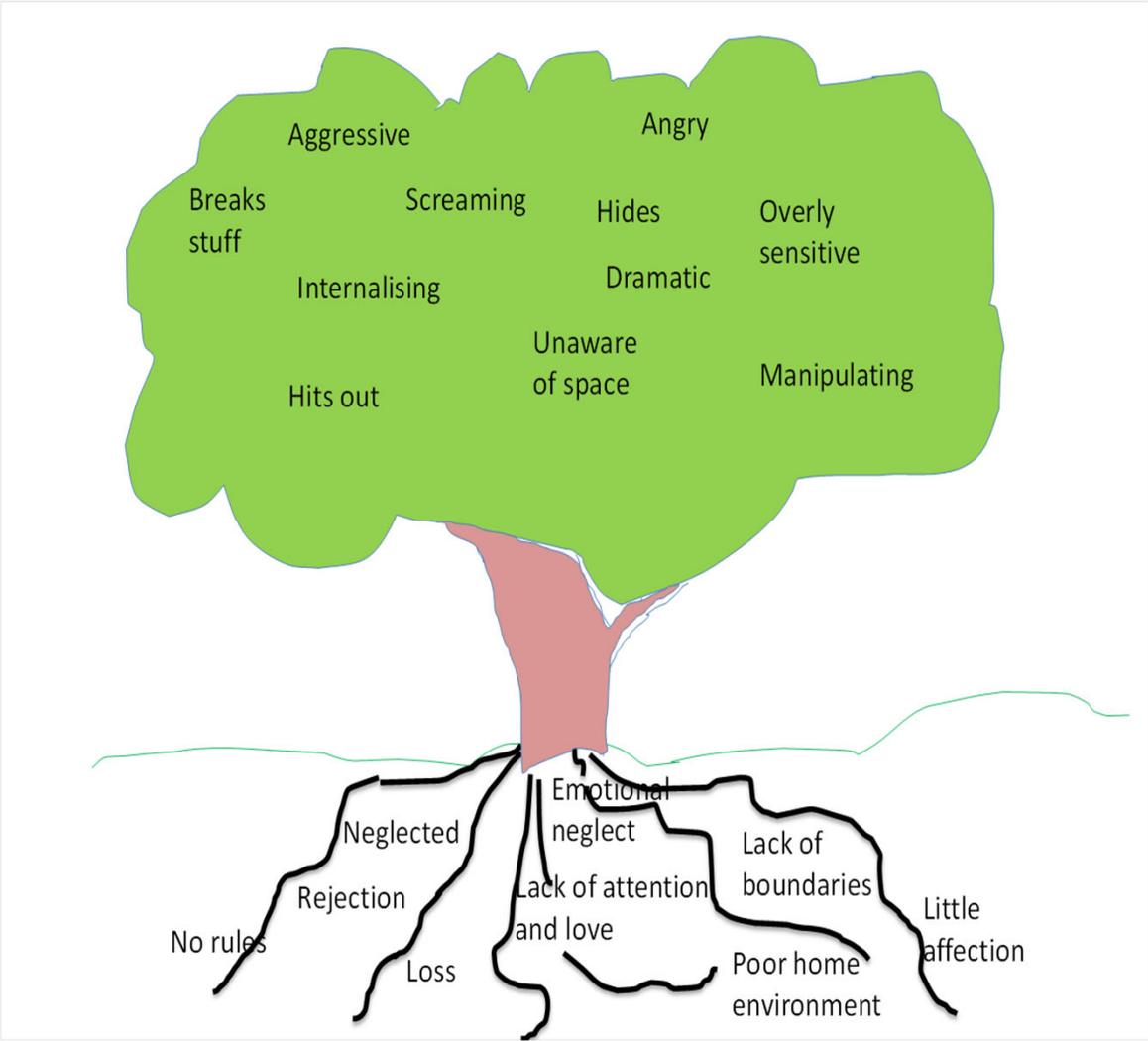
# All behaviour is Communication

Understanding the roots of the presented behaviour and reflecting what is being communicated verbally and non-verbally will empower the child to refine and reframe their communication process so as to be more effective in achieving their best interests.

Rose 2012



# Communication through behaviour and feelings – Understanding what we see and why we see it



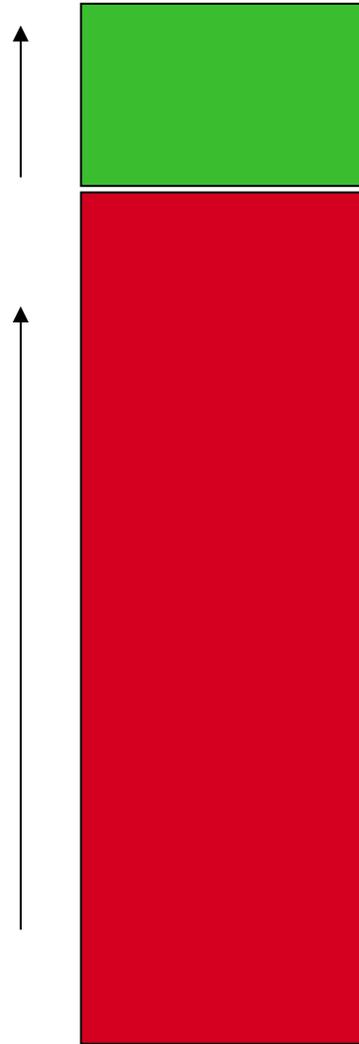
## Recovery Process

‘Like taking the tender seedling and replanting it in a place where it has a better chance of growing. This is an enormously difficult task – attention to detail in their everyday life is vital in bringing about this rehabilitation’ .

Lanyado, M (2003)



# Pre-occupation



# Internal Working Model



Prolonged exposure to stress and a child's continued use of coping strategies may result in behavior patterns that are difficult to change if the child perceives the strategy as being effective (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Skinner, 2002; Stansbury & Harris, 2000).



# Communication and Complex Needs

Working with children with complex needs, particularly when they are experiencing turmoil and distress, demands a facilitative, enabling and empowering technique, and a high level of skill, sensitivity and self-awareness.'

M. Brandon et al, 1998



# Penny

It took only three days after Penny was born for the GP to demand that a case conference be held due to her mother's limited capabilities. However, the social services department disagreed with the heightened concern and decided that it was more appropriate for the health visitor to keep a watchful eye. While neighbours and health service workers raised more and more concerns, there was still no intervention by social services.



When Penny was two months old, an environmental health inspector for the council reported concerns for the safety of the children: the house was unfit for habitation and council workmen said that they were not prepared to enter the building. At six, Penny was attending Midway County Primary School.

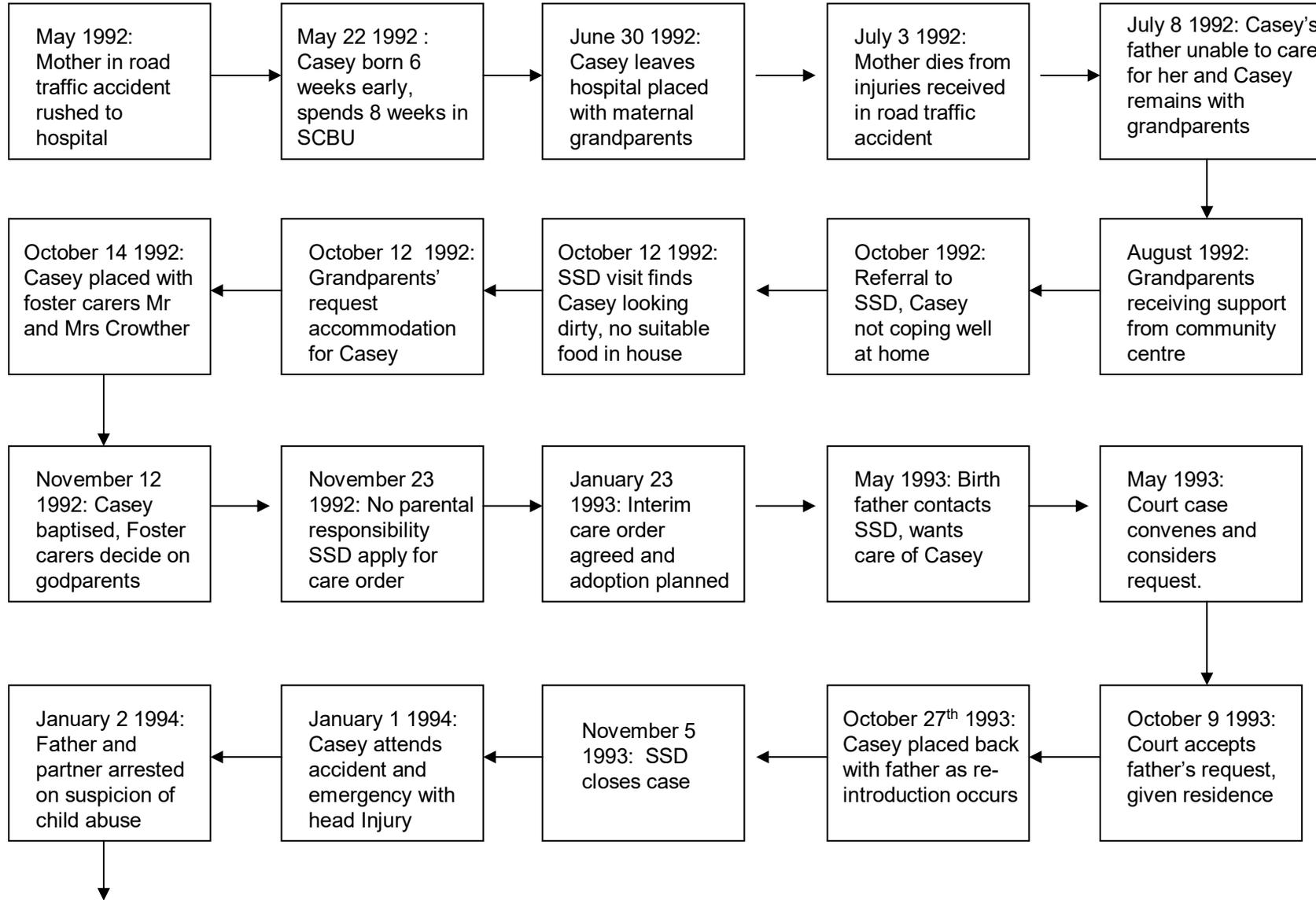
The children were unkempt and Penny was reported as soiling at school. It was at this time that the first concerns of sexual abuse were raised.



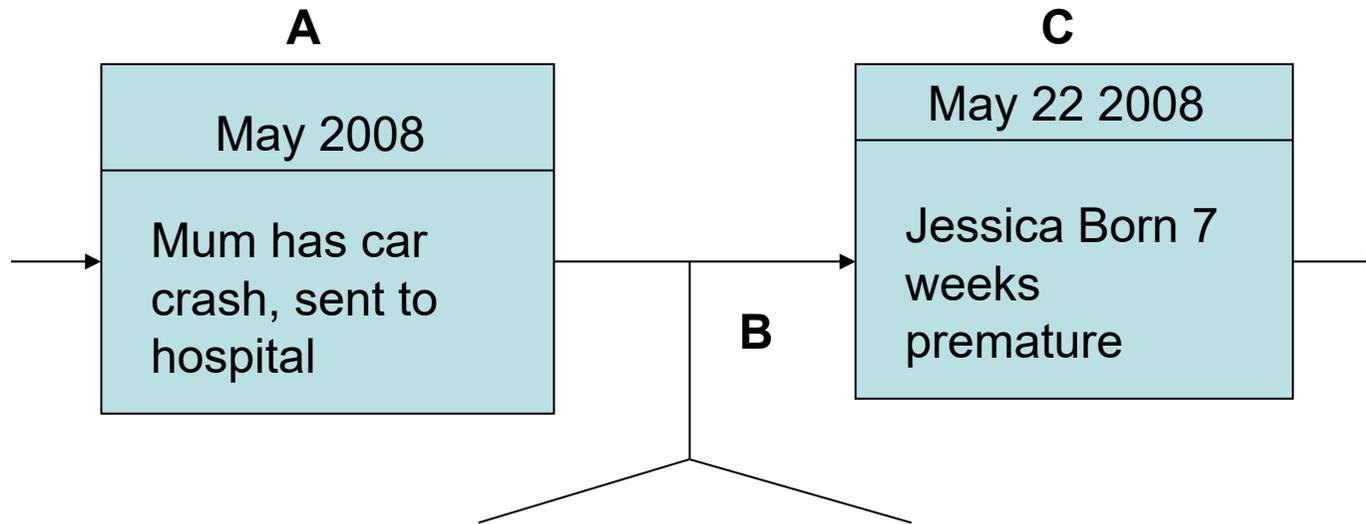
That November, as Penny approached her seventh birthday and was attending school in nappies, the family were warned that any more referrals would result in a case conference. A neighbour complained to the animal inspectors about the condition in which the family's dogs were kept. The dogs were taken away.



## Movement Boxes - Chronology



# Meaning and Collating



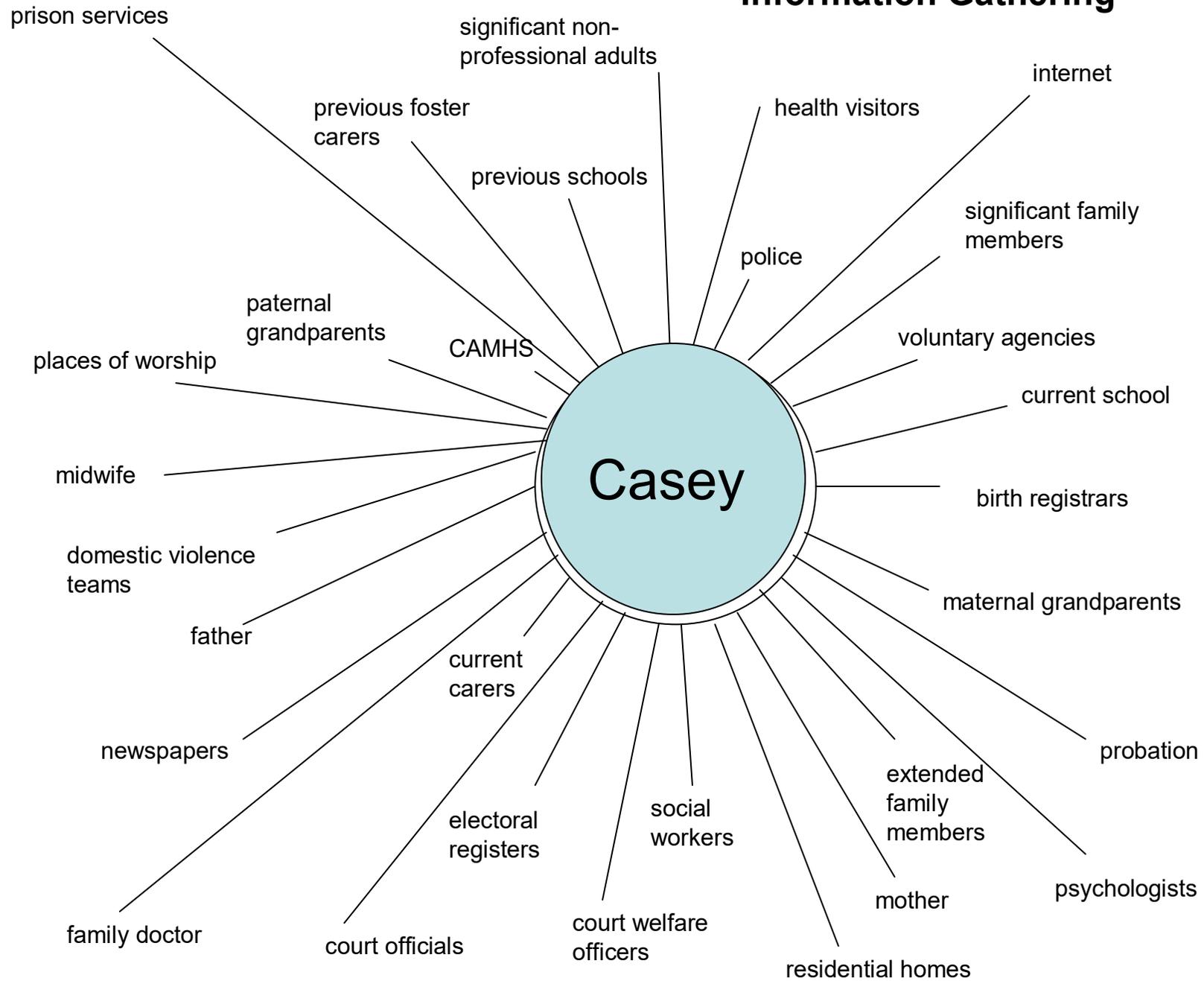
What do we need to know?

- Is there an accident report?
- Who else was in the car?
- What is mum's story?
- Was this the reason for early birth?
- 

What would the child want to know?

- Did any one die?
- What sort of car was it?
- Were the police involved?
- Could I have died?
- Was anyone upset?
- Why did mum crash the car?
- 
-

# Information Gathering

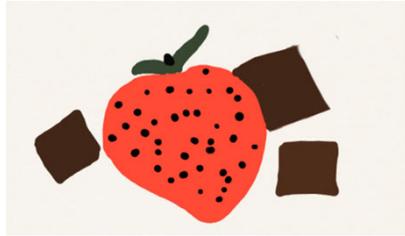


‘The danger of retraumatizing is at its highest at these times, and so the ability of the life story therapist, and the knowledge he has of the child, must be equal to the risk’.

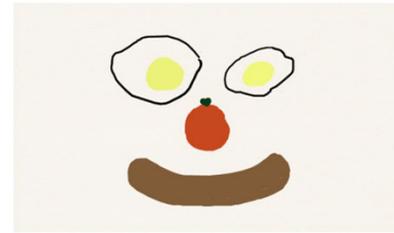


- Jenga
- Squiggles
- Feeling Themes
- All About Me
- Family Tree
- Movement Snake

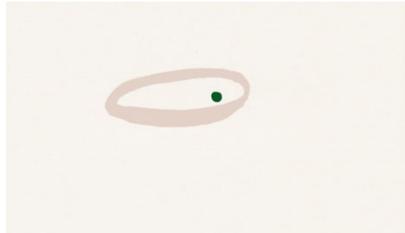
Sexy



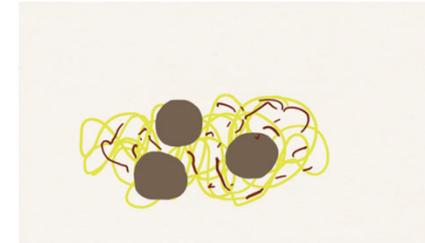
Happy



Lonely



Silly



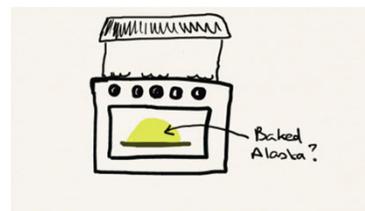
Frustrated



Jealous



Confused



Mad



# The Power of Play

Play is how children learn about their world. Play is essential for healthy development and so Play needs to be accepted as a serious, purposeful business through which children develop mentally, physically and socially.

Oaklander 1989



# Sharing our Stories

Telling family stories - sharing our stories of the past helps bring adults and children closer and creates a wonderful opportunity for intimacy and relationship building.

Stone 1987

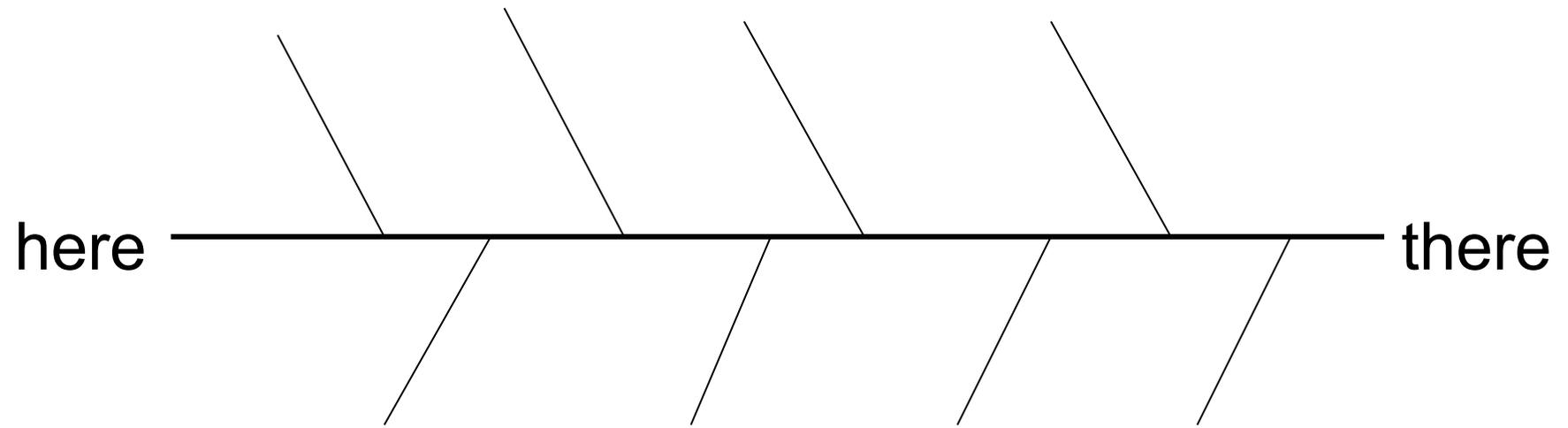


# Problem Solving and Feelings

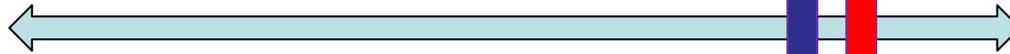


- Ishakawi
- Cause and Effect Thinking
- Internal Working Model
  - Thinking Cycle
    - FFFH





Most Worthy,  
Competent,  
Most Lovable



Least Worthy, Most  
Incompetent and Most  
Unlovable

Best Carer in the  
World, Most Loving,  
Most Nurturing and  
Safest Carer

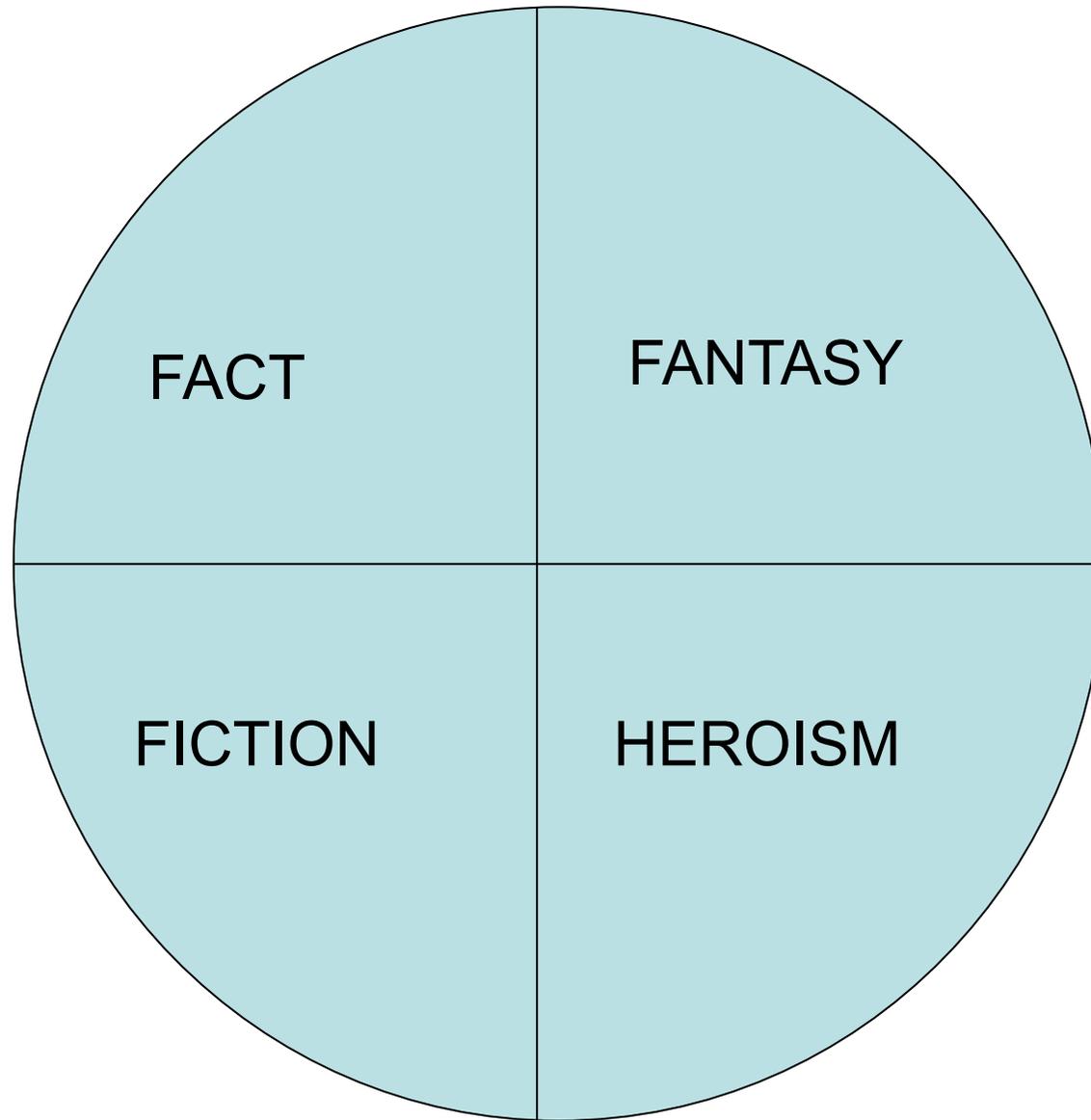


Worst Carer in the  
World, Most Unloving,  
Most Dangerous and  
Scary Carer

Most Welcoming,  
Safest and  
Fulfilling World



Scary and Most  
Unwelcoming Place



# Creating Therapeutic Environments



Children learn best from repeatedly seeing and hearing actions or ways of thinking that we would like them to emulate or “model”

Our role therefore must be to portray positive models for what we want children to **do** (such as being generous, fair, honest, caring and responsible) to reinforce positive action and thought.



# Therapeutic Communication

Therapeutic communication is about sending out the right messages so that children, who may previously have internalised a sense of worthlessness, come to see themselves as worthy, capable and valuable individuals.

In our interactions with children, our main tool is ourselves.



Mirror  
Sequencing  
Race Track



# Barriers to communication

We need to be patient, empathic, imaginative, respectful and tactful in order to help troubled children and young people communicate. In helping children to make sense of their world, we can explore their thinking, their emotional self and their internal view and then help shape their external presentation to achieve all they can be.

Rose 2012

