

LIFE STORY THERAPIES

your story, your identity, your world

Inner Child Relating

A big part of engaging with our story involves re-visiting who we were at different ages and characters. This can bring us face to face with different ages of ourselves, and we can find ourselves having an interesting combination of reactions towards these child selves.

I find that doing story work is a wonderful opportunity to face and grow these relationships with have with ourselves, and so much can be gained by going back in time and re-engaging with ourselves compassionately in the different chapters of our experience.

If this is something you are working with, below are some reflections and invitations that could support you in this process.

Enjoy! And take care of you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rachel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Seeing Us

Have you got a photo of you as a child? Maybe you have several from different ages and chapters of life. Lay them out in print form if you can. Which are you drawn to right now? Or maybe another way to look at this is: which do you feel is easiest to approach?

Get comfortable. It might be helpful to listen to bi-lateral music right now. This music keeps both left and right brains engaged – broadly speaking with the left holding logic and language and the right holding emotions. Keeping both active can help where we feel the ‘big feelings’, helping us ground in the now as well as feel what was felt in the past.

There are lots of playlists on different platforms. I’d recommend one that’s instrumental, no lyrics to distract or guide your thoughts, such as this one on Spotify:

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/1anRkD42E3Nz4rytrvOtU7?si=6fee92414fc647be>

But this is your experience, if the music distracts, annoys or overwhelms, ditch it!

Being With

It might feel enough to simply gaze at the photo you’ve chosen, conjuring the memory of yourself at that age to your mind, and sitting with them. Being with them. Feeling whatever feelings come up around this can be challenging in itself. The object here is not to ‘fix’ or ‘correct’ but simply to be a safe adult for that child us, welcoming their presence without shutting them down.

As we receive their feelings, we might find ourselves struggling to hold them – wanting to push the feelings away, find solutions, exhort the child us to calm down or stop fussing. Simply relating to them means hearing them without judgment or correction. Letting them have their feelings and simply witnessing them. Holding a safe space for them means being a kind and benevolent witness – it’s not easy but it’s how we allow a child feel safe to express themselves. You deserved this as a child, and you deserve this now.

Journalling

Writing to our child self can be a hugely helpful practice of making space for that child too. It can be helpful to hold that child us in our mind’s eye but it’s also perfectly valid to simply ask our present adult selves these questions too. Some questions that can kick off a conversation might sound like:

What’s on your heart right now?

Would you tell me your worries?

Where does it hurt?

What makes you happy?

What do you wish you could do more of?

What feels safe?

How big is the feeling? What colour is it?

What does it smell like?

Where would you go if you could go anywhere right now?

What do you wish we could do together? Show me?

Sometimes it's hard to get that close to our child selves – maybe we don't feel able to reach out to them or we sense they don't want to talk to us! Then it can be helpful to journal around our feelings about our child self.

How do I feel when I look at them (in my mind's eye or the photo)?

What's my bodily impulse? To reach towards, move away?

What feelings do I sense in them?

What do I know about them?

What do I wish they would do?

What do I wish had been different for them?

Who are they in my story? Victim? Villain? Hero? Side-kick?

Practice

Building relationship is a long-term process. It takes time and repetition to form. This in itself can be challenging for TCKs, where we feel the need for quick connections and expect eventual rupture. Being a constant and trustworthy presence for your inner child is hard, and powerful. We can set aside regular time to show up for them, prepared to sit with them for a certain time we can commit to. And we can check in on them – how are you doing? Showing up for us regularly will pay off in terms of self-trust, emotional regulation and deeper self-knowledge or intimacy.