

## Q&A with Dale and Raquel

# Lifebooks

You may recall hearing about Lifebooks as part of the Waiting Parent's workshops series here at Adoption Choices. The idea of creating a book for a child that had not yet become part of your life probably didn't reach the top of your "to do" list. When your child arrived, the day to day demands of parenting may have consumed that "to do" list entirely. You vaguely remembered that Lifebooks were important and would certainly get to it some day. Days came and went, followed by months and perhaps even years. Now it's too late, and you don't have the time, and it's not really that important, is it?

First of all, it's never too late. Secondly, this book does not need to be submitted to an art gallery. Thirdly, yes it is really that important. It helps a child understand his/her past, present, and future. It provides a method for children to access their own history. It helps children avoid using denial and fantasy by giving accurate answers. It helps children understand the reasons why they have been separated from their birth parents and reinforces they are not the cause of that separation. It is an excellent tool to talk about the past and can jumpstart conversations with your children.

The hardest part with many projects is actually getting started. You may have found the Lifebook to be difficult to start. Start with a description of the day you met your son or daughter. Gather

photos and memorabilia together. Pick a photo and write some short text to accompany it. Once you've actually started, momentum may kick in and you'll find it easier going.

We've also heard people wonder about how to address negative information in the Lifebook in an age appropriate way. It's never okay to lie but there are ways to allow the details of the story to grow as the child does. One way is to use flaps and have more detailed information behind the flap or tucked away in an envelope. As the child gets older, the details from behind the flap or in the envelope can flesh out the story. Other difficulties parents encounter is when information is incomplete or missing altogether. Again, do not lie but provide the information you do have. You may not know the details of your child's birth but you may know where they lived from age 2 months.

The materials you use for the Lifebook can be as unique as your family. The artistically inclined family may indeed have a book suitable for a museum but don't let unrealistic standards prevent you from creating a book at all. A three ring binder with plastic page inserts can make a wonderful Lifebook. The Adoptive Families website [www.adoptivefamilies.com/scrapbooks](http://www.adoptivefamilies.com/scrapbooks) has many other ideas and resources. Make creating your child's Lifebook your resolution for 2008!