

CALEB'S HEALING STORY

**AN INTERACTIVE STORY WITH ACTIVITIES TO HELP
CHILDREN TO OVERCOME CHALLENGES ARISING FROM
TRAUMA, ATTACHMENT ISSUES, ADOPTION OR FOSTERING**

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Contents

<i>Acknowledgment</i>	6
<i>Introduction for Parents, Caregivers, and Professionals</i>	7

Part 1 Caleb's Story

<i>Characters</i>	13
<i>Caleb's City Map</i>	16
1. The Boy Who Has a Story to Tell.	17
2. The Case of the Missing Chocolate Chips	25
3. Anger Is Not My Friend.	32
4. When the Past Is Not the Past	40
5. Healing Is Hard Work	48
6. The Shadow in the Corner?	56
7. Healing Kids Celebrate	63

Part 2 Activities and Assessments

Healing Activities and Assessments for Children and Teens.	73
Healing Activities and Assessments for Parents and Caregivers.	119

Part 3 Resources

<i>Guidelines and Recommendations for Professionals</i>	133
<i>Further Reading</i>	136
<i>Helpful Organizations, Websites, and Contacts</i>	137
<i>Glossary</i>	140
<i>Index</i>	142

Acknowledgment

We thank Bruce Buchanan for his permission to present some of his techniques for working with attachment problems.

Introduction for Parents, Caregivers, and Professionals

The secret of getting ahead is getting started.

—Mark Twain

Caleb's Healing Story is the second book written from the perspective of young Caleb Smith about healing from his attachment issues and early trauma. In the first book, *A Safe Place for Caleb*, theories and definitions as well as therapeutic interventions regarding attachment, trauma, grief, and loss are explored (Chara and Chara 2005). *A Safe Place for Caleb* outlines five main goals for resolving trauma that can lead to disrupted attachment as well as grief and loss issues:

1. Resolve past trauma/losses.
2. Reconstruct cognitive beliefs based on these experiences.
3. Assist with the development of trust.
4. Learn to handle emotions appropriately.
5. Understand societal expectations and learn to engage in reciprocal relationships within a safe and family-focused environment.

In *Caleb's Healing Story*, readers are invited to join Caleb on a healing journey by sharing their own stories and completing the healing activities included in Part 2 of the book. *Caleb's Healing Story* expands the goals for resolving trauma by identifying specific common challenges that children/teens with a history of attachment problems and trauma encounter on a daily basis and offers easy-to-use interventions in the form of activities and worksheets. The identified common challenges and the interventions presented are compiled based on both Kathleen and Tasha's clinical counseling experience working with many children and their families.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

The first half of this book is a story designed for the person struggling with attachment and trauma issues. The story is written from the perspective of Caleb, a composite figure based on experiences with several clients that Kathleen had the privilege to walk with during their healing journeys. Reading about Caleb's experience facilitates an understanding of common challenges and offers hope for healing. Many children/teens find Caleb's story of experiencing abuse and neglect, having difficulty trusting others, and being adopted easy to relate to. Readers join Caleb on their own healing journey by answering questions, drawing pictures, reading motivational quotes, learning positive affirmations, and completing healing activities related to each chapter.

We have found that many behavioral issues displayed by children/teens with trauma and attachment issues are really fear-based. Therefore, the activities and worksheets are designed based on our clinical experiences to help readers recognize and change these fear-based thoughts and behaviors. (You may want to make additional copies of the worksheets so they can be used more than once by each child/teen.) We also acknowledge that it can be especially challenging for parents and caregivers to understand that even when a child/teen is displaying rage or disrespect, these behaviors are often rooted in fear caused by trauma. When a child/teen is acting out of fear, it is helpful to tell yourself things like, "That was her hurt talking" or "That was his trauma talking." As a result, we have included additional activities to support parents and caregivers with their struggles in caring for a child/teen who has experienced trauma and/or attachment breaks. We encourage parents and caregivers to listen closely to how the struggles Caleb shares in the story exist throughout his entire day, not just at certain times. Trauma is not something that can just be turned off—it takes hard work to achieve healing.

In addition to activities and worksheets, we have also included assessment measures that we designed to be completed by both parents/caregivers and the reader (with or without the help of mental health professionals). The purpose of these assessments is to identify areas of concern and to have an appropriate means to measure improvements. At the end of reading each chapter, you will be prompted to complete related assessments and activities. We recommend completing the assessment Common Challenges for Children and Teens (page 74) first and using this as a guideline for choosing additional assessments and activities to complete.

USE BY PROFESSIONALS IN A THERAPEUTIC SETTING

This book can be used as a stand-alone book for professionals as well as a companion to *A Safe Place for Caleb*. We encourage mental health professionals to consider using both books not only for individual and family counseling, but also for conducting a variety of group counseling formats. We have included additional guidelines and recommendations for using this book in a therapeutic setting (see Guidelines and Recommendations for Professionals, page 133). Teachers in a classroom setting can also use this book.

USE IN A FAMILY OR NON-THERAPEUTIC SETTING

We designed this book to be read together by a child/teen and a trusted adult. While the story is being read, adults should explain new concepts, such as *Early Hurts* and the *Hurt Self* (a glossary of terms is presented in the back of the book). Some kids may want to read Caleb's entire story all the way through first and then go back to do the activities and questions on the second read-through. We want to stress that the activities we designed for this book are not to be done by the child/teen alone. Rather, children and teens with attachment and trauma issues are to work with a parent or adult who is motivated to assist in their healing. It is important to understand that healing from *Relational Injury* requires a healthy relationship with another person as part of the healing process. Sometimes parents question if their teen will benefit from a book with a main character who may appear much younger than the teen. However, if your teen had *Relational Injury* much earlier in his or her life, this book takes readers back to those early experiences that still need healing.

When reading the book and completing the activities and assessments, it is recommended that you read about a chapter a week with your child/teen. Keep in mind, it is very important to go at the pace of the child/teen. Spend more time on chapters and activities that highlight the Common Challenges that your child/teen identifies as most difficult. After completing the activities related to each chapter, celebrate your child/teen's achievements and healing journey! Even if the progress may seem small, it takes hard work and is worth celebrating.

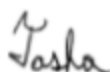
Remember: "A journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step"—Lao Tzu.

We applaud you and your family as you continue on your journey towards healing. As Caleb once said, "Push past the pain. You deserve to be loved and to love the ones who love you." We are both passionate about helping families to heal, and we wish you all the very best as you take this healing journey together.

Here's to Healing Kids all over the world,



Kathleen



Tasha

PART 1

CALEB'S STORY

Characters

(In order of appearance)

Caleb—That's me!

CHARACTERS FROM MY ADULT LIFE

Rosa—My wife. She is a great mom to our children. She likes to paint.

Billy—My son. He is five years old and loves to play with trains.

Felicia—My daughter. She reminds me of my baby sister Kelly because of her silly laugh and her love for her big brother.

CHARACTERS FROM MY CHILDHOOD

Mrs. Catherine Smith—My mom. She has loved me every day since I was adopted. She gives me a hug when I feel sad, and she knows how to brighten my day.

Mr. Bob Smith—My dad. He has a big heart. He likes to play with me at the park.

Tim Smith—My older brother. He is the best brother I could ever ask for. We like to go to the library together and play catch at the park.

Kristi Smith—My younger sister. She likes to dance. We play on the swings together.

Birth Mom—I do not remember her much, but I do remember the smell of breakfast foods on her dresses. I also think about the many times we walked to the park to play on the swings.

Birth Dad—I have no memories of him, but I was told his name was Rob, and he was good at fixing cars.

Kelly—Birth sister. I remember feeding her sometimes and listening to her laugh. Another family adopted her after the Smiths adopted me.

Dr. John—My special helper. He has taught my family and me so many things about healing.

Mrs. Beach—My teacher at Vernon Elementary School. She is a great teacher who shows compassion to all her students. She also understands the importance of healing from past hurts.

Kenny Walden—My best friend. We enjoy playing football and riding our bikes together.

Amy Elizabeth—Girl in my class. At first I did not want to be her friend, but then I learned that she is a healing kid too. She grew up to be an author, and she wrote the book *Amy Elizabeth Goes to Play Therapy*.

Mr. Jasper Walden—Kenny's dad. He teaches Kenny and me about football.

Mrs. Shirley Walden—Kenny's mom. She is always smiling. She volunteers at church and always helps those in need.

Baby Jack Walden—Kenny's little brother. He likes to coo and make gurgling sounds.

Mr. Beach—The local baker. He is married to Mrs. Beach and often gives delicious baked goods to her students.

Dorothy—The librarian at the local library. She helps me find books about how to take care of pets.

Sparky—Dorothy's dog. Before I learned about healing, I was not nice to Sparky. Now that I know dogs have feelings too, I am nice to Sparky. I like to pet him and give him dog treats.

Grandpa Shawn Smith—He is a good grandpa who loves football, has a great laugh, and likes to play with his grandchildren.

Grandma Linda Smith—She is a fantastic cook. She takes her grandchildren shopping and has them over for afternoon tea.

Tubby—Best dog ever. He likes to wag his tail and play fetch with us.

Chapter 1

THE BOY WHO HAS A STORY TO TELL

Hello! My name is Caleb Smith. For those of you that do not know me, it is so nice to meet you. I am also excited to see those of you that already know me from my first book, *A Safe Place for Caleb*. I wrote my first book about living with the Smith family after having many sad and scary things happen in my life before the Smith family adopted me. Although those painful memories happened many years ago, I sometimes still think about them and how important it was for me to heal. I am grown up now with a wonderful wife and two great children. However, things were not always this good. It took a lot of hard work, but as I healed from my past *Hurts*, many things in my life got better.

Now that I am an adult, many people ask me questions about my healing journey as a kid. They ask how I overcame my problems with *Hurts*, anger, attaching (feeling close) to others, fears, and losses from my early years. They wonder how those things troubled me in my daily life when I was younger. People also want to know what was the most helpful during my healing journey.

In order to help answer these questions, I decided to write another book just for you. I will tell you what a typical day looked like for me when I was dealing with *Hurts* and learning to heal. In addition, I will give you some helpful tools for your life if you have had some sad or scary things happen to you. I am so thankful for my family and the help that I received when I was dealing with my past *Hurts*. I am excited to share my *Healing Knowledge* (the good and true things I have learned). Let me start by sharing a little of my story.

When I was four years old, I was taken from my birth mom because she was not able to care for me and I was placed for adoption with the Smith family. My birth mom was white, my birth dad was black, and I am a little of both of them. I wish I had some fun memories of my birth dad, but he did not live with us so I do not really remember him.

I can recall my birth mom and the way she smelled. She would often tell me to be a good boy. My favorite memory is when my birth mom would take me to the park to swing.

While I have a few positive memories of my birth mom, most of my memories of her include yelling, hitting, nasty smells of beer and cigarettes, fears of being left alone in the dark some nights, and sometimes being hungry. I also had a baby sister named Kelly, but she had a different dad. My baby sister was not adopted into the Smith family with me. It makes me sad to remember those experiences.

Many people told me that my life would be better after I went to live with the Smith family. They told me I would be safe in my new home, but these individuals did not totally understand how it feels to be hurt as a child

and the painful memories that stay with you. I am sure you understand what some adults did not know at first—simply removing me from a scary place would not make the fear (and all the problems that came with that) go away. In addition to the painful memories and fear, I always felt a little different than other kids who were not adopted, who did not have lots of *Hurts* when they were younger, who did not have birth parents from different races, or who did not have birth parents that lived separately. For these reasons and many more, the Smith family and I required help in order for me to be able to heal.



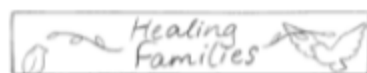
The Smith family and I needed a special helper who knew how to help kids like us and the families who love us learn the truth, heal from *Hurts*, and develop an attachment or close feeling to special people in our lives. Thankfully the Smith family found a special helper named Dr. John.

Since I had lots of *Early Hurts* when I was little, I believed many things about life, trust, hope, and people that I later learned were false. Dr. John taught me that *Trauma* (sad and scary experiences) and *Triggers* (reminders of sad and scary experiences) cause *Hurting Beliefs* (false guesses about why *Early Hurts* happened). These *Hurting Beliefs* then cause *Hurting Behaviors* (hurtful things I did to myself and others). After receiving help on my healing journey, the true things that I learned about my early experiences are *Healing Beliefs*. My positive actions and behaviors, as a result of knowing the true *Healing Beliefs*, are *Healing Behaviors*.

When I was younger, I was struggling with many *Hurting Beliefs* and *Hurting Behaviors*. I was often overwhelmed and my past *Hurts* interfered with my day. While working with Dr. John, I identified common attachment challenges contributing to my struggles. Healing is a lot of hard work but it is worth it to be a *Healing Kid*. I healed from my *Early Hurts* and so can you!

My early experiences and work with Dr. John is just the beginning of my life story. If you have past *Hurts*, that is just the beginning of your story too, and you have the power to write healing into your life. Through the years, I learned that everyone (big or small, young or old) is writing the story of his or her life. Even if you do not know it or are not writing words down on paper, you are telling yourself and others about your thoughts, feelings, and experiences and that is a story.

When I was younger, I did not know that I had some choices in how my story turned out. I am here to tell you that you do get to decide some of the



things that happen in your story. It is my prayer that you are writing a story of hope and healing instead of just remaining alone with your hurt, fear, and questions. It is not always easy to change a story filled with lots of *Early Hurts* into a happy one, but I know you can write healing into your story if you work hard. While it may seem like I know a lot about healing, this was not always true.



I recently found some of the drawings and writings I created as a kid when I was working on my healing story. Since many people have asked me what a typical day looked like when I was struggling with my *Hurting Beliefs*, I wonder if you would like to go back to when I was learning to heal so that we can write our healing stories together.

In each chapter, I will tell you what my day was like as a kid with the younger version of myself narrating my story, and then I will ask you questions about your experiences. Life is better when you have a friend. Will you be my friend and go on this healing journey with me? It seems like just yesterday that my birthday wish was to have friends and for my *Hurts* to go away. If you are ready to learn more about my childhood and start your own healing story then follow me, I will show you the way.

