

BOOK REVIEW:

The Child Life Chronicles: Stories from the Field

By: Laura Gould, CCLS, MS

The Child Life Chronicles: Stories from the Field is a collection of case studies from individual child life specialists that highlights cases that define each practitioner's career. This collection, edited by Christen Bradbury, CTRS, CCLS, highlights cases from around the world and discusses unique cultural, emotional, and medical needs and how child life collaborated with families to provide a needs assessment and interventions to meet each child's developmental level. The book serves as an opportunity for current child life specialists to reflect on their assessment and intervention skills and provides insight to those outside the field on the job of a certified child life specialist in various settings.

Each story begins with the author's name, years in the field, country where the intervention took place, and themes including possible triggers for a potential reader, such as gun violence or death of a child. Before beginning, some stories also note vocabulary that may be unfamiliar for some readers depending on the country of the author and reader; for example, in the United Kingdom a cannula is an intravenous catheter which in the United States is commonly referred to as an IV. Each case includes the setting, background on the patient (with names changed), target concern, developmental considerations, planned intervention, a narrative of the event and finally a reflection by the clinician on their experience.

This book did not simply highlight the cases where child life specialists were confident in their interactions but also shared those scenarios that make clinicians step outside of their comfort zones and grow. One example is in the chapter

"A Quiet Place to Say Goodbye;" Sarah Hall, CCLS details her first experience providing bereavement support- difficult work. While each patient, family, practitioner, and scenarios are unique, many child life specialists can relate to many case scenarios presented. In "Blood Draw to Triumph," Christen Bradbury discusses working with a young patient with needle phobia. She recognized that a child life specialist will not be available for every lab draw or injection, but developing a coping plan includes teaching interdisciplinary team members, caregivers, and the patient.

The Child Life Chronicles: Stories from the Field should become a staple for learning and reflective practice in the child life field both for seasoned



and aspiring child life specialists. This book allowed for a natural break between chapters for the reader to stop and reflect on their own practice. The editors excelled at choosing stories covering a broad spectrum of child life's role. Stories included supporting procedures such as an MRI, lab draw, and operating room preparation. Other stories included supporting siblings during trauma and bereavement support, and others detailed therapeutic activities, play, and diagnostic education. Belinda Hammond, EdD, CCLS, CIMI expands child life outside of the hospital walls to school reintegration in "Confused Classmates," but it would be great to read about more case examples outside of the traditional hospital setting.

Students could utilize this text as an introduction to the field to understand child life's role and feel validated in knowing child life specialists self-reflect and continue to expand their skills. The assessment piece provided is helpful to understand insight into each child life specialist's decisions in what interventions to provide. However, most of the developmental theories come from American or West European, white, male psychologist such as Erik Erikson, even when the scenarios discussed may be occurring in South Africa. It would be helpful to learn if other theories are used and how development may

look different in varying parts of the world. The background of the child life specialist may also be helpful to take into consideration. This book provides knowledge about the role of child life to interdisciplinary staff who may not know when and how to utilize child life as there is such a range from assisting with pokes, coping with trauma and health care environments, and bereavement support. Lessons can be derived from the book such as when to collaborate. It may be helpful to delve into interdisciplinary collaborations with social work, nursing, technologists, physicians, medical assistants, and ways roles overlap and the uniqueness of child life's role.

This book is now available in paper and e-book formats. One suggestion is that it become an audiobook. As it becomes harder in busy lives to find time to pick up a book, it would be great to see this book transformed into an audiobook with each other's voice reading each chapter to hear their emotions behind their words. I found this book inspirational and was in awe of the amazing work other child life specialists are doing worldwide.

References:

Bradbury, C. (2023). *The Child Life Chronicles: Stories from the Field*.