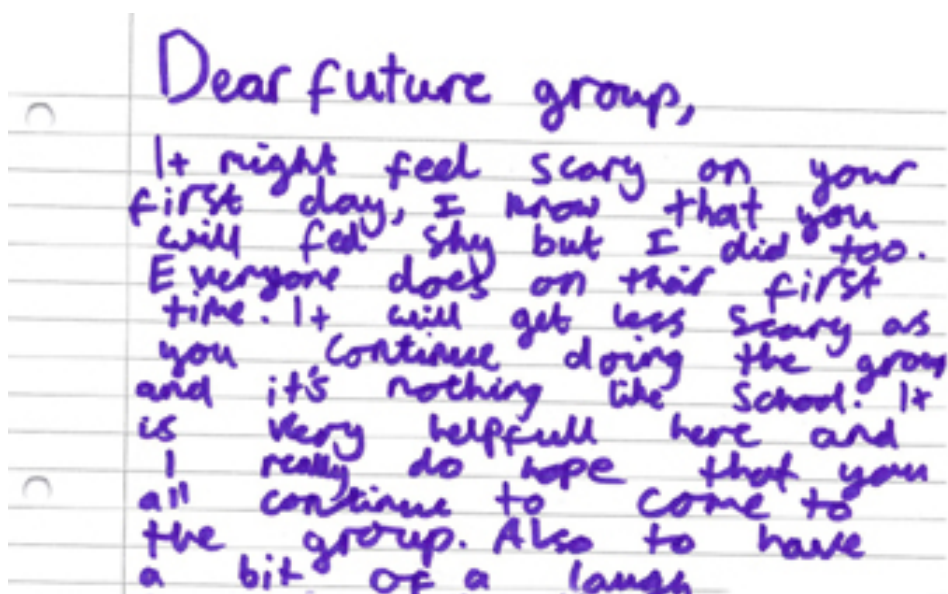


## Kaylee's story: Healing Together has been a life changer



Kaylee (not her real name) lives with her mum and older sister. When you first meet her, she seems self-assured so much so that her mum did not feel that she needed counselling or extra support. However, once her older sister had started attending Healing Together Kaylee badgered her mum to see if she could join too.

Healing Together offers a mixture of written exercises, games, videos, art and craft activities and group work. The sessions are run by Victoria, a clinical psychologist, and has a maximum of eight children per group. Sessions last two hours after school and the course runs for eight weeks. Kaylee joined the 11 to 13 age group but there is an older group for young people 13 to 18 and plans to extend the scheme to 9 to 11-year-olds.

Kaylee and her sister are very attached to their mum but do not like their father. Kaylee describes him as 'hurtful'. She has had no contact with him for four years but he recently appeared at her school and tried to take her away. Her mother is considering moving the children out of the area to Yorkshire to create a new life for them.

At first Kaylee seemed to be really confident and extrovert, not shy about taking the lead, but as time went on it became obvious that she was struggling with anxiety and her low self-esteem was impacting on friendships. She would come home saying that girls at school were picking on her and was always looking for validation from other people.

Fortunately, several things came together. Kaylee comes from a strong extended family who really care about her and were keen to offer support. She was learning new strategies at Healing Together to channel her emotions in a more productive manner. Even better, her mum was attending the Birmingham Freedom Project which runs a parallel course for mothers affected by domestic violence so the pair were both on a journey together, learning to approach worries and issues in different ways and developing more resilience.

Her mum was delighted by the impact of both courses: 'It has been life changing for us as a family as a whole. The two courses go hand in hand, I've found it beneficial to have attended the course and I would recommend the programme 100% to anyone in the future. My daughter actually speaks now, and it's done her and me the world of good.'

Kaylee is much more positive now and recently took part in a local panto. 'She has been great to have at rehearsals,' said the director. 'We remember her saying once, 'Are we going to get on with it, or just hang out?' She always seems to have a bounce in her step which is infectious in the group.'

*Healing Together - nurturing children & young people affected by domestic abuse*

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