

A Message to Our Caregivers

How successful do you think you could have been in the program if your caregivers were not involved?

"Not at all."

-Youth Partnership Board

The Youth Partnership Board (YPB) is made up of youth who have graduated from a group treatment program for problematic, illegal, or inappropriate sexual behavior.

The purpose of the YPB is to share the voice, perception, and experiences of youth.

One of the main priorities of YPB is to share with other youth and their families who are at any stage of the treatment process the insights and understandings that helped them heal and move forward. Successful engagement in treatment is a critical step in healing for everyone impacted. The following are some of the thoughts and feelings they wanted to share with the parents and caregivers of those youth.

UPON DISCOVERY

Parents,

We understand that learning about the sexual behavior of your child can be overwhelming. Sadness, anger, guilt, isolation, disappointment, and a multitude of other feelings can be experienced. Processing those emotions in a therapeutic environment brings healing.

"My parents blamed themselves and I needed them to know it wasn't their fault. I am the one who is responsible for this not them."

-Youth Partnership Board Member

Youth's story: When my parents found out, I remember my family was horrified and in shock. I also remember my parents having very different responses. I remember them being in denial, being enraged, and every other emotion there is at different times. Now that I'm older and have gone through the program, I now understand they had these feelings for a long time and that is okay. I also know that an honest acknowledgement of my parents' feelings had to happen, over and over again, they had to feel those feelings first and process them in order for us to heal as a family.

"Having my parents know what happened and still love me, that was everything because I hated myself."

-Youth Partnership Board Member





MAINTAINING A SENSE OF NORMALCY

Parents,

The time you take with your child – one-on-one – builds your relationship. Take advantage of natural times together. The drive to and from therapy sessions can be a great opportunity to not only process group, but also share about all of life. Connecting about both the good and bad in life is perhaps most important. Developing new routines that provide positive communication creates security and structure.

Youth's story: After group, me and my dad would sit in the car and talk about what we learned that week. For me, group was always heavy but the contrast between talking to my dad and group was that it made what I learned more real. On the drive home we would stop to get something to eat and talk about things not related to group like school, my friends, or anything else except group. Because we talked about the things in our groups first, it made it easier to be honest about the other things that mattered in my life too. That drive home and the 'Real Talk' during it helped me build a better relationship with my dad and I realize now that even though I was facing heavy life altering events, him making me feel normal got me through it. At the time I didn't notice but looking back now I see how important those conversations were to me.

BECAUSE MY MOM WAS CALM, I WAS CALM

Parents,

Even though inside you are feeling a roller coaster of emotions, know that your child is looking to you for guidance. When you can be beside them and be strong, despite the turmoil inside, it helps them know that together you can take this step towards therapy and be successful.



Youth's story: I did not know what to expect, all I knew is that I did not want to go or be at therapy. I was very scared and nervous. All I remember is my mom being willing to take me to this place we both knew nothing about. Now that I'm more mature, I now know she was freaking out, terrified, and did not want to do this as much as me, but I didn't see that at the time. All I remember was her being willing to do this and because my mom was willing, I was willing and that kept me calm.

"I was court ordered to be here so I had to be here but if my dad was not with me day-one I would not have been able to walk through those doors ."

-Youth Partnership Board Member



STAND BY ME

Parents,

There may be part of you that is so upset or angry that it is hard to take the next steps towards healing as a family. Standing by your child and believing that they can and will change makes all the difference.

"When I was in the middle of everything, I was not able to recognize it but now I see how much my parents' support meant to me."

-Youth Partnership Board Member

Youth's story: Hearing what they had to say and how they felt about what I did was surreal and so hard to hear but it helped me so much. I believe what is most important wasn't really what they said but the fact that they stayed despite what I did. I knew they still loved me despite what I did.

BE OPEN AND HONEST



Parents,

We imagine that there is fear and worry about talking with your child about the behavior. It may feel easier to not ever talk about it. However, please know that even though it is hard, ultimately directly facing this together is necessary. Trust is key.

Youth's story: As I begin to look back on my experiences and challenges throughout the program, I now realize the pivotal role my parents played in my self-image and emotional development. Each week, on our way home from therapy, we would talk about what each of us had discussed in our groups that week. At home, they would incorporate the principles that we had been taught into our daily life. Looking back, I see I really trusted my parents because they didn't put off the hard conversations, they were honest when things were hard or when they were struggling with something, and they were quick to forgive. Having someone that I was close to that I could confide in completely and honestly that offered genuine support and advice was a huge part of what motivated me to be involved and to actively participate in the program.



"We share from our experiences and hope it is helpful to you."

Sincerely,

Youth Partnership Board



NCSBY

Additional information about youth with problematic sexual behavior can be provided from the National Center on the Sexual Behavior of Youth www.NCSBY.org

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