

# Case Study

Candice is a 33-year-old mum of 2 children that attend Holton School.



## What was like before you joined the Safe Base programme?

I didn't really know I needed this kind of support until I found myself getting it. In fact, I said no first!

Life was difficult, in fact everything felt very overwhelming before I attended the Safe Base course at the school.

I knew I had been through a lot as a child and then after being in foster care I fought to come back and take care of my wheelchair bound mother. I also had my son to take care of. When I was pregnant with my daughter my mother passed away it was such a shock and it was a very difficult time for me; 2 months later, I had my daughter.

Since then, I split with their dad and so it's been just me and my kids for a long time now. I was struggling to get them to school, things were very stressful daily. One has PKU (metabolic disorder that affects food intake and can cause developmental delay as well as other complications) and the other is neurodiverse with sensory global delay. I spent a lot of time at hospital appointments, fighting for the right meds and support for them. My life was just about the kids.

## What made you decide to join?

I was feeling sleep deprived and very stressed when Tracy suggested I joined the group. To be honest, I didn't want to as I had already done a lot of courses, and nothing had made any difference. But Tracy (family engager) convinced me to attend!

I knew some of the group, not well, but it helped.

## What was it about the Programme that helped you?

The first session was interesting and not what I thought it would be. It was visual and engaging and at the end we did a guided meditation. I had to draw a picture of what I imagined – it was a picture of me as a flower growing up to reach my mum in heaven. I felt very emotional when talking about it in the group and that didn't normally happen, so I knew something was going on.

When I got my 1-1 session with Lynne I felt a connection, I felt safe and found myself talking about my experiences, but mostly about my mother. I talk about her but never talk about how I really feel or get upset about it. Looking back now, I don't think I had time to grieve for her, and I miss her so much, she was my best friend.

I went to all the sessions and the 1-1's and had additional 1-1s too. We talked about how I felt about my mum, responsibilities and how stressed I was getting the children to school on time.

One of the sessions we used stones to understand relationships and Lynne gave me the stone I chose to represent myself; we talked about selfcare and being kind to myself and the stone represented that. I still have it and I sit and hold it every day to remember. I have also read the book I was given to remind me of what we learnt.

## What difference do you think it has made for you?

I'm more confident and I have made real friendships, we meet up outside of school and have had a few nights out, we go to the gym and swimming, and they are supporting me to improve my physical health. I



have passed my ICDL exam and keen to learn more. I'm also volunteering at the café and loving being a part of that.

I have learnt to say no and have boundaries around my own time and how I feel. I feel like I have taken my power back as I used to be scared to say no to my ex and my family even though I could see the control it was having over me.

I am feeling less overwhelmed, home is still hard work, but its calmer and I have learnt to take 10 seconds before responding and so I'm more patient with the children and most days we are getting to school on time now!

My life was all about the kids – but now I am taking more care of my own needs. and even dyed my hair!

At the end of the session, I decided to leave the negativity behind and take away the ability to look at life more positively – and I am proud of myself for doing that!

### **How would you sum up your experience?**

*"It was very emotional, but I needed it. I see a difference in me but didn't know other people did until now!"*

### **Family Engager – Tracy Hopkins**

Tracy shared the changes she had noticed and how Candice had 'come to life' and was definitely more confident lighting up the room when she joined in.

She also added how much calmer and happier the children seem these days. This has also been commented on by the class teacher.

Tracy used the word Flourish to describe what she was seeing happen for Candice and her family.

### **How would you sum up the change you see?**

*"She is a ray of sunshine! – she has good vibes, and her presence is making a difference in the cafe."*

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### **Additional notes**

Candice has attended a lot of courses over the past few years all to better understand her life - but her emotional blocks meant that she had learnt the information but not been able to internalise it or benefit from it. This has already changed, and she is now sharing what she has learnt and encouraging others.

As a part of this process Candice was also offered and accepted extra 1-1 sessions to make sure she had time to share her story with time to feel the emotions and explore her feelings.

I also was able to chat with the head teacher about her high anxiety around getting the children to school as this was adding to the problems. This meant she could be encouraged and supported to get the children in to school on time in a different way. As her anxiety has now dropped, she is coping much better with everything, and the children are on time more often.