

Read About *Why Our Therapeutic Support Program Matters*:

Some of the hardest wounds to heal are the ones we can't see. The damage, like the crime of sexual abuse itself, is often shrouded in secrecy and buried in silence, shame and fear. She is fourteen years old. She looks much younger than that. She barely eats, like she is trying to disappear altogether.

She was a victim of sexual abuse by her uncle, for four long years. When she finally told, the abuse ended but the pain did not. It stayed, making her fold in on herself, withdrawing more and more each day.

Desperate to find help, and terrified she would lose her daughter altogether, her mother reached out to SungateKids and found out about our individual therapy options and our Therapeutic Support Groups. Perhaps, if she could talk her daughter into joining the group, she could find her girl again – the smiling, carefree child whom the perpetrator had stolen from her. And perhaps mom could find some support, too. Someone who understood, who didn't judge her and hold her accountable for what her own brother had done to her child.

On the first day of group, her daughter spoke only when spoken to, and looked at the other girls only when she thought they wouldn't notice. But there they all were – girls completely different from her, yet the same in a most profound way. For the first time in as long as she could remember, she didn't feel alone.

Across the hall, her mother sat amongst parents, grandparents, and foster parents. She spoke, haltingly, of the horror of realizing that her brother – her flesh and blood – had hurt her daughter that way. She spoke of the guilt she had for not knowing, the self-loathing for sharing DNA with the man who wrecked their lives. The woman next to her reached out and patted her shoulder. I hear you, she said. I hear you.

Neither mother nor daughter said much in the car on the way home. As they pulled into the driveway, mom asked her daughter if she wanted to go back the following week. Her daughter looked her fully in the face and said “yes.”

Their journey is long and, to be sure, there is hard work ahead. But they each have a safety net now. Their safety net is SungateKids. Using evidence-based, trauma-focused treatments, SungateKids' highly-trained clinical staff are able to work with both mom and daughter to help each take those first steps from victim to survivor, and from survivor to thriver. Each is learning new coping skills but perhaps most important of all, each is learning that she is not alone – that, in fact, she has a community of survivors whose strength and support she can draw on, and who need her every bit as much as she needs them.

We need your help to make sure that SungateKids is there for every child, and every caregiver, who needs us. Help us heal the wounds and protect children. To find out how you can help, please visit our website at www.sungatekids.org, or give us a call at 303-368-1065.