

I approach this Christmas season with very mixed emotions, as many people do at this time of year, when we remember people who are no longer with us for whatever reason. Recently, in the last six weeks, my mom unexpectedly passed away to glory, so now I found myself on the other side of the support system evaluating my own emotions! I want to thank the teams both in Growing Through and the local Rays of Light teen support group we were running at the time, who really stepped up to fulfil my role while I was out of action for an interim period. They were amazing and a great support along with so many other people. As much as we don't want to be exposed to the pain of grief again, when you've been doing this role as long as myself and some of the Rays team have, it's not a bad thing sometimes to reevaluate grief from a personal perspective to stay in touch with who we are trying to help and support.

Ironically, Rays of Light is based on the story of David through the psalms, who was very expressive and in-tune vocally and in prose regarding his emotions that he was experiencing. Indeed, Psalm 30:11 (TPT) is a prime example of the journey of grief declaring, 'then he broke through and transformed all my wailing into a whirling dance of ecstatic praise! He has torn the veil and lifted from me the sad heaviness of mourning. He wrapped me in the glory garments of gladness.' The goal of grief is to journey through the intensity of the mixed bag of emotions and questions to help navigate them to a place of acceptance by integrating their loss into their lives. It was an honour to come alongside the teens in Rays of light and guide them in their journey. We had six teens who attended initially that was downsized to a faithful four. Some of the feedback below gives a flavour of what the teens learned and how the course helped them....

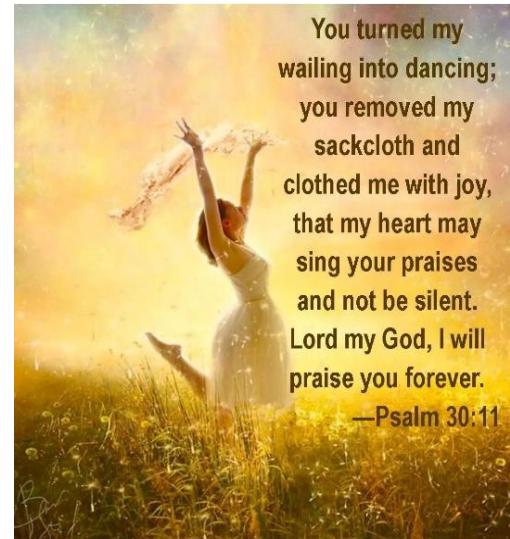
Teen Feedback:

'Rays of Light has helped me by bringing me closer God again, helped me to open up, meet new people and talking with people who understand.'

'talking about different stuff that everyone can relate to'

'it's okay to talk and to trust people'

'it's okay to be yourself'



Parent feedback:

'I feel early intervention is important, especially from a biblical perspective as they will know that in this world that they will never be alone.'

'thank you very much for this opportunity to help my daughter as it truly makes a difference and helps build their confidence.'

'my daughter had a very positive experience and was always happy to attend. It really helped her to express herself more and her feelings'

Collectively, there was a 100% improvement in self-esteem, and social interaction; a 66% improvement in behaviour, academia, participation of school, communication and cooperation at home, which creates a wholesome all-round progressive enhancement in all areas of behaviour. Certainly, reading the feedback, makes doing the groups worthwhile, for sure! Evaluation of the programmes are essential and pivotal in knowing how effective they are and the areas that we need to improve on. In fact, we were appraising and assessing the latest programme while we were conducting it, as we intend to embark on a full update. So, moving forward into 2026, this will be my primary goal, as it is well overdue. We already have some amazing ideas for constructive changes and innovations for some new games, which is exciting. This project will have a substantive cost so we will be organising some fundraising events, but if you could prayerfully consider a donation via the website we would be very appreciative.

As we enter a Christmas season, and a new year, I pray remembrance of Psalm 46:1 (TPT) over your life and circumstances which affirms that, 'God, you're such a safe and powerful place to find refuge! You're a proven help in time of trouble – more than enough and always available whenever I need you.' Personally, I will hold fast to this truth, and I thank you all for your continued love and support during this time and I also ask for prayer for great godly wisdom for Growing Through going forward in the new year for its expansion and its pending innovational changes. May God's richest blessings surround you all in your celebrations and may His peace follow you into the new year and bring you all your hearts desires.

Abundant blessings in Christ,

Mary



To make a donation:

www.growingthrough.co.uk/donate

For further information contact:

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