



Family Links

My new beginning - a mother's journey through the Nurturing Programme



Lisa* joined a Nurturing Programme parenting group in 2006. This is a story of the impact the 10-week course had on her and her family, told in her own words.

“ I'm 45 years old and in one way or another I have felt a failure in everything I have done in my life. We were the typical family of Mum, Dad and three girls, only one problem: there should have only been two of us. That's me and my eldest sister, poor Laura wasn't planned. The other major mishap was that my Mum wanted all boys and not girls, and this is where we all paid the price of being the wrong sex.

After years of abuse and rejection from my Mum, I ran away from home a week after my sixteenth birthday with a lad I thought I was madly in love with. I was married at 19 and spent twelve years being abused by him. For my own safety I was removed from my home and kept in a top security women's refuge for some time. I went on to receive two years of psychiatric treatment as an in-patient to help me overcome the physical, mental and sexual abuse.

All these years later, and married to Peter with two beautiful children, the scars and damage caused by my past were almost completely healed. Still, I have always feared that somehow I would turn into my mother and that I would do to my children what I have had done to me.

The Nurturing Programme for the first time in my life has really made me realise that in order to nurture my children I needed to nurture myself and I needed to make positive changes. *The Parenting Puzzle* is so easy to read and follow, that immediately I felt that this was going to be good.

Discipline

My interpretation of discipline was to be hit, which is punishment. My way of thinking now is that discipline is a way to help children to learn important skills so when they grow up they can accept responsibility for their own actions, respect themselves and others, help them to become independent and resourceful without feeling put-down.

Empathy

I am pleased that I do feel that I am empathic towards the children and people in general, but this course has helped me to perfect these skills. I can empathise without being judgemental or criticising.

Personal power and self-esteem

My self-esteem has increased because I am aware now of my personal power. Personal power for me is turning what would have been a stressful situation into a positive one by accepting the situation and then finding alternative ways of dealing with it.

Choices and consequences

I feel this has been a huge success for me because the changes that have happened mean one warning reminds the children of the rules, so when I give them the choice, they realise it is reasonable and comply with no fuss. I also feel good about this because it avoids confrontation.

Feelings

This section was the hardest for me because I had to face feelings I had chosen to lock away as they were so painful. With help from the group and sticking with the course, I have now at last found the courage to search my feelings once more, analyse my thoughts and feelings and realise that most of my experiences as a child and growing up weren't my fault. I have let go of the guilt and I no longer relive my past to make it better. I accept what has happened and feel free. It is facing these feelings that [means] I feel even more confident to help the children with theirs.

Anger

I have learnt so much about my own anger as well as the children's anger and know that anger is ok to feel but it is the way in which you deal with it that is important. I will now say that I'm feeling a bit stressed and that I need to go and have some 'me time' to calm down. I have found going to my bedroom and having a play and cuddle with the cat relieves my anxieties and I feel so good that I don't take my anger out on anyone by shouting, which was a huge problem.

"I" statements

What can I say about this one, other than it is my favourite of all? I have had so much difficulty in my whole life trying to express myself and to tell people how I feel or how they are making me feel, and then I discovered "I" through the Nurturing Programme. It is the smallest word yet has to be one of the most powerful. I use it to praise my children, to express my feelings to Peter without making him feel inadequate and I use it to praise myself. I find it so easy to use it now that it helps me to share my thoughts and feelings without sounding as if I am blaming other people of how I'm feeling and making them feel uncomfortable.

Kinds of touch

I am very sensitive when it comes to touching and love to cuddle, hug, tickle and caress my children. I like to give affection in this way and the children love to receive it too. I am very scared when it comes to hurting physically because of my past and feel very alarmed when the children have become physical. We talked about steps we could take to avoid hitting each other and since doing this I am pleased to say Mark has not hit his sister at all. The children are discovering other ways to control their anger and frustrations.

Nurturing ourselves

I must admit to finding this hard as I never seemed to have enough time to nurture myself and even now it is something that I really have to work on. I do now understand that it is not selfish to take time for ourselves and that it is important for the rest of the family that I can recharge batteries, so to speak. I have started to buy myself a small bunch of flowers and the occasional magazine to have with a quiet cuppa. My biggest change is that I don't feel I put so much pressure on myself when I haven't got done what I wanted to do. They are probably small steps but I feel I'm going in the right direction.

Ages and stages

This session was definitely thought provoking. I didn't think I compared the children, but [through] becoming self-aware I realised that sometimes I did and it wasn't fair. I have found when frustrated with Meghan about cleaning her room, I would say "Can't you be tidy like your brother for a change". I was not only comparing, I was also using sarcasm to prove a point. I also picked on Meghan for her handwriting, comparing it to Mark's lovely writing. I was so wrong to criticise her, and praised her for her lovely work and for being such a bright button. I have never criticised her since for her handwriting, so I have learnt something!

Children growing up

As I have progressed through the Nurturing Programme, I look at the children in a different way than before. I am more relaxed about them doing and trying new things, to a point where I ask them if there is anything they feel they would like to have a go at.

Conclusions

I have now come through this course and I feel different, I feel I am a good Mum, but I also feel I'm a good person and I like who I am now. The Four Constructs really are the foundations of all the changes I have made and am making, because without these I was misguided, living in the dark ages and missing totally what is so important to me to hold onto.

I now feel the most complete I have ever felt. I have let go of the weight bearing down on my head and I feel confident that as a family we were not off the rails, but needed the help of the programme to bring to the front all the good things in our family. I know what type of parent I want to be. I talk to my children with respect and most importantly, I praise all their efforts with encouragement and rewards. I have stopped praising followed by a criticism.

My goal is that my family will gain in strength, have a deep and meaningful relationship with each other and my grandchildren will have the loving and nurturing environment that we have worked so hard for.

* All names have been changed

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