

DIANA'S JOURNAL



A counsellor teaches using the Green Bag tool and shares from the Bible



The Agape Mission is to reconcile children to God and family through the good news and transformational love of Jesus Christ.

Lucy* is 17 years of age with a son who is around 18 months. Lucy was rescued and came to Agape in April 2021. She had been sexually assaulted by a family member and had bravely shared this with her teacher in school who reported the situation. On campus she went through a time of rehabilitation including counselling and was subsequently reintegrated back into a safe home with another relative who was willing to care for her and her unborn baby.

But her story does not end there. Agape

continued to visit and monitor her wellbeing. Lucy gave birth to a beautiful little boy but subsequently became sick. Tests confirmed that she had breast cancer. The decision was agreed with her caregiver to bring her and her little boy back to the Agape campus where she would be taken for much-needed treatment. Staying on campus meant she would be closely monitored by our staff – including our nurse – so we could ensure she would receive the best possible medical care. After several months of treatment and visits to hospital including travelling to Nairobi for a PET scan, we now await the results to see if the treatment has been successful.

During all of this I have watched Lucy on campus. Some days have been such a struggle as she has coped with the anticipated nausea, pain in her limbs, and other side effects of the strong drugs. Some days are spent in bed, huddled under her mosquito net as life continued around her on campus, and other days she is up and about being a mum to her little boy and attempting to engage in life on campus. This young girl has a sweet and gentle demeanour, but underneath there is such courage, strength, and determination. My heart overflows with admiration for her.

These last few weeks, Agape counsellors have been receiving training on a new process called "Picture me." This holistic counselling tool is in the form of a Green Bag, which makes it ideal for sharing with children in the field or on campus because it is portable. The bag is divided into sections of interactive picture cards, games and activities



and is a carefully planned therapeutic tool. It enables the children to take God's Word seriously, seeing His love in action around them, and meeting Him through the counsellors themselves as well as the stories they tell.

Following the training, implementation began in earnest this last week with the counsellors keen to begin practising their new skills and excited to witness children's lives changed.

Our aim is that all the children who pass through Agape will have the opportunity to receive this counselling. The feedback that we have already received is that the children are responding so positively. Those who were previously unwilling to share their stories and were shut down, have begun to have their eyes opened to the understanding that comes when we share our deepest hurts, pain, shame, and guilt and allow God to come into that place, bringing healing, freedom, and most of all His acceptance and love.

Lucy was one of these children who was unwilling and fearful of sharing at any depth. When encouraged to share with her counsellor she would express her pain: "Please don't ask me to remember those things, I don't want to think about." The pain was too much, and the fear of opening up that lid was beyond what she felt she could cope with.

This week she was invited to her usual counselling session, but this time the session would be utilising the Green Bag tool. As the counsellor led Lucy, asking her if she might be willing to think about her 'worst' memory, she asked her to share how it made her feel and would she like to draw a picture of this. Lucy drew a tree. She was able to explain that this was because 'the tree was something that stood there alone and nobody cares for it.'

Through hearing three different stories (that the counsellor carefully selected because they were similar to Lucy's circumstances), Lucy began to understand that she was not alone, the things that had happened to her had indeed happened to others also. As she heard this, something within her unlocked, she began to share about how she had felt so alone, rejected, unimportant, and lost. As the counsellor listened carefully she then concluded the session with the Bible story of The lost sheep. Lucy, maybe for the first time, realised that she was not alone and would never be. Asked if she would be willing to share how she now felt and draw another picture, she drew three big rocks and said that she wants to be unshakable like these rocks. She now felt very strong and valuable after hearing the story of the lost sheep. She too felt valued like that sheep and expressed a desire to walk in God's light every day.

Watching Lucy today, she smiles and engages in conversation. Although she awaits her test results, she continues to take life in her stride, and now there is a new smile that comes from the healing that God has brought and will continue to bring as she trusts in Him each and every day. It is such a privilege to watch God at work in the lives of these children.

Please join us in praying that as our counsellors, pastors, and social workers use this Green Bag tool, children will be reconciled to God and family through the Good news and transformational love of Jesus Christ.

I give you my love, Diana

* Name has been changed

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