

Girl, grandmother find common ground in Nutley Family Service Bureau therapy

Joy came to Nutley Family Service Bureau nine months ago, when her paternal grandmother – who has custody of Joy and her younger brother Sean – sought treatment to help Joy deal with the separation from her birth mother.

Joy's parents had struggled with substance abuse since she was born 12 years ago. She has felt the loss of her parents keenly, particularly her mother, and had expressed some suicidal thoughts.

Joy was lucky in the sense that her grandmother, who had three of her own children still living with her, was able to provide a safe and loving home to her. Joy's birth mother wanted to be in her life, but was unable to be a consistent presence. Joy's grandmother was open to allowing a relationship between the two but had established firm ground rules concerning Joy's mother sobriety.

While in family therapy with her grandmother, Joy was able to express her frustration with her grandmother's rules while gaining insight into why those rules were there to protect her. Joy also was able to express her feelings of abandonment and how they overwhelmed her, particularly when she was feeling vulnerable in school.

In therapy, Joy was able to learn positive coping skills, such as writing about her feelings. The therapist also role-played with Joy conversations with her mother so that she could more effectively express her feelings to her. The therapist provided Joy's grandmother with the support she needed to manage the volatility of Joy's feelings. The grandmother also learned how to validate those feelings so that Joy felt understood.

While the work is ongoing, Joy is doing well in the new school year, has been seeing her mother more consistently, and has been able to express and get her needs met by her mother.

With your support of the Greater Newark Holiday Fund, Joy and families such as hers will be able to have a happy holiday. Thanks for your help.



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