

A Mother's Experience of the South Pacific Private Family Program

I really feel very passionate about the SPP Family Programme – so much so that I would like to share my story with you.

To say that the Family Programme was instrumental in marking the beginning of an entirely new perspective on life for me is an understatement, and my hope is that it might be of some help and comfort to you as a support person.

15 years ago I was an everyday North Shore mum, with 2 kids in private school. My typical day consisted of helping out in the school tuckshop, playing tennis, having lunch with friends, going to art classes etc. We were a normal middle class family, who went on family holidays etc.

Then, out of blue, my youngest child came to me and admitted that she had been using drugs – just for fun and to fit in with her peers in the beginning, but it had escalated to more serious using, and she was really frightened of what was happening to her.

To put it mildly, my entire world didn't just fall apart – it exploded!!!! What did I know about drug taking/using?? It was always other people's kids, family members, friends that this happened to, and **certainly not anything I had ever imagined that my kids would get involved in.** I was desperate to help my daughter, a bright, sensitive girl and up until then, a good student. I was completely terrified at finding myself in completely uncharted waters. It felt like I was out at sea in a very tiny boat with no hope of help arriving.

A colleague, in whom I confided, suggested I contact South Pacific Private – which I did, and very shortly thereafter we found ourselves in the foyer filling out the admission forms.

My daughter was scared and I was even more scared, trying desperately to hold it all together.

I think that the scariest part for me was saying goodbye and leaving her there. The sign in the foyer says, "Expect a Miracle" – but to be perfectly honest

I didn't have a clue what I was going to do after she had left. I had absolutely no personal experience of anything more than the occasional aspirin, and couldn't even begin to imagine what was taking place in the hospital, but I knew then, that life – as our family knew it – was about to change, and for better or worse. Put simply, we had to try to support her as best we could.

That is where the Family Programme came in as a complete life changer. For the first week of being in SPP, my daughter called and begged to come home, and as a mum it tore at my heart – but I managed to convince her to stay to the end of the week, by which time she had started to settle into the programme. Shortly after that the Family Programme began.

Again, I arrived at South Pacific Private with absolutely no idea of what was going to happen in there. But during that time things began to fall into place for me and the other support people in the group. We learned so much about addiction, how and why it happens, but more importantly, we learned how to understand and support our loved ones, we learned also how the SPP programme works and the language used, again, so important in providing support for when our loved ones leave.

I can truthfully say, hand on heart, that the **Family Programme changed my life in ways I had not ever imagined, and entirely for the better.** That's not to say that everything was easy from then on – far from it, but it gave me tools and a framework to not only help my daughter, but to improve my own life, and for that I am truly thankful.

I hope that if you are wondering if the Family Programme would be beneficial to you as a support person, that you will make it a priority, **not just for your loved one, but for yourself.**

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