

PEACE Program Group Counselling for Children and Youth**“I know what I have to do to keep myself safe”**

It was happening again. Angie braced herself against the wall and turned her head for the slap she knew was coming. Her husband Rick’s large hand caught her upper cheekbone, thankfully just missing her right eye.

With the left side of her face pressed against the wall, Angie lifted her eyes long enough to spot their daughter, Nicola, running towards Rick. *No*, she silently mouthed at the 8-year-old.

“No, Dad, stop!” the young girl screamed as she pummeled her father’s lower back with her small fists.

“Shut up! Shut up!” Rick turned to yell at the girl. Angie’s head spinned, but she knew she had to do something or he might hit Nicola.

“You took too many again,” she told him, “You know what it does to you when you take too many.” He turned his attention back to her. She made sure Nicola was looking at her, and silently indicated to the girl that she should move away, which she did; Angie closed her eyes with relief.

“Where did you put them?” Rick grabbed her shoulders and shook her hard. “Where did you put the pills?” Angie’s head hit the wall too many times; she caught Nicola’s round eyes staring from behind a wall and, as Angie crumpled to the floor, all she could think was *Hide, hide*.

“She flat out said, ‘I know what I have to do to keep myself safe.’”



Angie and Nicola sat in the PEACE counsellor’s office at Haven Society. The counsellor, Gwen, explained that Nicola could join a counselling group with other children, and that Gwen would keep Angie updated with her progress.

Once a week for 10 weeks, Nicola attended the children’s counselling groups. Shy at first, the young girl soon warmed to the seven other children and youth in her group. Nicola was surprised to learn that the other kids in her group had also had similar experiences to her own. She knew that she could trust them with her story since they would understand.

At the small celebration at the end of the 10 weeks, Angie thanked Gwen and told her how much Nicola had learned.

“She flat out said, ‘I know what I have to do to keep myself safe.’”

“Nicola was very eager to work on her safety plan,” Gwen confirmed. “She’s a fast learner.”

“Mom, look!” Nicola showed Angie her ‘graduation’ certificate. “It means I did a good job.”

“You did a really good job, Nicola,” Angie beamed at her daughter, “You always do.”

While this story speaks to the experiences of our clients, for privacy reasons, this story and all names are fictional and the images and photos are stock.