



Breaking the cycle of trauma symptoms with LINKS

Case study: LINKS Trauma Healing Service



The Family Profile

Emily*, a 15 year old Aboriginal girl, has found a safe home with her foster family in Penrith. She was referred to the LINKS Trauma Healing Service due to a number of trauma symptoms: recurrent nightmares, depressed mood, anxiety and flashbacks. Emily struggled to regulate her emotions and manage her dissociations, which developed into self-harming and suicidal behaviour.



Emily's carers, of non-Aboriginal background, also look after their two biological and one other foster child. The parents were referred with Emily to the LINKS Trauma Healing Service to address the girl's continuous cycle of symptoms. With the help of a LINKS therapist, both carers learned about trauma and trauma symptoms and developed safety plans to be able to keep her safe. They also were referred to the Tuning into Teens™ program run by LINKS, which improved their ability to communicate effectively with Emily based on a better understanding of her symptoms and their impact.



The Result

Emily learned relaxation techniques and psycho-education, in conjunction with rapport building as part of Trauma Focused Cognitive Behaviour Therapy. "We did thought process work, including how to identify her feelings and communicate them effectively", explained the LINKS therapist.

The family participated in conjoint sessions and learned to talk about emotions as an 'everyday language' to enhance communication. The carers reported that their relationship has strengthened since and Emily was able to sit in sessions maintaining eye contact, not showing signs of agitation and hyper-vigilance.

"When I went for a home visit, for the first time ever I was able to look at Emily in the eyes and she hugged me." - Emily's caseworker

The newly-learnt strategies help Emily to manage her symptoms and she no longer reports thoughts of self-harm, suicidal ideation, dissociations, nightmares and flashbacks.

Emily and her foster family recently enjoyed a happy family trip overseas.

The LINKS Trauma Healing Service has been set up to help vulnerable children and young people like Emily. The Service is based in Penrith and Charlestown and is delivered in a culturally inclusive framework. The LINKS team attends cultural awareness training and maintains knowledge on cultural differences through consultation with the team's Aboriginal Mental Health Clinician and the latest research.