



COUNSELLING GAVE ME COURAGE!

Children and youth with diverse SOGIESC (sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, sexual characteristics) can feel safe, accepted and celebrated with the right support. Beautiful Life Organisation (BLO) provides this support through free counselling and their drop-in centre, A Place to be Yourself (APTBY).

Vuthy* arrives at APTBY early to join the monthly youth discussion group we hold. He seems a bit flat so our staff ask how he is doing. Vuthy opens up about some workplace bullying he has been experiencing recently. It is not the first time he has had problems there. A couple of years ago he faced similar discrimination and harassment, and when he finally built up enough courage to report it to his Director, his workplace responded surprisingly well and invested in a Gender and Sexuality workshop by BLO for their entire team. But recently the bullying has started up again. After reporting it again and a quick investigation, the staff member in question was promptly let go. Our staff praise Vuthy for knowing his own value and for the courage he showed in reporting the bullying. Vuthy feels guilty and worried about any potential backlash he or his workplace may face. The person who was let go is threatening to go to the media. Our drop-in centre staff remind Vuthy that he and his workplace did nothing wrong by standing up against discrimination, and also about the free counselling we offer in case he wants to talk it out more with a professional. Vuthy responds quickly that he would like to try this.

Other visitors arrive and the discussion group starts. As usual, we go around the group, introducing ourselves and our pronouns. We joke around a little before getting into the structured topic. Vuthy, a 23 year-old gay male, shares some of his personal experiences and thoughts with the other younger attendees. They listen intently. He is respected here. Valued. The exchange allows Vuthy to get things off his chest, get advice and support from his community and feel a sense of pride at being a role model for the younger community. He leaves with a smile on his face, seeming much lighter than when he had arrived.

Vuthy has since had 5 professional counselling sessions, is organising another Gender and Sexuality workshop for his workplace and feeling content with where he is at in life.



One of APTBY's staff sharing his experience at the youth discussion group

“ I found that after talking with the counsellor, I felt relieved and less stressed than before... I'm so grateful! ”

*name has been changed to protect the identity of visitor