



**LYGHT**

LISTENING & LED BY  
YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE

GRIEF, HOPE, &  
TRANSITIONS

A DOUGY CENTER PROGRAM

# RESEARCH FINDINGS



2021-2023  
RANDOMIZED CONTROL TRIAL (RCT) #2

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The National Grief Center  
for Children & Families

*James R. Duke*  
THE DUKE ENDOWMENT



# L.Y.G.H.T. Mission

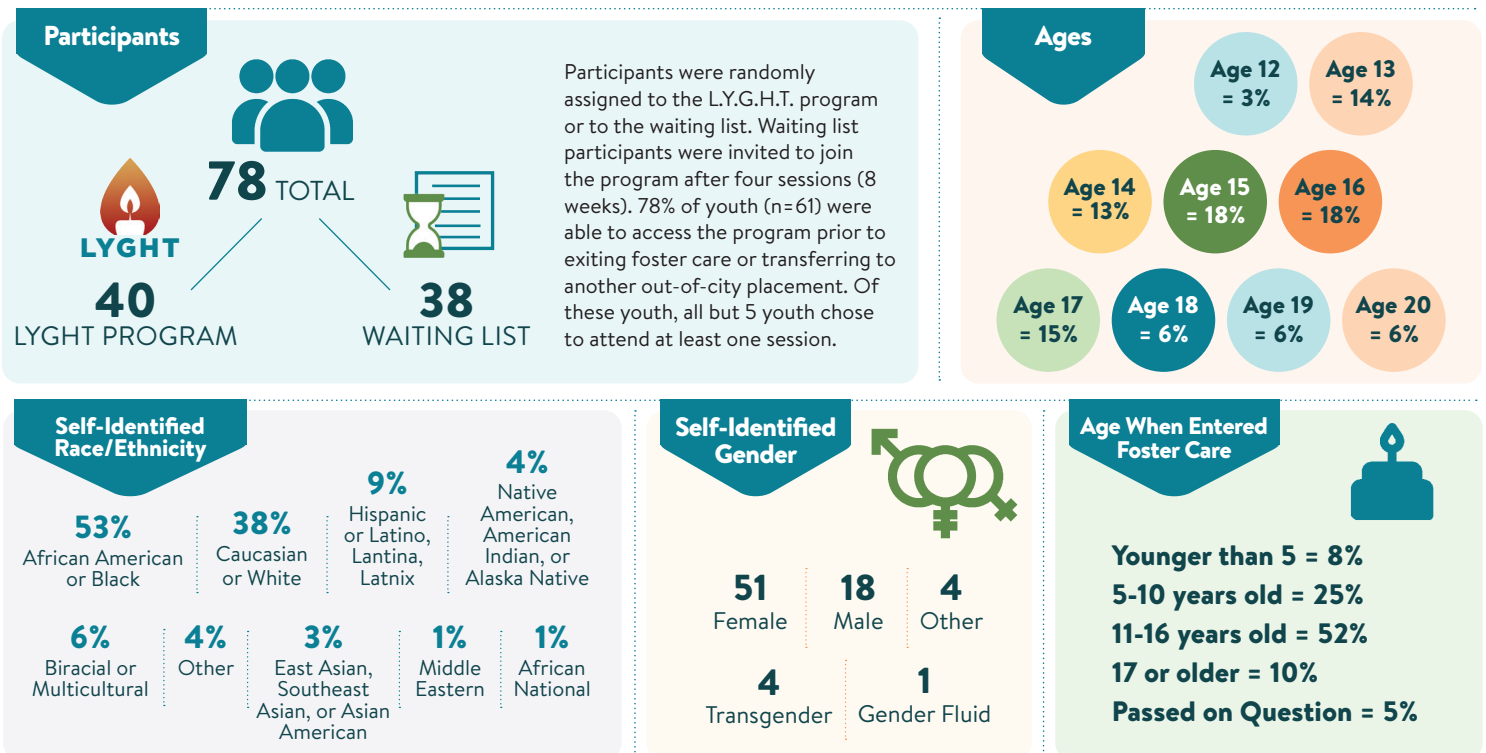
At the core of the L.Y.G.H.T. program, we aim to raise awareness about how youth in foster care who are grieving experience marginalization on various levels, to create ways to provide trauma-informed peer support to youth in foster care, and to promote the importance of moving the child welfare community toward a grief-informed holistic model of care.

## Research Question

Does the L.Y.G.H.T. program, a peer grief support program for youth in foster care, enhance the well-being of youth in foster care?

From September 2021 to June 2023, a second randomized trial of the Listening and Led by Youth in Foster Care: Grief, Hope, and Transitions (L.Y.G.H.T.) program was conducted with teens and young adults in foster care throughout South Carolina. The program was run under real-world conditions.

## Study Demographics



# Outcome Measures

## Quantitative - Questionnaires

- Hopefulness
- Social Support
- Self-Worth
- Problem Intensity
- Program Helpfulness
- Trauma-Informed Climate



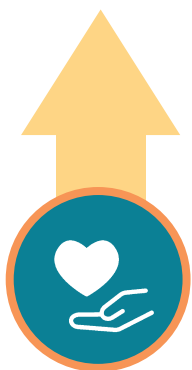
## Qualitative – Focus Groups



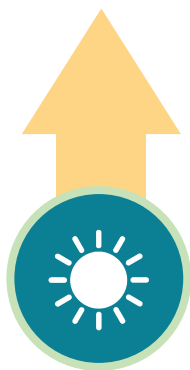
- Initial Interest in the Program
- Perceived Program Benefits
- Program Dislikes
- Program Recommendation

# Findings

For youth who participated in the L.Y.G.H.T. program:



SOCIAL SUPPORT INCREASED



HOPEFULNESS INCREASED

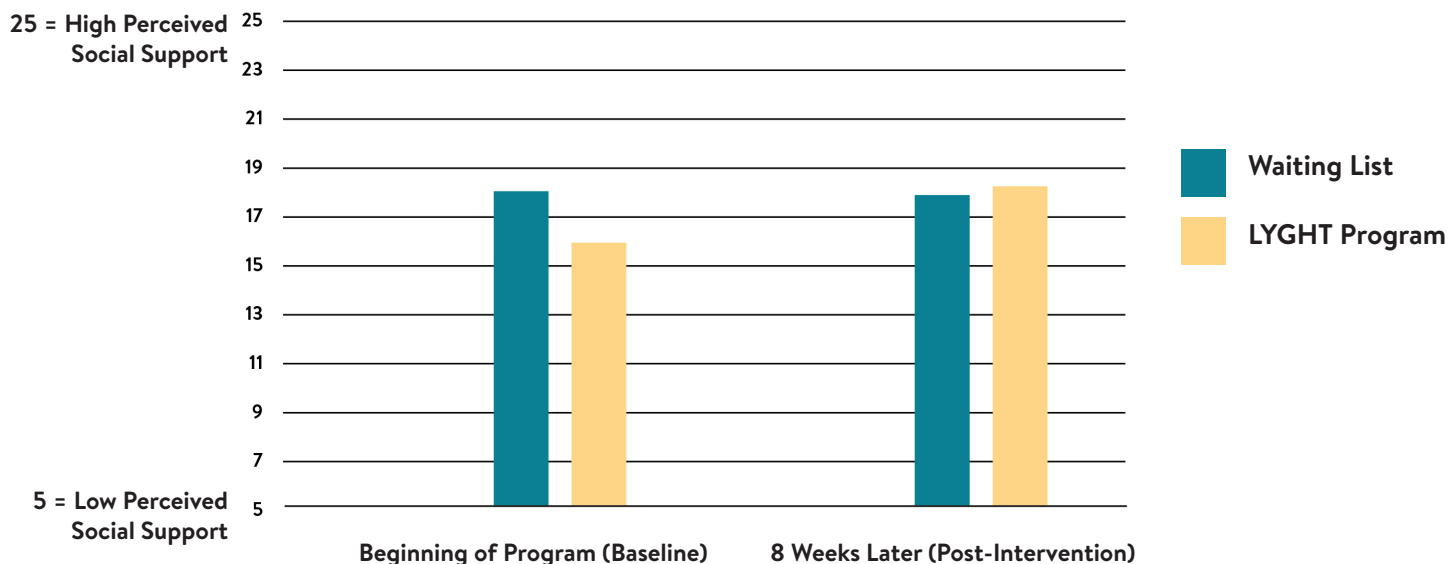


SELF-WORTH INCREASED



PERCEIVED PROBLEMS BECAME BETTER AND MORE BEARABLE

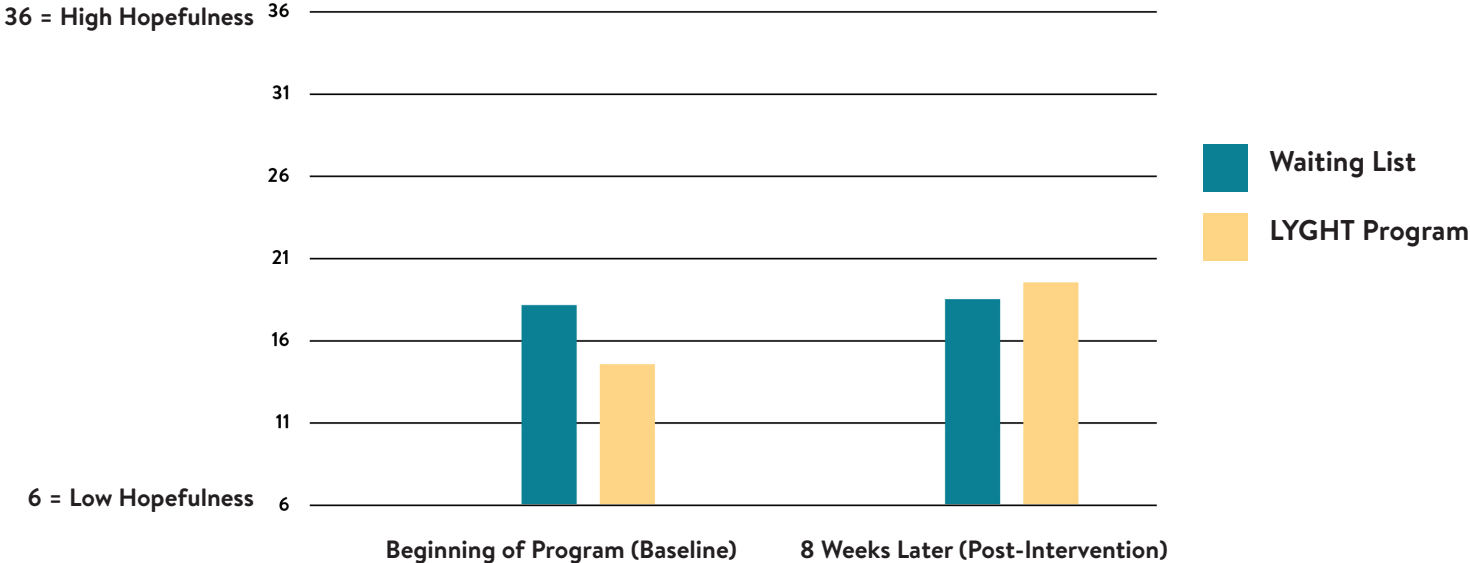
## Social Support\*



Results indicate a positive medium effect (effect size = 0.06) of the L.Y.G.H.T. program for social support: For youth who were assigned to the L.Y.G.H.T. program and participated in at least 1 session, youth reported a greater increase in social support ( $t_1$ :  $M = 15.95$ ,  $SE = 1.00$ ;  $t_2$ :  $M = 17.9$ ,  $SE = 0.80$ ) than youth who did not participate in the L.Y.G.H.T. program ( $t_1$ :  $M = 18.05$ ,  $SE = 1.00$ ;  $t_2$ :  $M = 18.25$ ,  $SE = 0.85$ ).

t=Time Point, M=Mean Value, SE=Standard Error \*Controlled for site of intervention

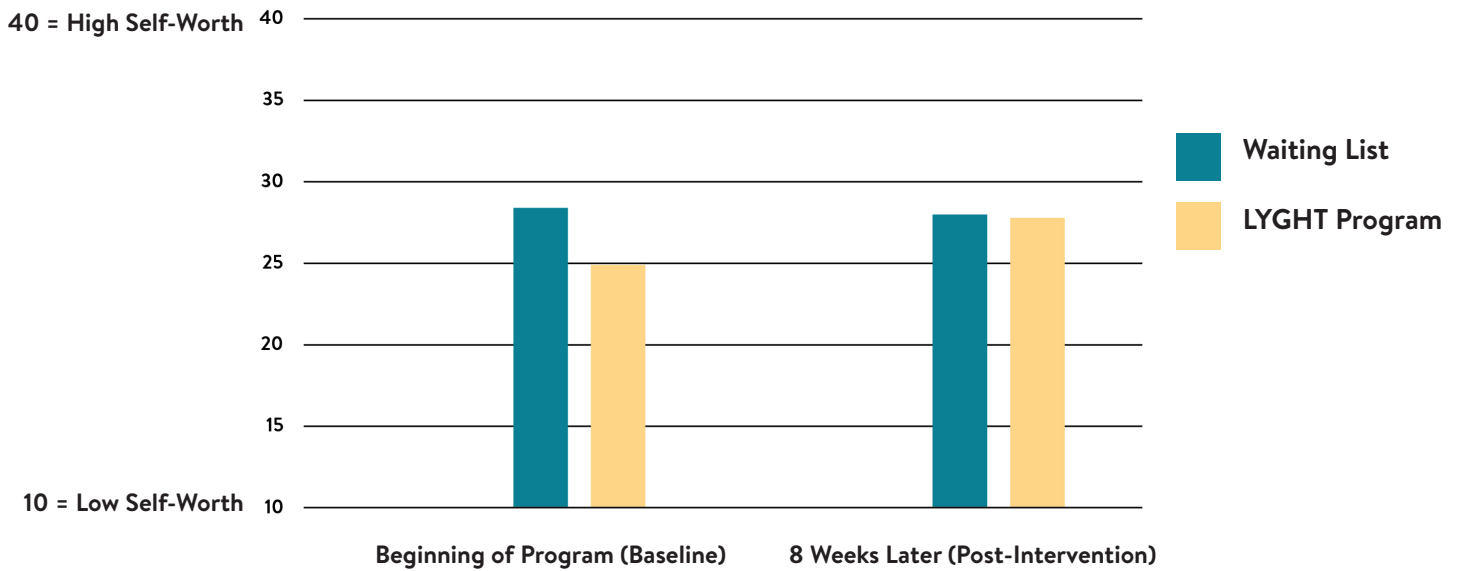
# Hopefulness\*



Results indicate a positive large effect (effect size = 0.15) of the L.Y.G.H.T. program for hopefulness: For youth who were assigned to the L.Y.G.H.T. program and participated in at least 1 session, youth reported a greater increase in hopefulness ( $t_1$ :  $M = 14.58$ ,  $SE = 1.44$ ;  $t_2$ :  $M = 19.56$ ,  $SE = 1.14$ ) than youth who did not participate in the L.Y.G.H.T. program ( $t_1$ :  $M = 18.18$ ,  $SE = 1.14$ ;  $t_2$ :  $M = 18.54$ ,  $SE = 1.38$ ).

$t$ =Time Point,  $M$ =Mean Value,  $SE$ =Standard Error \*Controlled for site of intervention

# Self-Worth\*



Results indicate a positive large effect (effect size = 0.14) of the L.Y.G.H.T. program for self-worth: For youth who were assigned to the L.Y.G.H.T. program and participated in at least 1 session, youth reported a greater increase in self-worth ( $t_1$ :  $M = 24.90$ ,  $SE = 1.10$ ;  $t_2$ :  $M = 27.80$ ,  $SE = 0.90$ ) than youth who did not participate in the L.Y.G.H.T. program ( $t_1$ :  $M = 28.40$ ,  $SE = 1.00$ ;  $t_2$ :  $M = 28.00$ ,  $SE = 1.10$ ).

t=Time Point, M=Mean Value, SE=Standard Error      \*Controlled for site of intervention

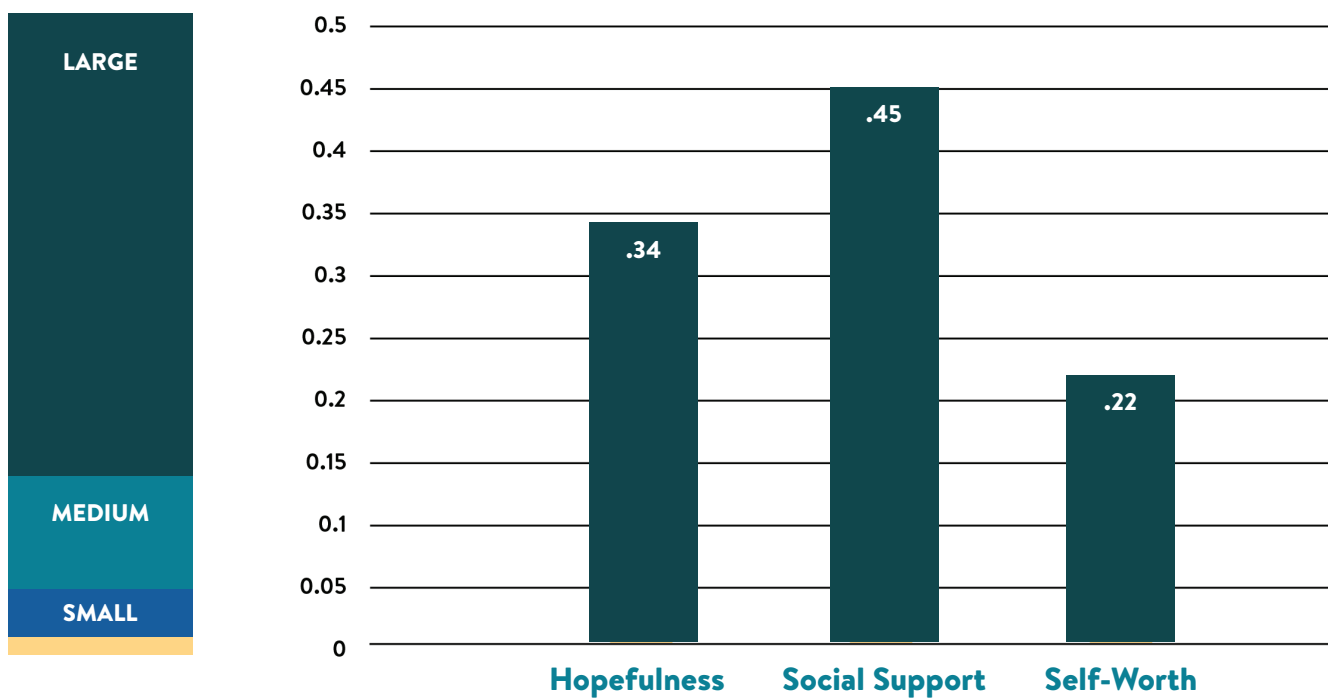
# Long Term Impacts

Results indicate even greater effects after six months: a positive large effect of the L.Y.G.H.T. program was observed for all outcomes:

- increased hopefulness (effect size = 0.34).
- increased social support (effect size = 0.45).
- increased sense of self-worth (effect size = 0.22).

In addition, at six months, 79% of youth reported that their problems had gotten better since beginning L.Y.G.H.T. (see Exhibit 7).

**Exhibit 7: L.Y.G.H.T. Program Effect Sizes After 6 Months (South Carolina)**



Notes. Outcome findings at 6-months are based on the 21 youth who participated in the second randomized controlled trial study in 2021–2023 and completed a follow-up survey at 6-months post-intervention. Effect size: Partial  $\eta^2$  ( $\eta^2$ ) = 0.01 indicates a small effect.  $\eta^2$  = 0.06 indicates a medium effect.  $\eta^2 \geq 0.14$  indicates a large effect.

# Problem Intensity


Participants in both groups reported improvement in problems after initiating L.Y.G.H.T. sessions. For youth initially assigned to the L.Y.G.H.T. group, the improvement was observed at 8 weeks, and for youth initially assigned to the waitlist group, the improvement was reported at 16 weeks. **These improvements were sustained at 6 months post-intervention.**

## Notable Considerations


Compared to the population of participants as a whole, effect sizes were strongest across outcomes for:



**Youth who self-identified as African American or Black**



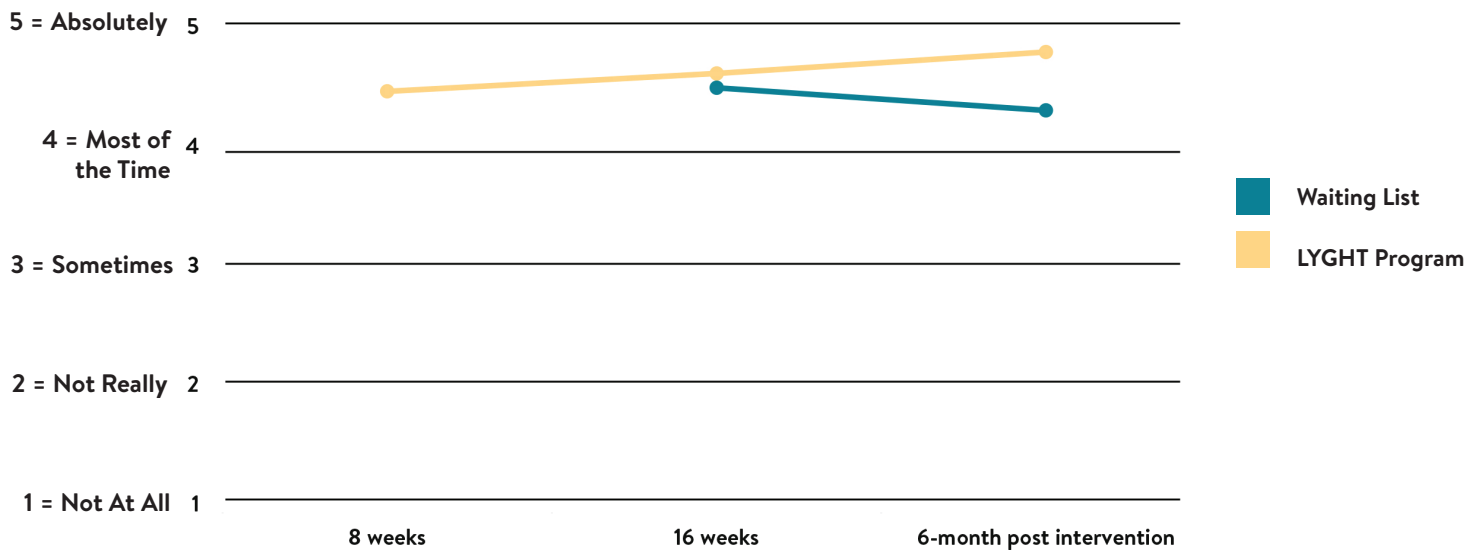
**Youth who self-identified as male**



**Youth who participated in at least one L.Y.G.H.T. session**



# Trauma-Informed Program Atmosphere



At 8 weeks, 16 weeks, and 6 months-post intervention, youth rated the L.Y.G.H.T. program between “most of the time” and “absolutely” as a trauma-informed atmosphere.

## Youth reported the L.Y.G.H.T. program provided a trauma-informed program atmosphere where youth felt:

- **safe** in the L.Y.G.H.T. group
- they could **trust** other members in the L.Y.G.H.T. group
- **supported** by the other members in the L.Y.G.H.T. group
- the other L.Y.G.H.T. group members **understood** them and what they had been through
- the L.Y.G.H.T. group members **appreciated** sharing with and listening to one another
- that **they had choices** about whether and when they spoke, listened, or participated in the L.Y.G.H.T. program
- that their uniqueness and identity were **respected**

# Youth Perceptions of the Program

Youth were invited to share their feedback through open-ended survey questions. A total of 42 youth provided feedback on their perceptions of the program.



- **Initial Interest in the Program**
- **Perceived Program Benefits**
- **Program Dislikes**
- **Program Recommendation**

# Initial Interest in the Program

When asked what initially drew them to be interested in the L.Y.G.H.T program, participants provided various responses.

## 2 out of 3 participants

reported that their initial interest in the program was for support to cope with their problems:

*“I knew it was going to be helpful for me and my problems.”*

## More than half of the participants

reported the desire to receive support from their peers:

*“I felt like talking about my life experiences with other girls my age would help me get over the events that happened because some people could relate to me.”*

Other responses included **the desire to help others, self-worth, and something to do/curiosity.**

# Perceived Program Benefits



**Personal Well-Being, Empowerment, and Agency**



**Relational Connection and Perceived Support**



**Safe Space**



**LYGHT**

**Program Components**



## Theme 1: Personal Well-Being, Empowerment, and Agency

**64% of participants** reported that the program assisted them with healthy emotional and behavioral management:

*“It helps with anger management.”*

### Self-awareness:

*“I’ve learned that not everyone’s the same and the world doesn’t evolve around one person.”*

### Learned interpersonal skills:

*“I’ve learned to be considerate of other people’s feelings and emotions.”*

### A sense of agency:

*“What I like the most about the L.Y.G.H.T. program is when we talk they listen to you and do not say bad things to you.”*

### Hopefulness:

*“What I learned was to speak up and to not lose hope.”*

### A sense of recognition and worthiness:

*“When I got into L.Y.G.H.T. it made me feel more welcomed than I felt.”*

# Perceived Program Benefits



## Theme 2: Relational Connection and Perceived Support

**74% of participants** stated that one of their favorite parts of the L.Y.G.H.T. program was feeling a sense of relational connection and perceived support:

*“My favorite experience has been to be able to make connections with the whole group.”*

### Shared lived experience with other participants:

*“There are people who share similar experiences as mine.”*

### A feeling of acceptance:

*“I have learned that there are others who truly care, respect, and listen to what you have to say.”*

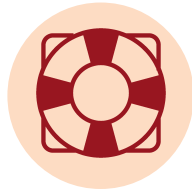
### Developing and building new relationships:

*“I had a great time getting to know other people and just being able to share with them.”*

### Helping one another:

*“I learned that peers can help one another.”*

# Perceived Program Benefits



## Theme 3: Safe Space

### Nonjudgmental program space:

*“Everyone is really accepting and not judgmental at all.”*

### A space that facilitated opportunities for confidentiality and trust:

*“I’ve learned that I can trust other people who is in this program.”*

### Youth involvement in decision-making:

*“My favorite part is being able to share what you want.”*



## Theme 4: Program Components

### Specific program components:

*“I love what we do at the end of every meeting.”*

# Program Dislikes

**55% of participants** reported they had no dislikes:

*“There was never a moment when I didn’t like LYGHT.”*

The most common dislike reported by youth (**17%**) included having interpersonal conflict with peers in the group:

*“Other group members taking things totally wrong.”*

# Program Recommendation

**100% of participants** reported they would recommend the L.Y.G.H.T. program to other youth. Reasons for why they would recommend the program included:

## The program contributed to overall well-being:

*“I would 100 percent recommend it. Grief never truly goes away, however this program can help individuals find ways to carry on life while managing their grief in a healthy way.”*

## The power and value of peer support:

*“Yes, I would totally recommend it because it helps kids learn to express their feelings in small groups. Also it’s a program where you can talk about your problems at your own pace and with what you’re comfortable with.”*

## The opportunity for self-expression:

*“Yes, because it gives these young adults and teens an outlet to help them talk about their feelings and misfortune in the past and learn to build and grow from them.”*

## Having a safe space/place to cope with their losses:

*“Yes, because we teenagers need a safe place to talk about how we feel.”*

## Additional Study Highlights

92%

of eligible youth chose to participate in the voluntary L.Y.G.H.T. program

Percentage of youth who provided feedback and said they would recommend the program to other youth in foster care:

100%

The L.Y.G.H.T. program was accessed more than

280  
times

by youth in foster care



At 8 weeks, 16 weeks, and 6 months-post intervention, youth rated the L.Y.G.H.T. program between **“most of the time”** and **“absolutely”** as a trauma-informed atmosphere



# L.Y.G.H.T. Resources



A program of Dougy Center: The National Grief Center for Children & Families  
Issue 11, December 2023

## Introducing the L.Y.G.H.T. Mascot, Lumi!

The LY.G.H.T. team is excited to introduce our new LY.G.H.T. mascot, Luminous. Look for Lumi in upcoming LY.G.H.T. program resources, especially a very exciting new resource for teens in foster care which will be announced in our next issue – stay tuned!

## L.Y.G.H.T. Newsletter



## Survive/Thrive Journal



## L.Y.G.H.T. Tip Sheets

### Sign Up for LYGHT Updates

\* Email

First Name

Last Name

Street

City

State/Province

Postal Code

## L.Y.G.H.T. Updates Sign up [here](#)

# Next Steps

Expanding the L.Y.G.H.T. program to more community sites in South Carolina

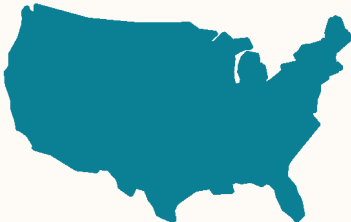


Expanding the reach of the L.Y.G.H.T. program through more trained L.Y.G.H.T. facilitators

Bringing the L.Y.G.H.T. program to Oregon



Building the infrastructure to bring L.Y.G.H.T. to additional states



## Acknowledgments

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## Contact Information

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