

Why supporting parents in lifelong-learning is relevant to Family Services: A case study of Uni4You

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Lifelong learning makes a difference.....

...it transforms lives

Mind you it was, a hard work and I never worked so hard in all my life. Um, but I, I started like, kids started to see a change in me too, and I thought “well, I’m, I’m a good role model for them”.

I had something more in common with them [child’s teachers], and they talked to me like a friend, not like a teacher that’s teaching my child, and I think my kids get more out of it... I don’t know, the teachers seem really invested in my kids and what they’re doing. It is different... we’ve got something in common.

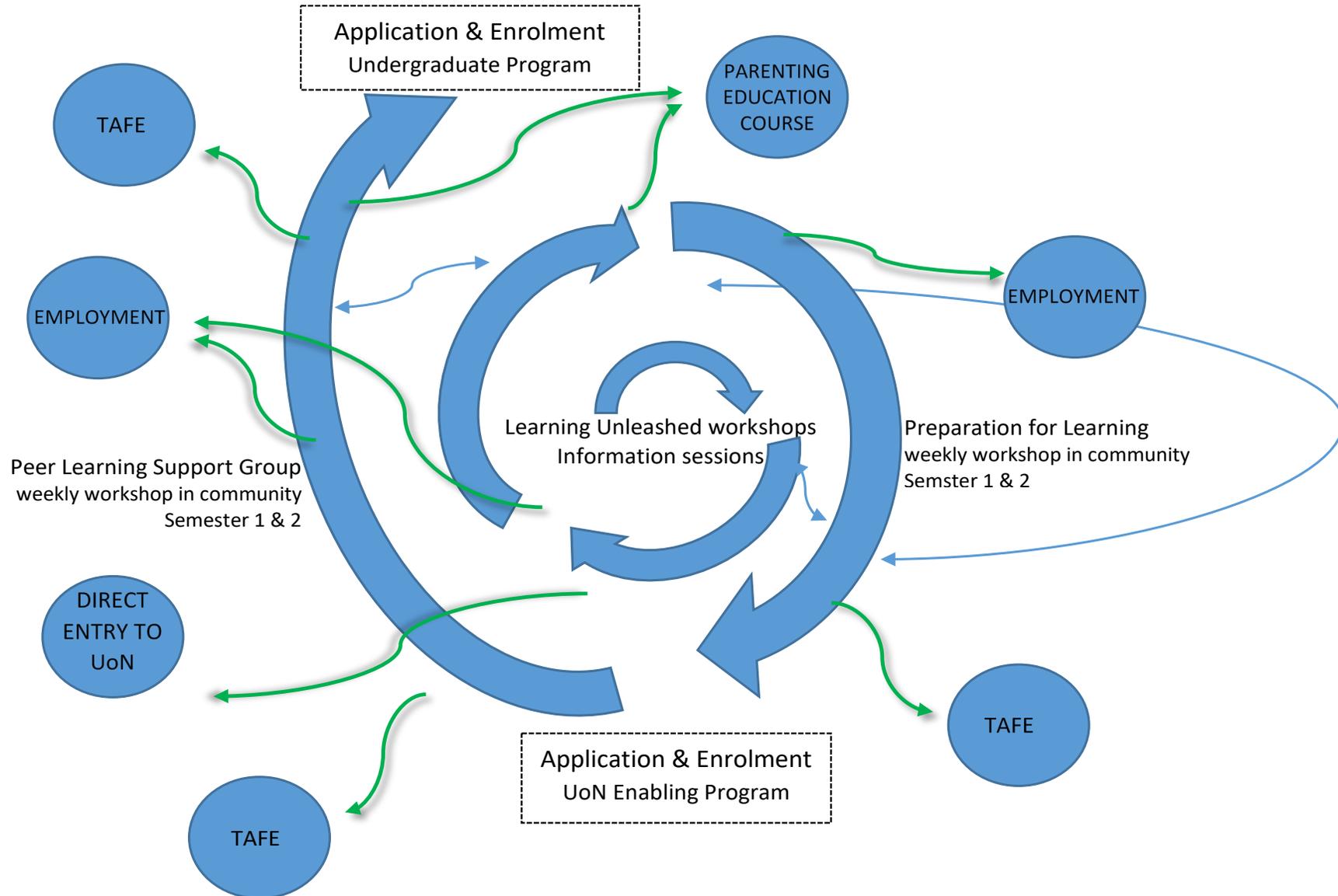
But, I, even if I never, even if I never go back to uni... I’m so glad that I’ve done it. It’s made the biggest difference for the kids.

The Family Action Centre

A unique multi-disciplinary centre in the University of Newcastle's Faculty of Health and Medicine with a commitment to harnessing the strengths of families and building the capabilities of communities, especially those underserved communities where health, wellbeing and child development needs are complex and entrenched.



Lifelong Learning - The Uni4You Spiral





Participant Profile

Low SES: 100% come from low SES (2016 Census data).

Mature Age: 60% range between 25 – 40 years.

Disability: 26% describe 'health issues' negatively impacting on their ability to learn.

Disrupted educational background: 16% attained Higher School Certificate level studies (Year 12).

First in Family: 75% are first in their family (and often their neighbourhood) to enrol in University studies.



Parents with complex caring responsibilities

68% of participants care for a child under 5 years of age, with 17% caring for a person with disability (child or other family member).

Out-of-home Care

10% have a lived experience of Out-of-home Care.
3% are preparing for restoration with their children.
2% provide foster care.

Women escaping domestic violence

35% exposed to family/domestic violence, with 15% reporting historic physical and sexual abuse.
5% have left a family/domestic violence situation within the 2 years prior to registering with Uni4You.



What we know about the Uni4You experience



Role Model to children and families

Yeah, instead of just sitting there and saying I can't do this, or trying to do it by myself, having the mindset of I can do this and I, you know, doing it for my children and doing it for me and my family, and being positive about it..

...wanting to be a role model to my daughter, I got to that age where I just unemployed wasn't doing anything, and my daughter was becoming more aware of her surroundings and circumstances, so I just wanted to encourage that within her as well, so that was a big one for me, it drove me...



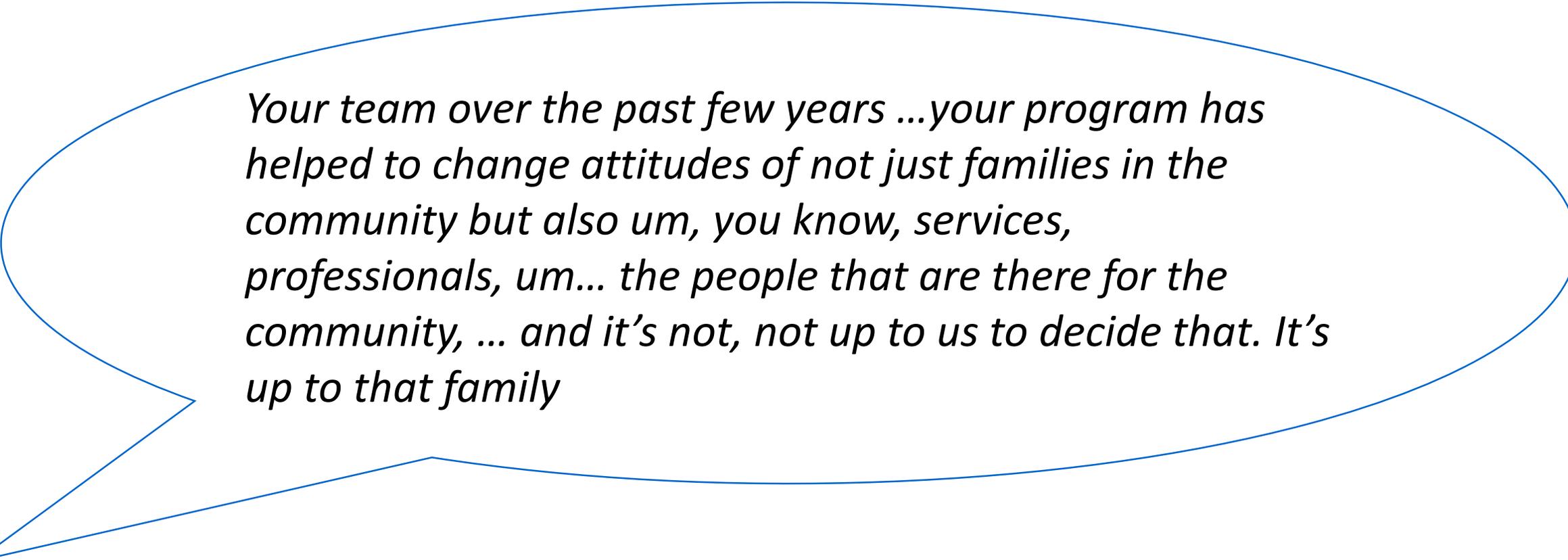
Influences family and neighbourhood

when I started Uni4U I went and got a laptop and everything, and they didn't have access to any of that, and because I'd bought it all for uni then they'd come over and they're starting to use laptops and, um... yeah just things that they didn't... have... or hadn't seen people do, and then suddenly there was a house they could go to and... there was people that were doing homework...



I had my stepmum supporting me, and I was supporting her ... and I'm like "well this might help you, and I'll go and you can come and support me" .. Then we dragged my partner into it too...

My aunty who's already doing uni. Just our relationship has gotten closer cos it's another thing we've and we're always talking about uni so... I guess our relationship 's been impacted....my mother in law, she talks to me about her uni experience and she helps me and she read, read things that I've done and she's helped me out, so even our relationship has gotten closer.



Your team over the past few years ...your program has helped to change attitudes of not just families in the community but also um, you know, services, professionals, um... the people that are there for the community, ... and it's not, not up to us to decide that. It's up to that family



Connections, Belonging and Identity

... So the prep workshop helped me to get motivated and put me in a positive mindset that I can actually do things...and gave me the courage to get out in the community and... .. uh... get involved you know?

So yeah, it was pretty good, like I felt like I opened my eyes a bit more to what was going on around the community as well

...certainly for the people that I've had who're engaged in the program they are, much better at seeking out support, and seeking out information and looking on you know, the internet and um, getting you know, going to the websites..



Connections, Belonging and Identity

I got the companionship from the people, and also too, it was, I was excited to go. And I felt special. Because, I'd never done university – I had never even thought of doing uni. But when I had the option to do it, it was like, I was overwhelmed, not overwhelmed, I was just flowing and flooding with excitement. I was!



Aspirations, hopes and dreams

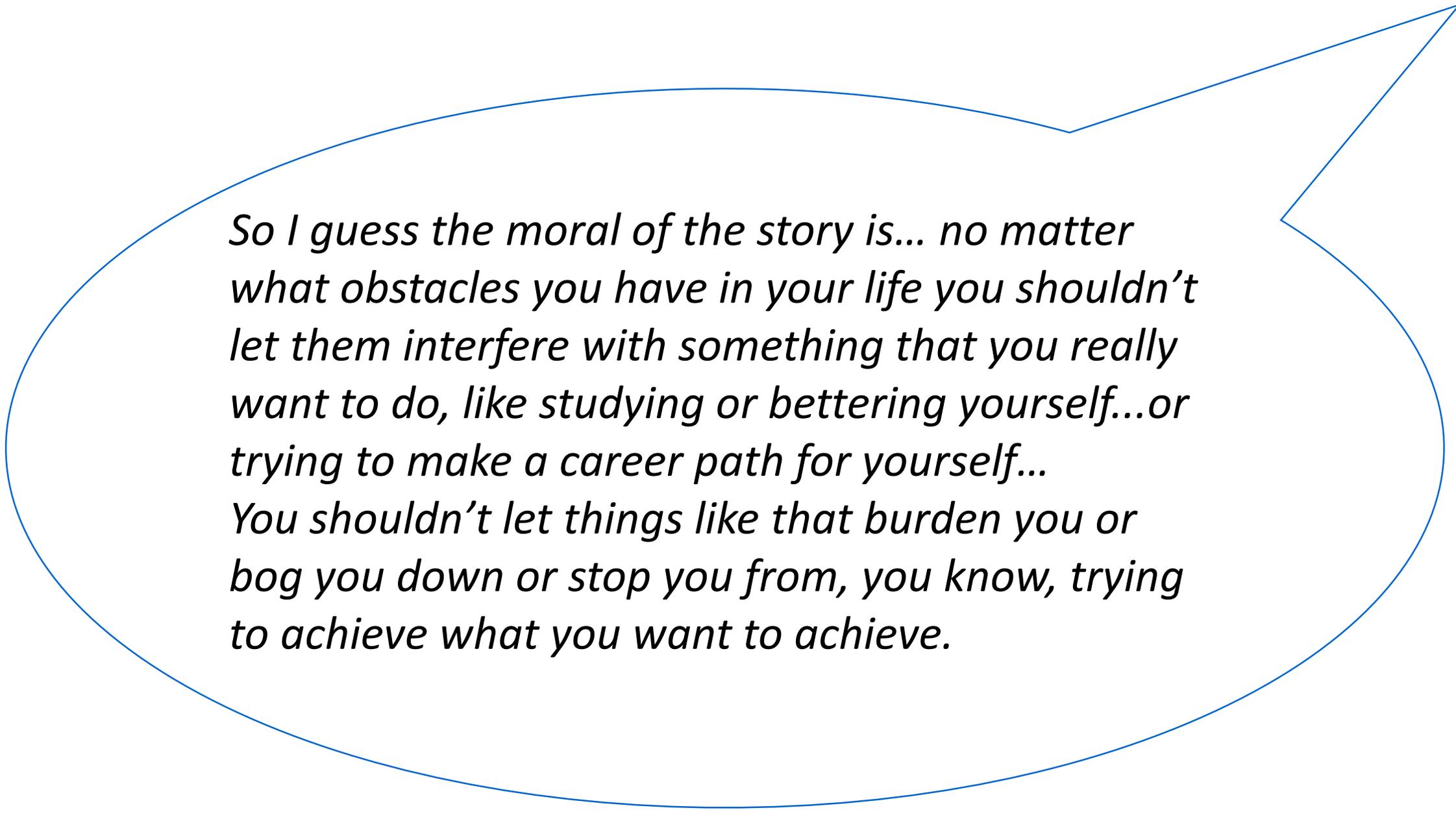
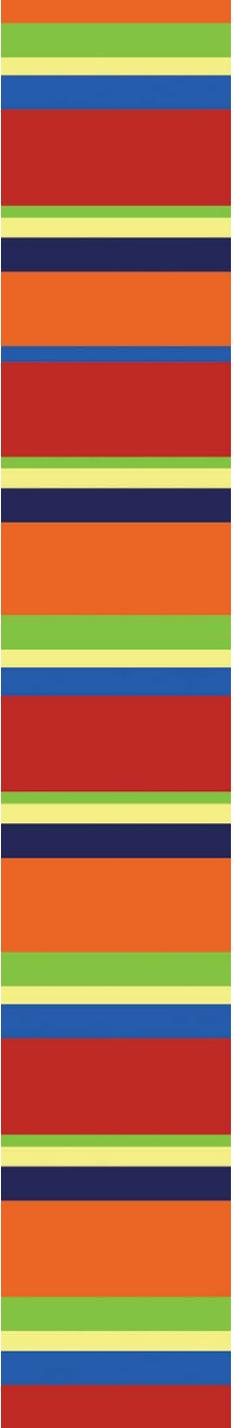
- Challenge the notion of need to “**raise** aspirations”

Equity policy in Australian higher education is currently focused on raising aspirations for university study among students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds. (Sellar, 2013)

We need to **connect** with people's aspirations

I've always kind of wanted to do this, but never had the money, never had the support...

I think I was just really tired of not... doing anything. Just being at home, I felt really... like my brain was going to mush, and I wanted to try and do something..



So I guess the moral of the story is... no matter what obstacles you have in your life you shouldn't let them interfere with something that you really want to do, like studying or bettering yourself...or trying to make a career path for yourself... You shouldn't let things like that burden you or bog you down or stop you from, you know, trying to achieve what you want to achieve.



THANK YOU