



**Welcoming Girls into Adolescence**  
**G DAY 2015 (Vancouver, Victoria, Toronto)**  
**EVALUATION**

☆ G Day

### ABOUT G DAY

G Day is a global social movement anchored by rite of passage celebrations for girls ages 10 to 12 and their Champions – parents and other supportive adults. G Day events are designed to inspire positive self-esteem and supportive family and community relationships at this key life phase.

#### *What is a Rite of Passage?*

A rite of passage is a ritual event that marks a person's transition from one social or developmental status to another. Rites of passage commemorate notable milestones in an individual's life, for any marked transitional stage, when one's social status is altered: for example, baby showers, weddings, graduation ceremonies and funerals.

### G Day intentions

- To empower and celebrate Girls, reflecting back to them their incredible specialness of this time in life
- To “Be the Village”, creating an intentional container where we assume collective responsibility for the wellbeing of our community's youth
- To support relationships and authentic communication between Girls and Champions
- To promote Sisterhood, compassion and respect among the Girls
- To present a diverse array of role models and content
- To create an accessible event that makes all Girls feel included

### Values

- *Community and family.* We support healthy family relationships in whatever form they take.
- *Diversity and inclusiveness.* We want G Day to reflect diversity of experience, race, colour, sexuality and family makeup.
- *Compassion and empathy.* G Day promotes active listening and authentic and supportive relationships free of bullying or judgement.
- *Sacredness.* G Day events are part of an ancient historical tradition that spans continents, millennia and faith traditions.
- *Girls empowerment.* Girls' leadership and wellbeing will light our collective way into the future.
- *Global awareness.* Our perspective and impact is global.
- *Fun!* Pleasure is one of the most potent forces for good in the world: let's use it to lift us up and connect us in community. G Day is a celebration.

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**“It takes a Village to raise a child” – African proverb**

A project of **United Girls of the World**, a registered Canadian non-profit Society.

A day of celebration and empowerment for Girls and Champions

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## INTRODUCTION

### Adolescent Girls in Canada

In Canada, while many girls start out strong, as they enter adolescence, between ages 9 and 13, their confidence tends to decline drastically.

These days, girls are exposed constantly to images- images of women in TV shows, advertisements, music videos, movies and videogames that are often highly superficial and sexualized. This hyper-sexualisation of women creates a culture where girls' self-esteem is often jeopardized. This was highlighted in one study where more than half of girls said they wished they were someone else.

While in grade 6, 36% of girls say they feel confident, in Grade 10, this number shrinks to 14%. This coincides with a strong decline in mental health.

Adolescent girls tend to have a lower sense of self-worth than younger, more self-assured girls. Generally, people with low self-esteem are more easily influenced by others, allow for mistreatment in order to be accepted, and are vulnerable to exploitation. Furthermore, they tend to have low resilience, and find it difficult to bounce back in the face of adversity.

Fortunately, research has shown that girls who receive the right kind of support at the right time, can improve their self-esteem, mental health, and resilience in the face of crisis.

There are critical factors, known in the research as “protective factors,” that are most important for developing resiliency; two of these include confidence and connectedness. Girls who feel strong in these areas are more likely to navigate the challenges of teen years successfully and become strong young women.

### About this evaluation:

This evaluation was designed to:

- Assess the impact of G Day on Girls and Champions
- Assess the program progress and implementation findings
- Summarize key learnings in order to develop the G Day event

For sources on all statistics on this page, and for more information on girls, please read The Facts About Girls in Canada. [canadianwomen.org/facts-about-girls](http://canadianwomen.org/facts-about-girls)

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Table 1. Feedback method, and response rate.

Feedback Method	Toronto (April 2015)		Victoria (September 2015)		Vancouver (October 2015)	
	Collected	Response Rate	Collected	Response Rate	Collected	Response Rate
Day of event forms (Girls)	66	77.6%	108	78.3%	149	86.1%
Day of event forms (Champions)	54	85.7%	65	70.7%	58	60.4%
Post-event electronic survey (Champions)	16	25.4%	9	9.8%	14	14.6%
Phone interviews (Champions)- Jan/Feb 2016	1	unknown	1	unknown	1	unknown
Paper-based interview forms (Champions and Girls)-Jan/Feb 2016	1				2 (1 Girl)	

## G Day Program Activities

The following is an example of the themes and types of activities covered in G Day. The specific activities were slightly different in Victoria, Toronto and Toronto, but covered the same overall themes.

Table 2. Program activities (example)

Who	Theme	Activity
All	Building Community: Becoming the Village  Separation	Build the Bubble Step into the Circle Small Group Sharing Music/ Movement Opening Blessing Reflection
Girls	Personal empowerment  Self-esteem  Body positivity	Step into the Circle Story telling Movement Games One-on-one of small group conversations
Champions	Reconnecting with inner adolescent  Parenting during adolescence	Step into the Circle Presentation Q&A/ Discussion
Girls	Leadership  Global awareness  Creativity	Storytelling Movement (Dance/yoga) Challenge (art project)
Champions	Parenting during puberty  Ritual preparation	Presentation Q&A/ Discussion Movement Art Project
All	Reunion Celebration	Closing Ritual Small circles sharing Reflection/ Feedback Closing comments Dance party/ Dessert reception

### Summary of Impact:

Among G Day's intentions, there are a couple of protective factor-based outcomes for the participating Girls of 2015 G Day events (Vancouver, Toronto, Victoria).

#### *Protective factors:*

- **Connectedness/sense of belonging:** G Day did a good job of bringing Girls together. It helped them make connections with one another and feel part of a community. The Girls strengthened existing friendships, made new friends, and felt a sense of belonging. The environment created (i.e., safe, relaxing, fun) is one where the Girls felt comfortable getting closer to one another, and adult role models.
- **Confidence:** G Day promoted Girls' self-confidence by providing a supportive environment that helped bring many girls out of their shells. Girls' self-confidence was also boosted through celebrating sisterhood, highlighting the positive qualities of being a girl/woman, and encouraging Girls to focus on their unique strengths, skills and value.

#### *Outcomes of the Champion Component:*

Champions (mothers, step-mothers, fathers, step-fathers, older girls, other mentors) were included in the G Day activities. The Champions felt that they had personally benefited, or had experienced positive impacts, from attending G Day. Many felt good about giving back to the Girls and believed that their skills and knowledge in certain areas had improved from their involvement.

## IMPACT ON GIRLS AND CHAMPIONS

### CONNECTEDNESS/SENSE OF BELONGING

Connectedness is about belonging. It is about knowing that you matter. It's about being seen and heard. Connectedness is not only a desire, but also a need. The need to be accepted can put a lot of pressure on a girl, that can sometimes result in her doing things that are not in her own best interest. While a strong connection with peers can be very healthy for girls, it is important that these relationships involve positive role models. Relationships that involve negative influences can increase a girl's risk for unhealthy choices. Research has shown that a strong sense of connection with family, school or community, can protect girls and support them in making healthy choices.

#### **Feeling more connectedness can include\*:**

- feeling less lonely
- being more supportive of others and less judgmental
- having a good experience at school
- getting along better with friends; making more friends; making friends with people from other cultures
- finding it easier to be herself, to state her opinions, to show her feelings, and to share problems
- feeling she has trusted adults to whom she can talk
- feeling part of a group; working better in groups
- feeling welcome, safe and supported at home

**At G Day, Girls felt connected to “sisterhood” (the notion that we are all in this together). They also recognized that they are not alone on this journey.**

After the event, when Girls were asked, “What did you learn today?” one of the most common responses was related to “connectedness” with others. Illustrative quotes from girls are provided below:

*“Knowing I wasn't alone - that we are all sisters.” (Girl, Toronto)*

*“Friends will help me carry on.” (Girl, Toronto)*

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\*From Canadian Women's Foundation Girls' Fund 2009-2012 Evaluation Highlights:  
<http://canadianwomen.org/sites/canadianwomen.org/files/CWF-GirlsFundReport-Highlights-EN-web-single%20page.pdf>



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*“Girls need Girls.” (Girl, Toronto)*

*“I learned about community and how girls are important.” (Girl, Toronto)*

*“I’m not alone on my journey to womanhood.” (Girl, Toronto)*

*“I can share my true feelings because there are some people out there who want to listen.” (Girl, Toronto)*

*“I love to listen to other people’s experiences and learn and connect to them.” (Girl, Toronto)*

**G-Day also facilitated new connections and helped strengthen existing relationships between girls.** Girls were asked, “What was the best part of G-Day was for you?” “Meeting new people/making new friends” or “hanging out with friends” was the third and fourth most common response in Vancouver and Toronto, respectively.

### As Reported by the Champions

After G Day, champions provided comments related to connectedness. Parents commented that their daughters had made new friends, and formed relationships. One illustrative quote from a Champion, 5 months after attending G Day in Victoria follows:

*“My daughter still talks about G Day, how much fun she had, the girls she met there. I know it sticks with her.” (Champion, Victoria)*

While meeting people and hanging out with friends was highlighted one of the most enjoyable parts of G Day for girls, some champions felt that more interaction and communication could have been achieved by having smaller groups and more interactive activities.

## CHAMPION/GIRL RELATIONSHIP

Although not all G Day participants involved a parent-daughter combination, when this was the case, there were outcomes found related to a strengthening of this relationship.

As Reported by the Champions

### **G Day provided Champions with tools to strengthen their relationship with young girls in their lives.**

After G Day, Champions were asked “What is the value of an event like this?” and “What are you taking home from this event?” Overall, champions felt that they had been equipped with information, resources, and tips to help improve their relationship with their girl.

Champions’ comments were related to 1) understanding and motivation to be empathetic towards the challenges of adolescence, 2) importance of celebrating adolescent girls, 3) motivation and strategies (e.g. language) to communicate with girls in future, and 5) gratitude towards girls. Some illustrative quotes from the parents follow:

*“As a Dad, [I now have] a better understanding of what my 12-year-old daughter may be experiencing.” (Champion, Vancouver)*

*“G-Day starts conversations, provides language to have future meaningful discussions.” (Champion, Victoria)*

*“[I am taking home with me] an appreciation for my daughter and empowerment as a parent.” (Champion, Toronto)*

*“[I am taking home with me] motivation to be more conscious with my daughter’s feelings.” (Champion, Toronto)*

*“[I want to] ensure my daughter feels important and heard.” (Champion, Toronto)*

*“Many conversations to be had with my daughter.” (Champion, Toronto)*

*“[I am taking home with me] ways to re-evaluate my methods for communicating with young girls.” (Champion, Toronto)*

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*“That I can be the kind of guide (Mom) my daughter needs.” (Champion, Victoria)*

*“It is a time to reflect on our childhood and to provide a starting point for supported discussion with our girls.” (Champion, Vancouver)*

*“[I am taking home with me] a stronger bond between my daughter and I. Happy Memories.” (Champion, Victoria)*

*“A closer connection with my amazing daughter.” (Champion, Vancouver)*

*“[I am taking home with me] ideas for how to better listen and empathize with my daughter, and celebrate her.” (Champion, Vancouver)*

*“Great opportunities for conversation as a family.” (Champion, Vancouver)*

*“[I am taking home with me] how to talk to and support my family through this time of her life.” (Champion, Vancouver)*

Many parents also felt that G Day was an opportunity to take a fresh look at parenting. Furthermore, many felt that G Day shows Girls that they have a parent who wants the best for them. One Champion felt that the value was in the promotion of enhanced sharing and vulnerability in relationships.

Several months after the G Day event, Champions were asked “What positive outcomes/benefits did you experience from G Day?” Although two of three Champions did not identify any long-term benefits of G Day, one participant highlighted that the shared experience with her daughter still stays with them, and influences the communication and trust in their relationship. This is illustrated in the following quote:

*“The main benefit I received is the fact that my daughter and I talk a lot more about stuff like that. She is not me. And she is not going to see things the way do. She sees things differently and It’s important that I just listen. And she knows that I am by her side.” (Champion, Victoria)*

One comment from a Champion, 5 months after attending the Victoria event, suggests that G Day had a lasting impact.

*“It’s not just a party everyone goes to and you forget about it a month later. It’s something that has stayed with us.” (Champion, Victoria)*

## CHAMPION/CHAMPION RELATIONSHIP

Champions appreciated the opportunity to connect with other Champions to share experiences and learn from each other.

When asked to describe the benefits of G Day (5 months after the event in Victoria), one Champion highlighted:

*“The bond between champions. There were some ladies and men that I spoke with and their stories still resonate with me. I remember when things get hard or tricky, I remember what questions they asked because of what they were going through. It stayed with me.” (Champion, Victoria)*



### CONFIDENCE

Improvements in self-confidence are especially significant for girls of this age, because adolescence is when they typically experience a significant decrease in confidence. For girls, having more confidence doesn't just make them feel better, it actually serves as a kind of protective shield against the toxic culture of hyper-sexualisation that surrounds girls, and can help them maintain their self-esteem. When a girl feels confident, she is more likely to ask for help, to have the strength to resist peer pressure, to cope better with conflict and other problems, and to not blame herself if she is assaulted.

#### Feeling more confident can include\*:

- speaking up more easily
- sharing more openly with others
- believing it is okay to be herself
- being proud of her achievements
- feeling less shy (“coming out of her shell”)
- feeling more positive about her life

**G Day created an environment that promoted confidence and self-esteem for Girls.** When Girls were asked, “What did you learn about yourself today?” they reported key messages related to self-esteem. The Girls felt that they could be their own unique selves and highlighted messages such as feeling powerful, strong, confident and brave.

**G Day highlighted the positive qualities of being a girl/woman.** One quote from a girl that illustrates this is as follows:

*“We are all unique in our own way.” (Girl, Toronto)*

#### **G Day’s activities and presenters supported feelings of confidence among girls.**

Key learnings identified by girls related to confidence (e.g. “I trust myself / I am confident / I am brave / I am not afraid of what others think about me) were likely connected to certain powerful presentations or activities. For example, in the two cities where Anna Soole presented the iGirl session on assertiveness, Girls overwhelmingly named “learning to stand up for themselves and others” as a top takeaway.

When girls were asked, “What was the best part of G Day for you?” dancing was the activity that was mentioned the most in all cities. This is an important finding since dancing may be one of the key activities that influences Girls’ feelings of confidence and self-esteem (feeling it is okay to be themselves) and feeling less shy.

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\*From Canadian Women’s Foundation Girls’ Fund 2009-2012 Evaluation Highlights:  
<http://canadianwomen.org/sites/canadianwomen.org/files//CWF-GirlsFundReport-Highlights-EN-web-single%20page.pdf>





"The most powerful part of G Day for me was the dancing. The moves were things that none of us probably would have done if we were out in public or there were a bunch of boys around, but in that moment we seemed to all be united in our weird sides that we don't always show to everyone, but we silently acknowledged each other and were like, yeah, we're weird, but who cares! It's G Day, girrrrrls!"

- A G Day Girl

As Reported by the Champions

When Champions were asked, "What would the value of G-Day have been for you as a 10-12 year old girl, comments around "increasing confidence and self-esteem" were frequently reported in Toronto and Vancouver.

Some illustrative quotes from Champions include:

*"I would have had more confidence entering into adolescence if I'd had one to attend"*

*"I would have loved this as a confidence boost when I was 12."*



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*"I would've felt so much more confident, powerful, and maybe less afraid of my dad/authority"*

Another quote that illustrates the value of G Day in setting a positive tone in the development of self-confidence among Girls is below:

*"Setting the tone for relationships throughout life and learning, early on, the capacity to recognize fear, face it, and make decisions from a place of strength." (Champion, Victoria)*

Five months after the event, a Champion still remembered the safe, comfortable environment at G Day and how this contributed to her daughter's confidence.

*"[G Day] is something that's never been offered before. My daughter is shy and when we split for the first time, she was kind of hesitant, but when we had snack and had to go back, she was off again and had such a great time. It made me really happy that she felt safe enough to know that I was there and she was good on her own too." (Champion, Victoria).*

## PROGRESS AND PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION FINDINGS

### Best Practices of the Canadian Women's Foundation

The Canadian Women's Foundation (CWF) is Canada's public foundation for women and girls ([www.canadianwomen.org](http://www.canadianwomen.org)). The Foundation empowers women and girls in Canada to move out of violence, out of poverty and into confidence. Since 1991, the Foundation has raised money and invested in over 1,300 community programs across Canada, and is now one of the ten largest women's foundations in the world. The Foundation takes a positive approach to address root causes of the most critical issues facing women and girls. They study and share the best ways to create long-term change and bring community organizations together for training and to learn from each other.

In 2005, CWF commissioned research on girls in Canada, including an extensive literature review and environmental scan of girls' programming across the country. In that document, best practices for girls' programs were identified. The authors argued that girls' programs should:

1. Pay explicit attention to gender equity
2. Be asset-based, with a positive focus
3. Be girl-directed and/or girl involved
4. Be interactive and fun
5. Provide a safe, friendly space for girls
6. Be accessible and address any possible barriers to participation
7. Respect and celebrate the diversity of girls

These best practices can be used as a guide for G Day to ensure that it is using an evidence-informed process to welcome girls into adolescence in an empowering, compassionate, and inclusive way.

Based on interviews and surveys among girls and champions who participated in G Day events, were the CWF's best practices reached?

Overall, it seems that G Day has done a good job at best practices 2, 4 (fun), 5, and 7. However, there appears to be room for improvement in 3, 4 (interactive), and 7 (see "Champion and Feedback Section").

The following are two illustrations of best practices at G Day:

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### *Happy and Positive Place and Feeling Comfortable*

Champions commented that G Day was a happy and positive space where Girls and Champions alike felt comfortable because of the presenters, because girls were having fun, and a good time, because of the supportive environment, and because it was girls-only. One illustrative quote from a champion follows:

*“It starts with the speakers and how they are so honest and true and how they relate about when they were young. This is a celebration, this is great. When girls hear that from complete strangers, and not their mom or their sister, it sounds different. When there are other girls who they don’t really know, or maybe they do know, and they are all listening to this and looking at each other, there is this aura that builds, and energy that builds, it’s just really good.”* (Champion, Victoria)

*“[G Day] made girls feel that they can be open and it was going to be okay. No one was going to look at them weird, or say anything nasty. That safety is so important. That did it. That made that safe space.”* (Champion, Victoria)

### *Good Range of Things to Do*

Girls provided examples of a variety of activities they had participated in, including: dancing, yoga/meditation, listening to presenters, bellyfit, speakers/stories, journaling, etc.

As Reported by the Champions

### *Champion Involvement*

Many comments reflected that the parents cared about what their daughters were doing at G Day and sometimes wanted to know more so that they could engage in conversations with their daughters about it. A few Champions talked about how their involvement was the right amount, but a few also said that it would have been nice if they could have spent more time with their girls during the day.

## **Champion and Girls Feedback on Programs**

The main G Day highlights that Girls reported liking were the activities (dancing, yoga), and the speakers/stories.

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Champions reported that what they liked best about G Day were the presenters. Another highlight (in Victoria and Toronto) was the impact of G Day on Girls.

Both Champions and Girls appeared to be quite happy with G Day and reported few dislikes or recommendations. When they did report something they did not like or made a recommendation for improvement, the most common response for girls was related to specific activities that they did not like or wanting more of an activity (example more dancing) or different activities, more time, and expansion of the program (more hours or days). A few parents reported that there was too much focus on G Day promotion, too much listening (not enough dialogue with participants), and a lack of girls-led activities. Many comments were related to specific presentations (likes/dislikes) and format suggestions (e.g. number and length of presentations). Some parents also made suggestions for additional topics or activities that the program could cover.

In Victoria, Champions wanted more diversity in the participants. In Vancouver, Champions wanted more small groups and intimacy, more interactivity for Girls and Champions, and more effective strategies to make sure all girls feel included. In Toronto, some Champions who were not parents (e.g. Big Sisters) felt that the parenting workshops should have been more generic and applicable for anyone, not just parents, since G Day targets diverse adult role models for girls.

Champions provided other recommendations for G Day. Some felt that it would be useful to have some platform for connection beyond the G Day event. Whether this was a website or other online forum (not a self help line), it would be useful to have a place for girls to come voluntarily to ask questions as part of an online community and stay connected to other girls. There could be one for Champions too.

Another Champion felt that having an intake process for G Day could help G Day organizers ensure that participants' needs, priorities and interests are being met.

Some Champions commented on the cost of the G Day event, and felt that it may present barriers to some families. One Champion recommended a bursary for young girls who may be in foster homes or single parent homes.

Others felt that there should be more diverse ways to get the word out about G Day. One Champion felt lucky that her daughter heard the announcement on Cool FM, but suggested that there should be other ways to spread awareness about the event. One Champion highlighted:

*“ G Day should get into schools. So it’s not just about G Day.” (Champion, Victoria)*

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When asked, “if you were to think about a successful G Day experience (right after the event, 1 month after the event, etc.), what would this look like, sound like, feel like smell like?”, some highlights from Champions are below:

*“The girls and champions loved the gift bags- as a parent or champion, I would have liked to have received some products that would help me guide my girl towards the goal of feeling good about herself.”*

*“Continued support and ways to support your girl- ideas, coupons to activities to promote bonding or positive self image.”*

When asked about what the best way to collect feedback from G Day is, most Champions said that email surveys or event surveys are the best way. Some suggested that there could be prizes for girls to facilitate the feedback process. One Champion suggested a comment box at G Day, one for Champions and one for Girls so if someone feels they need to share something, they can throw it in there throughout the day.

## DISCUSSION

### What was learned

This preliminary evaluation of G Day aimed to determine the impact of G Day on Girls and Champions. The results of this evaluation are quite positive and highlight an event that has played a valuable role in the lives of girls aged 9 to 13. The impact of G Day was explored through self-rating and open-ended qualitative descriptions from Girls and Champions. Although it is not possible to assess the long-term impact of G Day due to lack of available data, on the day of the event, the program contributed to areas that research has demonstrated to be key protective factors. The two factors crucial to building resilience in girls that were commented on frequently by program participants included self-confidence, and a sense of belonging or connectedness.

With respect to the process evaluation, the results are also quite positive. The evaluation conducted a preliminary assessment of the extent to which G Day is consistent with best practices of the Canadian Women’s Foundation. While there is room for improvement in some areas, G Day seems to be doing a good job of providing a happy, safe, comfortable space, and providing a range of activities for Girls with diverse interests.

### Limitations and Future Direction of Evaluation

Identifying patterns in the data was challenging due to relatively small sample sizes, some variation in program types (Vancouver, Toronto, Victoria), and data collection methods and categories changing over time. For example:

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- Small sample size
- Data collection was based on open ended interview/survey questions
- Difficult to assess impact of program for a few reasons:
  - 1) There was no baseline data collected. Therefore, it was not possible to assess changes before and after the program.
  - 2) Data did not allow for comparisons (e.g. frequency of responses was used for measurement rather than likert-scale questions, e.g. agree to disagree, which allows for the variation in responses necessary to compare quantitative data)
  - 3) Due to the short duration of G Day, it was difficult to assess short and long term impact (other programs have demonstrated the importance of “dosage” in influencing the outcomes). The evaluation was, therefore, restricted to assessing thoughts/feelings on the event day, and, although it is possible that these could act as a potential “catalyst” for longer-term impact, it is unclear whether this was the case in reality.

## CONCLUSION

The G Day vision can be understood by the African proverb: “It takes a Village to raise a child.”

The evaluation findings reveal overwhelmingly positive feedback about the program. They also find that G Day contributes to the development of key fundamental building blocks for Girls to increase their self-esteem, become more resilient, and be more likely to grow up into strong young women.

These building blocks for girls supported by G Day were connectedness/sense of belonging (i.e. connection to sisterhood, strengthened relationships between Girls, and Girls and Champions), and self-confidence (i.e. highlighting positive qualities of being a girl, focusing on strengths and skills, etc.)

The Champions personally benefited and experienced positive impacts from attending G Day. The impact of G Day on Champions relates to improved confidence in their parenting, empathy, as well as knowledge and skills to support their Girl. Many felt that their presence had a positive impact on their girls.

G Day creates a space where girls come together and celebrate what makes them unique and also what joins them together. We hope that these findings will encourage other organizations to recognize and acknowledge the importance of our own coming-of age, and to celebrate those moments with intentional ceremony and fierce celebration.