

My name is Kathy Rashed and I'm concerned about possible cuts to group therapy coverage; by Vermont Medicaid.

I believe those making decisions regarding coverage need to hear from people who have been to group therapy.

My participation in group has positively impacted both my & my family's life. The following is a small example of why coverage is so important.

Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), Migraines, & Anxiety; are a major part of my life. Anxiety has controlled my life since early childhood. I never felt I belonged anywhere. This is no exaggeration. I literally believed; I would never feel I belonged anywhere with any group of people. I could not imagine anyone actually feeling the things I felt. I believed I was broken & not meant for this world. So different from those around me that I shouldn't exist. I decided; I am the thing that is not like the rest. I am the definition of a lost cause.

I would try to understand why. I berated myself for feeling this way. I tried so hard to fit in; yet never did. I constantly tried to see patterns in my actions. What is that thing I was missing? What thing did everyone else have to link them to other humans? I was missing that thing; that piece! I was never able to fix me. If more than one or two people were around me my anxiety would skyrocket. That was my life for more than forty years. A life of hyper-vigilance.

On May 27, 2014 I joined a newly created therapy group at, The Brattleboro Retreat in southern Vermont. I am still participating in the group. We meet once a week to share our thoughts, concerns, issues, accomplishments, feelings; & to listen.

At first I was only showing up out of curiosity. Over time I began to notice changes. Rather than just some people with problems meeting in a room once a week the group has morphed. We have become like siblings in a family. Maybe not like my family of origin, but where I can be open & feel safe. I found people who are also feeling different. People who not unlike me get sad & worry. People who also struggled all their lives; or only in recent years, with pain of some kind. People who have been feeling out of place, depressed, or alone. I'm not exactly like the others; nor are they exactly like me. I am however someplace I feel I'm accepted & understood. A place to exchange ideas of what has or hasn't helped in particular situation similar to mine. A place to be accepted. It's also a place to be confronted about illogical or irrational thinking. I've learned so much about myself via the response of those in my group. I realize now that I may not be exactly like the rest, but I can still fit somewhere.

I take less anxiety medication now. I am becoming comfortable with who I am. I'm learning to accept me. I've learned I am of value. I am worth the effort. I'm not the lost cause I once believed I was. I'm not the only one like me. There are others out there who go through life feeling alone & hopeless. I have always loved others unconditionally. I never felt I deserve the same.

Group Therapy is worth your support. I'm just one person. One woman with one husband & three sons. We are a kind & compassionate family. I'm not helpless or hopeless. I believe this now. I'm going to a weekly therapy group. It gave me the chance to see I'm not so different.

To sum it up. I'm not sure that I'll ever be fond of crowds. I do know I no longer need to stay home when the rest of my family goes to a birthday party. That's not something I could do 18 months ago.

Thank you.

Be Well, Kat

West Brattleboro, VT

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