

Greetings (Pause)

My name is Linda Limoges and I currently reside in Bennington County, Vermont. I want to express my gratitude for this opportunity to offer support for this truly invaluable program.

This may be considered to be my story . . . (pause)

However – our personal stories all share common threads that are woven together by our existence within humanity.

Trauma may occur at any time in one's life; and PTSD can affect people in all walks of life – regardless of education, socioeconomic status, or AGE.

THIS IS MY TRUTH (Pause)

My formative years were challenged by a considerable amount of adverse experiences which, in turn, resulted in PTSD, chronic pain, and a number of other various labels which hindered my path like having untied shoelaces . . . UNTIL I started going to Alyssum. (Pause)

I spent much of my life trying to disengage to avoid uncertain situations. Working together with the caring, nonjudgmental team at Alyssum and engaging in peer support has taught me to disengage from unpredictable triggers **when they present themselves**.

Then, a few years ago, a very sudden and unimaginable trauma occurred which totally shattered the lives of those involved, as well as my own. My sense of self was greatly fractured but my sense of hope was restored by the **constant support** of those at Alyssum. I regained my will to live and found my way through my grief with meaning and purpose.

The reason which peer support worked so well for me was that I KNEW that each person who was working with me TRULY understood my circumstances through common experiences. I was not there to receive a label or be inundated with sedating medications. I was there learning basic self - care skills which greatly improved the quality of my life and still provides me TODAY with the tools for coping with additional stressors.

The environment is nurturing and home like – with opportunities and spaces for cooking healthy meals, writing, art, music, meditation, yoga, dancing, gardening, engaging with nature, and playing with their dog, Prince; all conducive to self – reflection and personal growth. Contact with Alyssum has also helped keep me sober, has improved my interpersonal relationship skills, and has reminded me to relax as well as play.

However basic these all may seem – all of these activities which are so essential to the very nature of our personal well - being have enhanced my quality of life through self – care.

I have shifted from having dissociative behaviors to becoming more grounded. I am no longer hidden beneath my shield of shame which prevented me from moving forwards. TODAY I THRIVE (Pause)

We not only need Alyssum to continue but it would be advantageous to emulate this program in order to benefit the growing needs of others. My wish now is that the lives of other Vermonters may be enhanced as well through implementing additional programs.

While the traumas of the past still remain in the outskirts of my mind like shadows I now have the ability to remember that the sun is always there, even on the cloudiest of days. THANK YOU FOR LISTENING