

Resilience. We need to start with the belief:

"I have it in me, and I have to learn how to grow it". Tijana Mandic, PH.D., made that statement in her PTSD Workbook.

Hello. My name is Donna, and I have been a Bridgehaven member for 25 years. I stay busy with a full schedule most days. I am the mother of a wonderful 24 year old son who deals with chronic health issues. I help my aging parents, and I have 2 sisters, one who is battling stage 4 cancer. I also work part time as a janitor at my church.

When I was young, I had dreams of becoming a nurse. But as a teenager, I was sexually abused by a close relative. Trauma has a way of stopping you in your tracks.

Instead of going to college when I graduated high school, I worked for 5 years as a nursing assistant. I loved my job, but I was constantly haunted by my abuse. I resorted to using prescription pain and anxiety medications as a way to numb my emotions surrounding the trauma. I also began using self-harm as a coping tool. When I reached the point of wanting to commit suicide, my supervisor recommended I be hospitalized.

Thus began my journey of the revolving door in and out of the hospital. I had so many admissions that everyone there knew me. Once, back before medical records were digital, one nurse told another employee to go get my "encyclopedia" of medical records.

I was in the hospital every 3-6 months, staying a month at a time. My depression and anxiety became so severe that I needed Electroconvulsive Therapy.

I eventually attempted suicide.

But I was fortunate to find an excellent doctor. She introduced me to Bridgehaven, but later that same year, she was tragically killed in a plane crash. Bridgehaven was there for me. Shortly after her death, I found out I was pregnant with my one and only child. My former husband was an alcoholic and ultimately died after our divorce.

Grief is hard. Complicated grief brings even more to the table.

After my son was born, I attended Bridgehaven less often due to my responsibilities and the extra expense of traveling, but they created a new position where they had a therapist who did home visits. I was finally able to have regular therapy sessions again.

After some encouragement, I eventually returned to regular attendance at Bridgehaven where I found even more help by utilizing the wide variety of therapy groups. I enjoy art therapy, and I have participated in Bridgehaven's Art as a Part of Healing several years now, each year selling out.

I also created a rock garden on the grounds to provide hope for other members after finding a rock one day with a positive message that brought brightness to my day.

We are diverse but have common ground. There is a bond, and Bridgehaven feels like family. When it comes to the staff, they notice when we aren't there or when we need extra support.

When my nephew died of covid, two staff members met me outside to give me a much needed hug. They had been following his progress as if he was part of their family. We also have a crisis line where we can call in anytime if needed and talk to someone we know. It's much easier to talk and much easier to trust when it isn't a stranger on the other end. I have utilized that resource more than once.

Since attending Bridgehaven, I have not attempted suicide nor have I been hospitalized.

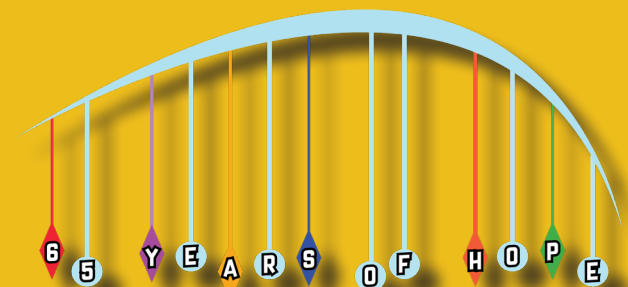
That's saying a lot.

I am learning about my illness and about trauma. I also am learning better coping skills and learning to better manage my emotions. Additionally, with their support, I have been at my current job for nearly 5 years.

Through resilience, I have once again picked up some old hobbies along with new ones. Also, I have become active in my community by helping with Trap Neuter Release programs for community cats in my neighborhood.

I saw a quote the other day. It says: Don't wait until you reach your goal to be proud of yourself. Be proud of every single step you take. I am trying to learn to be proud of myself.

I am grateful for those steps that Bridgehaven has helped me to take in my recovery goals.



Bridgehaven Bridge Builder Breakfast