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Serenity Renewal for Families brought me out of the dark place.....now I'm on route to help others.

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Claire

I travelled alone to Canada from the UK; educated with a Master's Degree and excited for an adventure. Subconsciously, I think I hoped the move would provide me with answers about myself that I hadn't found at home: who am I and where do I belong? In 2018, I took a job in Ottawa. I had a guy friend in the area, a new job and a new place - maybe I would find myself there?



Me during happier times in England.

I had no idea that in a very short time I would need and appreciate the services offered at Serenity Renewal for Families to bring me out of the dark place I would find myself in. **YOU made those services available to me!**  
**Thank You for changing my life!**

I quickly knew the job wasn't right for me, and that the move wasn't either. Only after I moved did I discover that my "guy friend" was a high functioning addict. I was alone in a new city, I didn't feel comfortable in my own skin, and I felt incredibly isolated. If I wasn't burning myself out working long hours for the job that I hated, I was ruminating over this man's problems and incessantly trying to fix him. I tried traditional therapy but wasn't getting anywhere. Why could I not break away from things that were hurting me? Why was I not listening to my own intuition?

Life went downhill very quickly: my therapist suspected my 'friend' could turn violent and strongly urged me to get away from him. I managed to do this for a few weeks, but I quickly got sucked back into his vortex of lies and acting out. **Panicked, I confided in my boss, telling her I couldn't seem to stay away from him, that I was sure it was impacting my mental health and, subsequently, my work. She fired me,** politely suggesting I move back to the UK where I had friends. With no job, no friends, no life, I was already living the life of lockdown.

I no longer knew where I should be or what would help. Feeling unable to work, I spent my savings paying rent I could no longer afford, to live in the apartment I almost never left. I felt completely hollow and hopeless, and clung even tighter to my emotionally enmeshed friendship. Sometimes I could barely eat or sleep. I hit my rock bottom. I started to see how my emotional wellbeing was tied to the behaviour of this so-called friend, and I knew I didn't want to live that way. How did a woman confident enough to move continents alone find herself becoming unravelled because of one guy?

It was then that I recalled a term that my first therapist used: codependency. I found out about the 12-Step ...

meetings of Codependents Anonymous. I remember how ecstatic I was when I attended my first meeting. Finally, I understood how my mind worked, and knew there was a way to build a relationship between my mind and my body. It was at these meetings that I heard about Serenity Renewal and all the amazing work they do.

I've been attending Serenity Renewal for Families workshops for about 18 months now and it's become a cornerstone in my growth, development, and healing. The information I gathered from the workshops helped me to see that my codependency had impacted all facets of my life, not just my personal relationships. An example of this would be Controlling Behaviours, where I learned about covert perfectionism and how I had been self-sabotaging in my career since university. I understand myself and my motivations much more clearly now.

Prior to Covid I had been attending Serenity Renewal for Families in person and got to experience the warmth and camaraderie of the staff and the other workshop attendees. I was hugely relieved when they moved their services online during lockdown. It's been invaluable to many, including myself, to continue to foster connection with others and facilitate personal development even during tough times.

Part of the reason that Serenity Renewal works so well is that they embody the idea that it's the experience, and not the knowledge alone, that helps; you are given principles to apply to your own life, but also a safe space to discuss these with your peers. Group sharing and storytelling is fundamental to healing, and it's the facilitation of this that has the most impact.

This has only been made possible due to the sliding scale payments available. Even before Covid I had been struggling financially due to job loss and had to discontinue therapy. Just when I needed it the most was when I could least afford it! The services would have been completely out of my reach were it not for the generosity of donors. This will be relevant now more than ever, as so many people will be struggling with mental health crises and financial difficulty.

**Thank you for supporting me and others like me with your gift. You have changed my life!**

Thanks to the educational workshops and the support of the team at Serenity I have embarked on a whole new direction in life, a career in addictions counselling and education. I hope one day to be able to be a support to others who are walking the path of recovery alongside me, and to help empower them to make healthier choices for their lives just as I have learned to do.

Happy Easter and Stay Healthy,



**P.S. Please make a gift today and thanks to the generous support of an individual donor your gift will be matched.**

**P.P.S. Standard fees for counselling and workshops are \$140. 67% of SRF clients couldn't afford to pay anything. I can only afford to pay the minimum of the sliding scale: \$10.**

