



My Tamarack Experience

what *aftercare* means to me



When I think about how I felt during my first days at Tamarack, oh my gosh, I was so scared! But the clients and staff all took me under their wing and welcomed me. I even remember being told “we will love you until you love yourself”. That was so important to hear, especially at that time when I wasn’t sure anybody cared.

I quickly felt at home and, in the eight weeks I was there, I learned so much. I learned the tools [I] needed to stay sober and have a healthier life. I realized that I needed to get rid of my using friends and set healthy boundaries with others. I learned the difference between true guilt and false guilt. I learned that I can have fun sober. I got to know my triggers and understand about relapse and how that can happen. All these skills have been useable, doable and applicable. And with that I am living again.

It’s funny, after feeling so scared at the beginning, when it came to the end of treatment, I didn’t want to leave. I had friendships here. I felt protected. Everyone cared for each other. Someone helped me if I was having a bad day, and I helped others when they were having a bad day too.

I was so happy that there was a way to stay connected after graduation and I started attending aftercare as soon as I was able to. The groups are very supportive with no judgment. There is the opportunity to share honestly when things may not be so good, and no fear of being shut down. We raise each other up and we welcome the new people. The obsession is gone, but group is a good reminder for me of where I can go wrong, and shows me what I am doing right. When I don’t know where to go, or where to start, I know that Tamarack will guide me in the right direction, even if they are connecting me with another form of help. This program keeps me sober.

I have been coming to aftercare almost every week for four years and there have been a lot of changes over that time, for sure. We have gone from a small group of graduates to a much larger number and we have two support groups available in the week so more people can attend. We started to get out for fun every couple months which has been important in reminding us that good times are possible in recovery.

Aftercare is now known as Forward in Recovery and we are just beginning with the family program. We’re getting extra educational workshops and there will be outings that will include family, which I think is really good. It is a family disease, right?



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Realistically, in early recovery, we don't trust many people, so to be able to work with our family, with the help of people we already know and trust is huge. It has made a big difference with me and my dad. We met with the Aftercare Counsellor to get some things out on the table, and to say some hard things to each other.

She [the aftercare counsellor] and I did some work first so I was prepared and she communicated with my dad ahead of time too, so he would know what to expect. I was so thankful that she was able to facilitate that meeting and be there for us. I don't think I could have done it otherwise. It has improved our relationship, absolutely.

I am going to keep coming here as much as I can. I have a place to go where I can talk about anything, with no judgment, and everybody circles around you in support. I still need to learn and to be reminded of that. I need to be humble to learn, and I feel humbled when I am here. Thanks to aftercare at Tamarack, I am staying sober. I just love this place.

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