

I have hope ... that's what therapy has given me

Cynthia: My name is Cynthia and I was in the United States Navy for about 9 years. I served from 1975 until 1984. I'm transgender and I understood who I was when I was very, very young. The part that was hard for me, especially hard for me was not getting any recognition, not being seen and only being seen as male. The damage that society does to us is all on the inside. You know, you learn never to trust anybody. It was just a real problem and, of course, my desire to be recognized and seen lead me to come out to people really inappropriately. When I left the Navy, I tried to live my life as a woman in Japan, but it was again, I had to have a job as a male. So, I got a job with an English school there, but I was also working in a bar at night and I had to drink with men. I would end up spending more than was reasonable or prudent to maintain my lifestyle.

It's like a little tiny snowball rolling down a hill, you pick up more and more weird mental states. I still had all of that baggage and it showed up in lots of different ways. I did meet some therapists as time has gone by especially when I entered the PhD program at the university I was attending. They directed me to a young lady who was really good. It was mostly talk therapy, which I enjoy talk therapy.

After reading about the people who were in the VA Hospital in New Orleans, I was like well maybe I should go check it out, maybe I can get some care from the Veteran's Administration. They have a trans-therapy group at my VA Hospital, and I have a wonderful therapist there. Right now, I'm seeing her four times a month, every Wednesday I see her. I suffer from environments that lead to post traumatic stress disorder and that is one of my issues. But, I've gotten so much better through working with the materials they have at the VA concerning PTSD. I have hope, you know that's what therapy has given me is hope. The VA's therapy program has given me the ability to say yeah that's the way it is but there are things I personally can do to make my life better. I don't have to answer to other people, and I don't have to be a different person, I can just be myself and allow people to think what they may.

Is there hope in the world for transgender people? Of course there is. There is change since the 1950s, it has changed since the 1960s. You can find sympathetic and supportive professionals and a lot of them, many of them, are in the VA system.



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