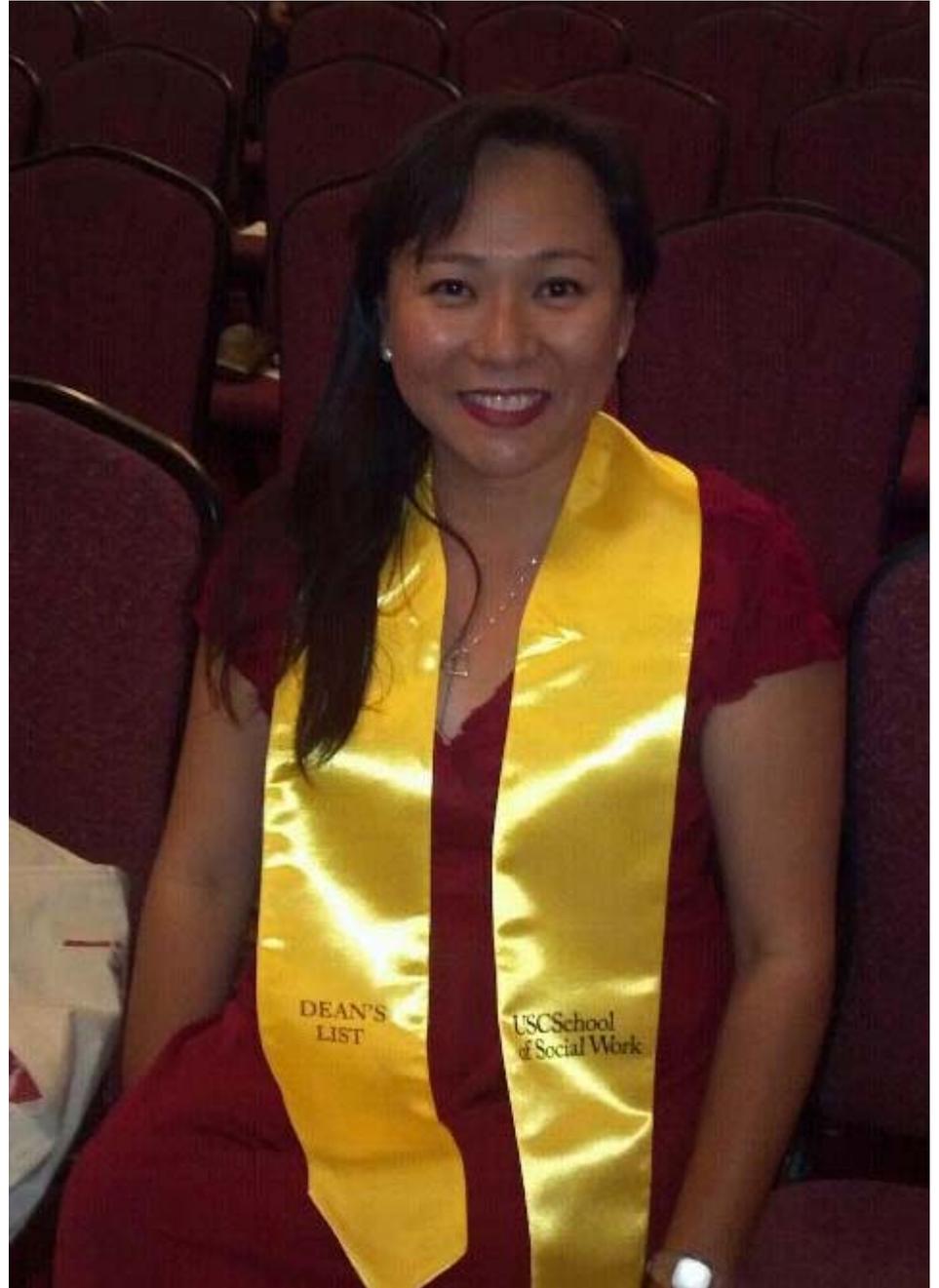


I was diagnosed with a mood disorder that still plagues me from time to time. Starting from the age of five and onward, I experienced several traumatic incidents. By the time I was in high school, I was suicidal. Although my parents and siblings were amazing and supportive, none of them knew that I tried to commit suicide. They also did not know that I had fear, anger, and shame because they only saw that I excelled in school and participated in multiple activities. If I completed my suicide attempt, no one would have known the underlying reasons. After my suicide attempt, I developed strength and insight. Now, with support from family and friends, I can catch myself when I feel like I am spiraling downward toward depression. I also became more inspired and motivated to help others who are reluctant to talk about hopelessness and suicidal thoughts.

Admitting my condition is frightening because I do not want people to think that I am weak. I find, however, that people are more compassionate than I expect. Many times, being open gives others the courage to be open about their own experiences. Through these experiences, I learn that there is no shame in admitting that we need help, even with our mental health, from time to time.

God gives me hope. My loved ones give me reason. My son is the *why* who keeps me striving. My friends keep me going. They all keep me in recovery.

-Joyce, South San Francisco



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