

At age 21, a mental health counselor at my college told me that I was struggling with depression. I had not eaten a full meal, slept more than three hours straight, or laughed in nearly three months. My life was out of control and I was losing touch with everyone and everything around me, especially myself and my family. But the counselor's words had a profound impact on me because, finally, I was able to put a name to what I was going through. I realized that I had probably struggled with this for many years but had often been labeled as a "troubled teen" or "problem child." With a new understanding as to why I felt the way I did, I began to take the steps I needed to get better. In time, I began to laugh and enjoy my life again. I completed my undergraduate degree and am pursuing a career in helping others. Today, in my role as program coordinator for the Office of Diversity and Equity within Behavioral Health and Recovery Services, I am able to blend my passion for social justice with my own lived experience in mental health. It has been one of the most rewarding and hopeful experiences of my life.

- Kathy, San Mateo



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