

What is peer?

By Amanda Coleman

Our lived experiences is what we share
It means we have been there
Not always we can relate but change we can anticipate
We help each other
To support one another
When these experiences we've been given
Are no longer our burden
When you feel discouraged
We are here to encourage
We remind you that every life matters
Even when you feel your whole life shatters, YOU matter
We know what it feels like to be left in the dark
We are here to ignite your spark
There is nothing that you can't overcome
We see you trying, but we also see you carrying a ton
So we remind you to give yourself a break
When you've had all that you can take
What is peer? A peer is me. A peer is you
When we can share all the things we have been through
It makes our burdens lighter
When we're standing with a fighter
"I call myself a survivor"
Healing is for everyone
Even if you feel it hasn't begun
Even when it feels like the end
There are always ways to mend
Even if you feel the mend hasn't started
Because these life experiences got you all disheartened
Whether they be from someone else or your own mistakes
Having HOPE is what it takes
We hold the hope for you
When you feel there's nothing more that you can do
Because we once didn't see it ourselves
Self love will be inspired
And it starts with yourself
Don't ever give up, do what you can
It's not always easy as some things are out of our hands
Remember there is always someone out there who understands
It's going to be ok
Maybe not tomorrow

But your peer support will hope for today
This is my truth
I hear what you say
My HOPE is that you will find relief
This is my core belief

Amanda Coleman works as a Peer Support Counselor at Columbia Wellness in Longview, WA.



Witnesses of Dawn

By Marie Marchand

There's a thread of connection between us
that glows in the shape of a circle,
beginningless and endless. So deep,
it contains our collective fears and dreams.
So luminous, astronauts can see it from space.

They sit at the space station
looking out the window and remark:
"There's that person again, persisting and resisting,
creating beauty out of struggle."
And they become your cheerleaders
without you even knowing it.
When they see storm clouds swirling over you,
they aren't surprised when you emerge
even brighter than before.

"There they go again," the astronauts say about you,
"shining like the dawn."

Darkness has something to teach us,
lessons that can be painful to learn.
But there's nurturance in darkness, too.
In its silence, we hear echoes
of our many-layered selves.
In its emptiness, we glean
the vastness of Being.

Cleansed by the darkness, we enter the light
eager to engage, eager to create.
We walk into the day as whole people—
not resentful of the darkness, but grateful.



Not weighed down by the journey, but grateful.
We emerge wisdom-keepers, peace-seekers.
In the darkness we begin to heal.
In the light, as witnesses of dawn,
we help others to heal.

The astronauts are outside in their space suits now
fixing a solar panel. A flare catches their attention.
A shooting star? A comet with its tail on fire?
They look down and see:
It's you—walking down the street,
taking up the space that is rightfully yours,
filling every step with a light so bright,
it's a beacon beyond worlds.

Yes, pain is part of your story,
but so, too, is this:
the brave persistence of your illumination.

Marie Marchand is the Peer Support Training Coordinator at Health Care Authority. She also serves as the Poet Laureate of Ellensburg, WA.

