

I, Rajaa Al Absi, would like to share my experience as a client and then as a volunteer at Merrymount.

Almost 2 years ago, I went through a sudden divorce with three kids and no job! I was not prepared for it at all. I felt like a hurricane hit my life and turned everything upside down. My life was shattered and I couldn't recognize what used to be familiar to me. At that time, I was sad, mad, and ready to fall apart and give up.

While I was going through this entire dilemma, I did not want my kids to feel my pain. I started to look for our first need which was the support. Since my parents live in Montreal, it was impossible for them to provide us with that support for long term. My sister has two kids of her own and works full time every day and she couldn't provide lots of support as well.

Gladly, Merrymount was there for us!

Merrymount provided me with the support I lacked during my breakdown. Merrymount supported me unconditionally by taking care of my children as much as I needed. I felt that I have a family here ready to help me for 24 hours a day and seven days a week. Every parent reading my letter understands very well what it means to have such a support during a difficult time. I felt a burden of fear was taken away of me because this new family is keeping my children safe and happy.

While my kids attended Merrymount, I was a lot more flexible to go through court, appointments with lawyer, finishing paper works and moving away from our matrimonial home. The package of stress that comes with divorce was going through my life with ease due to Merrymount.

While going through divorce process, I came across a new state in my life which is being a single mother. Every time I needed to attend doctor appointments, or school meetings, or shopping for grocery and couldn't manage with three kids Merrymount helped me at all times until I was able to stand up on my feet again.

Merrymount was strengthening me during all of this hard time. I never felt alone. I started to feel my difficult time was ceasing from my life softly and successfully. I remember my last day of using Merrymount services; I walked through the exit door with my three kids having big smiles on our faces and with lots of positive energy. We were ready to start our new life with lots of hope for the future. I understood while leaving that day that Merrymount is a breeze of comfort that families can breathe through during a crisis.

Merrymount's support has a huge impact on my outcome today. I became an independent single mother. I don't feel afraid of the future anymore because this center is always here to support me. Therefore, the first thing I wanted to do in my new life is to come back to Merrymount as a volunteer. I want to give back, I want to help and I want to be part of this wonderful place and provide support the way it was provided for me.

Being a volunteer at Merrymount helped me understand more about a crisis. The first thing is that a crisis does not represent anyone's identity. A crisis can happen to anyone regardless of their backgrounds, their social status or their level of education. A crisis can happen at any time without prior notice. A crisis can destroy the future of many families if they do not get the help they need. Merrymount is basically a cure to all of the side effects that associate a crisis. Merrymount makes it possible for families to go through their crisis and succeed. Merrymount is the light families see during their dark time. Merrymount is also the hope that should grow more in our society and a hope should never be taken away.

Merrymount did a lot to me as to many other families. It is the place that gives the feelings of warm hugs and that "everything will be ok". When families get the support they need during their hard time they overcome their difficulties and they become stronger and they will eventually give back to their society. That way, our society will grow healthier. It is a blessing to have Merrymount in our city and I wish every city in this country can have this blessing.

While writing this letter, I feel afraid that I have not described Merrymount the way this place deserves. But deeply in my heart, I wish that my simple letter could make a difference in any decision to be taken concerning the future of Merrymount.

Sincerely,

Rajaa Al Absi