

## Meet Delina

Delina is a 30-year-old woman from Ethiopia who has been living in Canada for 7 years and is currently residing in a housing shelter. She has faced challenges finding hope due to the emotional impact of past trauma. Supporting her toddler son, she hopes to secure permanent housing and a full-time job. Delina also has Type I Diabetes and has experienced difficulty accessing appropriate medical care through the shelter. She enjoys gardening and hopes to contribute to a gardening center in Canada.

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## Impacts on Mental Well-Being

### Precarious housing situation

Delina feels unsettled living in a shelter, and her current financial situation prevents her from securing permanent housing, causing significant stress. She fears for her safety and finds it difficult to go outside.

### Lack of access to personal belongings

Living in a shelter, Delina lacks access to personal belongings essential for self-care, including art supplies. Her son has also had to limit his belongings, making it more challenging for her to engage and entertain him within the shelter environment.

### Stress from living with chronic illness

Delina faces multiple barriers to maintaining and improving her mental health. Living in a shelter creates a sense of instability and lack of privacy, which exacerbates stress and anxiety. Financial insecurity, difficulties accessing medical care for her Type I Diabetes, and past trauma further compound her emotional strain, making it challenging to find hope and maintain overall well-being. Additionally, the lack of consistent community connections and supportive networks limits her access to social support, which is critical for resilience and recovery.

## 2 Contributors to Healing and Mental Well-Being

### Economic resources to support employment and housing

Given the stress of impermanent housing, Delina would benefit from accessible financial resources to support employment and secure permanent housing. This support could reduce her sense of displacement and allow her to establish a personal space for self-care and her belongings.

### Spaces and opportunities to practice self-care

Living in impermanent housing, Delina needs a dedicated space to practice self-care. Access to a communal environment with other Tigrinya-speaking individuals could help her feel less isolated and more supported.

### Accessible long-term healthcare services

Delina has lived with a chronic condition that requires ongoing monitoring. Access to long-term healthcare services would help manage her symptoms, reduce stress, and support her ability to carry out daily activities. Consistent medical care would also contribute to her mental well-being by alleviating anxiety related to her health, providing a sense of stability, and enabling her to focus on self-care, personal growth, and engagement in community and social activities that foster resilience and emotional support.

**“I learned happiness should not depend on other people, but it should depend on ourselves. We need to show ourselves love first before others.”**

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## Integrating Expressive Arts to Improve Mental Health & Well-Being

**“Dance ribbons helped me reconnect with my body, something I used to do when I was young. I felt the same peace as when I was a child.”**

### **Cultural elements intertwined with art expression**

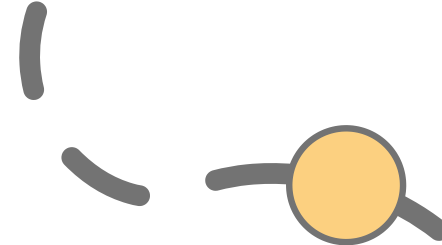
Cultural practices, such as the Buna ceremony, have provided Delina with comfort and joy, fostering a sense of belonging and connection to her roots. Participating in these traditions has also helped reduce the isolation she previously experienced.

### **Engaging in art modalities promoted confidence**

Delina participated in structured activities, including coloring, painting, and group work, which helped her overcome personal limitations and build confidence. She noted that coloring, in particular, encouraged her to try activities she had never attempted before.

### **Combination of group activities and movement-based art modalities**

Group activities, such as collaborative painting, provided opportunities for connection, fostering togetherness and emotional support. For Delina, sound and movement exercises offered a meaningful outlet to express emotions that are difficult to verbalize, helping her feel heard and understood. These activities also allowed her to explore new ways of self-expression and gain confidence in sharing her experiences. Over time, engaging in both group and individual expressive practices has contributed to a greater sense of emotional resilience and personal empowerment.



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## Sustainable Change, Looking Forwards...

### **Emotional resilience applied daily challenges**

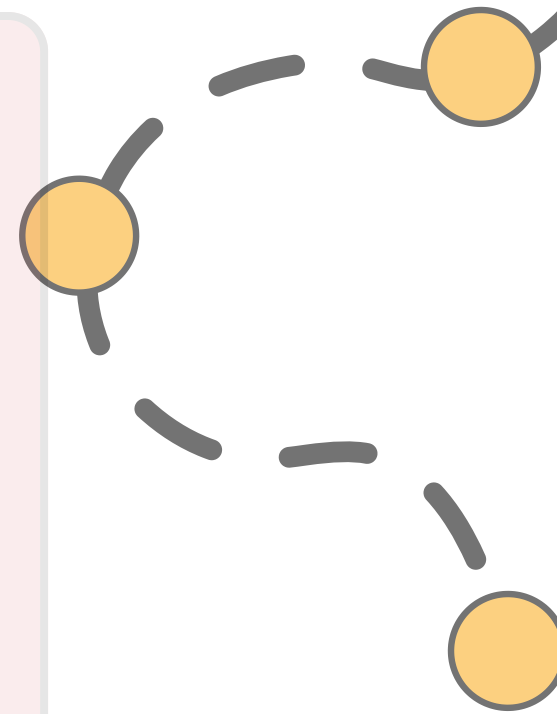
By practicing strategies such as mindfulness and self-compassion, Delina has reduced feelings of guilt and stress, strengthening her emotional resilience. These skills have enabled her to better manage daily challenges that might otherwise trigger intense emotional responses.

### **Exploration of other art therapy programs**

The program's safe environment supported Delina in embracing her healing journey, motivating her to pursue further opportunities for personal growth, including additional art therapy programs. As she continues her search for permanent housing, having a dedicated space for healing, respite, and self-expression remains essential.

### **Goal-setting and confidence in achieving goals**

The program has helped Delina build confidence in taking small steps toward her goals, including re-engaging with her community and beginning volunteer work in a garden—activities she had previously avoided due to stress and limited resources.



**“I have accessed therapy because I want to be a better mom to my children. I am in a better situation to explore and open past traumas and negative experiences.”**