



TESTIMONIAL PROCESS & FAQ

We recognize that telling your story can be both empowering and triggering, and we encourage you to work at a pace that is mindful of your current needs and emotional state. Take breaks when needed. There is no deadline.

We strongly recommend that you have a support system in place before starting the testimonial process. Periodically we host workgroups where people writing their testimonies can discuss ideas and receive support. Past participants have found that these groups have been helpful to organize their experiences and manage feelings of overwhelm. Please let us know if you would be interested in attending a future workgroup.

Please let us know if you struggle with articulating yourself through writing, have a learning disability, or otherwise would like assistance with the writing process.

GUIDELINES

We request that alumni wait a period of at least 12-18 months following their discharge from New Haven before submitting your story to be published online. This is to give you adequate time to process your experience while adjusting to life on the outside.

Please try and keep your story under 1,000 words. We may suggest edits to make longer testimonials more concise and accessible to readers.

Please do your best to use proper spelling and punctuation. We can help if grammar is not your thing.

Please only speak about your own experiences, not the experiences of others. You may describe things that happened to other people that you directly witnessed, but please do not tell another's story for them.

Please refrain from sharing graphic details of sensitive subject matter (such as trauma, self harm, addictive behavior, etc.) that may be upsetting for others to read.

For legal reasons, please be clear that your testimonial reflects your individual experiences and opinions. Do not universalize, name call, or accuse. It is OK to say things like: "My experience at New Haven was horrible" or "In my opinion New Haven was a horrible place." It's better to steer away from things like: "New Haven is a horrible place" and "Everyone thinks such-and-such", etc.

Please do not disclose the names or identifying details of anyone else including other students and staff.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

We ask that alumni consider their story through the following questions:

- *What was most helpful about your experience?*
- *What was most harmful?*
- *What do you wish people knew about NH?*
- *Knowing what you know now, what do you wish had been done differently?*

Your testimonial may include life before New Haven, life at New Haven, life after discharge and the years beyond.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Will you still help me write my testimony even if I don't want to publish it online?

A: Yes. We help former attendees through the testimonial process even if they have no intention of sharing it with anyone else. Some people write two versions of their testimonial: one published online, and one just for personal use.

Q: I don't even know where to begin. How can I get started?

A: Some people have found it helpful to begin with a "word vomit". This means first writing out everything that comes to mind without thinking too deeply about content, organization, or grammar. Once the words are on the page, you can then edit and refine your story. We offer assistance with the writing and editing process if this sounds intimidating to you.

Q: My experience at New Haven was not "bad". May I still share my story?

A: Of course. We welcome all alumni to submit honest, thoughtful testimonials of their New Haven experience and how it has affected their lives moving forward. We recognize that there is a wide range of alumni experiences, and we are looking for testimonials to reflect that range. We also recognize that one's feelings towards New Haven may not be black-and-white, and we encourage you to explore this ambivalence. There is no need to reduce your experiences as being simply "good" or "bad" if your reality is more complicated. We also discourage you from comparing your story with the experiences discussed in other testimonials.

Q: What happens after I submit my story to New Haven Voices?

A: After your story is submitted, we may suggest edits to assist with grammar and/or clarification. You will make the final approval before the testimonial is posted online.

Q: Can I edit or remove my story after it's been posted?

A: Of course. We recognize that one's feelings towards New Haven can change over time, and you may wish to edit your story to reflect those changes. If for any reason you no longer wish to have your testimonial on the website, we will remove it at your request.

Q: Does my name or identity need to be made public?

A: No. It is up to you whether you choose to disclose your name or other identifying details.

Q: May I include a photograph of myself from my time at New Haven?

A: Yes. Please make sure no other individuals are identifiable in the photograph besides yourself.

Q: May I include an excerpt from my charts, entries from my diary, artwork, etc?

A: Yes. Please make sure to obscure any names and identifying details besides your own, including the names of staff.

Q: I didn't complete the program. May I still share my story?

A: Yes. All individuals who attended New Haven are welcome to share their story, regardless of program completion status.