

My long way from the institution to the shared apartment and from the shared apartment to my own apartment

Part 1: The time in institutions

Monika Rauchberger, first published in German in 2007

I lived in institutions for a very, very long time.

I got into the institution when I was 2 years old.

I could stay there until I finished school.

Then I had to move to Innsbruck to another institution for adults with physical and multiple disabilities.

Many of my colleagues who had left school and the children's institution years before me were already living there.

Nobody told us that there were other institutions as well.

No one asked us if we wanted to move into our own apartment.

But I didn't realize that at the time.

I wanted to leave the institution home in the small village.

I did what all my acquaintances had done before me.

I wanted to live in Innsbruck because I had heard from my former Roommates that there was more freedom in the home in Innsbruck.

I imagined that in the big city I could come home whenever I wanted.

Nevertheless, I was very excited.

I was afraid of how it was going to be.

The caregivers from my old institution were also worried about me.

They said to me that I couldn't take care of myself yet.

They wanted me to stay in their institution.

That scared me even more.

But I had to move away because I was too old
for the children's institution.

So I just moved to the home with all my luggage.
Someone accompanied me to the second floor to a four-bed room
and then left me alone.
I was not completely comfortable there.

I was all alone in the big room until a roommate came in.
The new attendants didn't care about me.
They thought I knew about it anyway.
But I didn't know anything, because on the trial day
I had had the sheep bladder.

So I set off on my own. I went to the first floor.
There was the big dining room.
There were a few attendants there, and also fellow residents.

Actually, I should have complained. But I didn't dare.
There was also no one from my foster family
to accompany me on the first day.
No one told me when it was time to wake up in the morning
and when to eat.
And when I had to go to the workshops and
which workshop I would go to.

Over time, I figured it all out for myself. It's all sad, but true.

In this home, one person always took a shower and another one bathed next to it.
It was like an assembly line. That got on my nerves.
That's why I wanted to learn how to shower myself.
Not all the roommates wanted to learn to shower on their own.
A few attendants supported me. And so I learned to shower on my own.

It was similar with eating. At that time, I could only eat meat with a fork.
The attendants had to feed me soup and yogurt.
They said that it was not possible for me to eat only with a fork.
I should also learn to eat with a spoon.
At the beginning it was quite tedious.
But I persevered. I wanted to be independent.

Being an adult and being on your own is very difficult at first when you leave a children's institution.
But I got used to it. Then I got into a single room and met my boyfriend.
He also lived in the institution.
For a while now, I was happy to be in the institution.

But then the dream came up that one day
I wanted to move into my own apartment with my boyfriend.
Life in the institution got on my nerves more and more.

At some point, the director of the institution turned one floor into a transitional apartment.
Transitional housing means learning everything you need to know to move out to a less assisted shared apartment.

I signed up for transitional housing.

Luckily, my friend signed up there, too.

It took a long time to prepare for the shared apartment.