

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

Part 2: The time in the transitional apartment

Monika Rauchberger, first published in German in 2007

While I was living in the transitional apartment at the institution,  
I often thought about what it would be like to live outside of an institution.  
I imagined that I would have more freedom there.  
I could arrange my own free time.  
I could cook what I liked to eat.  
I could go out in the evening and on weekends,  
and it wouldn't matter what time I got home.  
I could live with my boyfriend as if I were in a relationship.  
That's when my desire became so great  
that I put all my energy into moving out.

Although I had moved from one home to another before,  
moving out this time was not easy either.  
What does it mean to live independently  
when I have lived in institutions all my life?

I needed a lot of courage to overcome my fears.  
I had to be patient with myself,  
because I didn't overcome my fears that quickly.  
I had to come to terms with the fact that I kept having doubts about  
whether I wanted to move out at all and whether I would be able to  
manage living in a shared apartment.

It helped that I dealt with quite a lot of questions and realized that moving out is made up many small steps. I took time to discuss everything quite well with my attendants and my future flatmates.

And I had ambition, otherwise I wouldn't have learned what there was to learn.

After I had overcome my doubts and fears for the most part, I was able to deal with other important questions.

One important question was who I would like to live with in the apartment.

I also realized that there was the possibility of living alone.

It makes a big difference whether you live alone or in a group home.

At that time, I didn't dare to move into an apartment on my own.

My attendants didn't support me moving into an apartment on my own either.

And I wasn't asked who I wanted to move in with.

That was not good, because there were frictions later on.

It was good that my boyfriend also moved into the shared apartment with me.

That gave me confidence, and I had someone to talk to and who supported me.

Me and my 3 roommates looked at what we needed to be able to do so we could live in the shared apartment with little support.

We realized that we had to be able to cook and do the laundry.

It was very important for us to think about what we would do if something happened, like if someone got hurt or the dishwasher went over.

At that time, we believed that we would not be able to move out unless we learned almost everything ourselves.

That's what the attendants told us.

Nevertheless, the caregivers had to do for us what we could not do.

They also applied to the State for how many hours of support we would get in the shared apartment. We had no say in that.

One of my roommates couldn't learn anything from all this.

He moved out into his own apartment and has had personal assistance ever since.

It is difficult to explain why we moved into a shared apartment with attendants and did not get personal assistants.

Probably the attendants from the institution did not believe that it would work out for me with personal assistance.

Then we were ready. We could move in.

We argued a lot. We had to do a lot ourselves.

I could come and go when I wanted.

That was a piece of the freedom I wanted.

Sometimes someone cooked something I didn't like.

The caregivers still told me what I should and shouldn't do.

But they didn't determine quite as much as they did in the institution.

I learned a lot in the shared apartment.

That made me proud and I became very brave.

Then I had the idea that I would have even more freedom if I lived in my own apartment with my boyfriend.