

Crystal's Y Story

Crystal grew up in Snohomish County and has continued to build her career and raise her family here. About 12 years ago, as a young mom with two little girls, she and her husband joined the Y. It felt like a simple family decision to join a place to stay active and bring the kids on rainy evenings.

Just a few months later, Crystal's husband passed away suddenly and unexpectedly. The grief and anxiety were overwhelming. Each day felt heavy, and even basic routines felt impossible. She remembers telling her sister, "I can hardly breathe."

Her sister encouraged her to get out of the house and try exercising again. Crystal didn't have the energy for an intense workout, but she remembered that the Y offered yoga.

So, she gave it a try. That decision became a turning point.

In the quiet of her first yoga class, something shifted. As the instructor guided the class through slow breathing, Crystal realized it was the first time all day she had truly taken a deep breath.

"That was the only time during the day that I was breathing," she says.

Week after week, yoga became a lifeline. The practice, the encouragement from her instructor, and the calm moments of reflection at the end of each class helped her begin to heal during the most difficult season of her life.

At the same time, the Y gave Crystal and her daughters something just as important: community.

With safe, reliable childcare and financial assistance during a time of hardship, the Y became part of their daily rhythm. Instead of staying home in isolation, they had a place to go together.

They swam. They tried ballet. They brought friends to the pool. Even during a time of grief, the Y filled their evenings with moments of joy.

"It provided structure for our day, community, and things we needed more than anything at that time," Crystal says.

Fast forward to today, the Y is still part of their lives. The girls who once played in the pool now come to the gym with their mom as teenagers, working out together and building healthy habits that will carry into adulthood.

Looking back, Crystal sees how much those early years mattered, not just for her healing, but for her daughters' future.

"[The Y] gave me experiences for my kids that I couldn't afford otherwise," she says. "It filled our evenings with fun and joy during a sad time."

Today, Crystal describes the Y's impact in simple terms. "Invaluable," she says. "It had an invaluable impact on my mental health."

Her hope in sharing her story is that if someone else is walking through grief or hardship, they might find the courage to reach out for community. Because sometimes healing starts with something small. A familiar face. A safe place for your kids. A deep breath you didn't realize you needed. And a community ready to welcome you when you walk through the door.