



Monadnock
UNITED WAY

Lena's Leap: From Uncertainty to Impact



For years, Lena dreamed of becoming a head teacher. She had the heart, the experience, and a deep love for her students. However, she lacked the necessary certification to take on a lead teacher role. That changed when she decided to pursue her Childhood Development Associate (CDA) certification and participate in Pyramid Model training.

At first, she was nervous. Juggling work, life, and coursework felt overwhelming. But with support from amazing mentors like her lead teacher, Steffanie Conlan, and her CDA mentor, Roberta Royce—and the flexibility of online tools like ProSolutions for the CDA work—Lena found her rhythm. The portfolio process was manageable, the instruction and examples made it feel doable, and, to her surprise, she enjoyed it.

One of the most meaningful things Lena took away from her training came through the Pyramid Model. She began to see challenging behavior through a new lens:

**“Kids aren’t naughty,” she said.
“They just need tools to regulate.”**

She became more patient, more present, and more attuned to the small moments that make a big difference—like when a child offers a kind word, asks a friend to play, or simply tries something new.

“Before, I might’ve stepped in and done it for them. Now, I guide. I encourage. I celebrate.”

One moment in particular stands out. A quiet child who usually watched from the sidelines wanted to join in a game but didn’t know how. Lena offered a simple suggestion—and watched with pride as the child bravely took the lead. “That moment of bravery—it meant everything.”

But Lena's journey isn't just about what changed in the classroom. It's about what changed in her.

"I'm 44," she said. "And for the first time, I feel confident. I know how to support kids. I use the right language. I offer ideas. My co-teacher and I work as a team."

What makes Lena's story even more remarkable is the path that brought her here. She's 5.5 years sober—something she's incredibly proud of. Addiction took everything from her. She had to start from scratch. But she didn't give up.

Through strength, support, and a deep commitment to growth, Lena rebuilt her life. Today, she's working full-time, married, and thriving in a career that fills her with purpose.

Her advice to anyone considering the CDA or Pyramid Model training? "Do it. It's more manageable than you think—and it gives you confidence you didn't know you were missing. Being a certified lead teacher feels amazing."

Lena's journey reminds us that the best educators are shaped not only by training but by lived experience, resilience, and heart. And for Lena, this isn't just a new chapter—it's a new beginning.