

## Alessandra's Story



I arrived in the United States, along with my husband and daughter, full of expectation and joy about our new adventure. Because of his work, we were realizing one of my husband's childhood dreams, living in another country and experiencing a new culture. Our plan was to be here for two years and then return to our native Brazil.

After we had arrived, I soon learned that despite having taken English classes at home for a year, I was not confident enough to try communicating with native English speakers.

I relied upon my husband to translate almost everything, which was frustrating for me. I am, by nature, an expressive communicator, but my fear of making mistakes or saying something offensive was always present. My lack of confidence caused me to isolate from others at parties and in community activities.

When the pandemic came to our region, I tried to find online resources to continue practicing my English skills. I had a new reason too: community. A friend told me about the Howe Library ESL program, so I gave it a try. The program enabled me to interact with native speakers and people from other countries with different language skills and accents. Our common goal: communicate confidently in English.

The group's approach was non-judgmental; We made mistakes, shared a laugh, and moved on. Over time, my confidence was restored, and I felt in control of my own life. I felt independent again.

I am so grateful for my experience with the Howe Library ESL group; it was transformational. I now feel comfortable communicating with native English speakers, and I look forward to being with them. My husband's work in the Upper Valley has been extended, so I am weighing several plans of my own while we remain here. Just what I will do first is not yet clear, but I know my ESL group will be rooting for me.