



EUCOMS Webinar (30 Sep. 2026)
PEER EXPERTISE Across Three Continents:
Canada, Japan and Europe

Bringing My Different Voices into Dialogue

Across the Roles of Service User, Mental Health
Professional and Peer Researcher in Japan

Yoshiko Ohno

(mental health social worker, certified public psychologist)

Graduate School of Human Sciences, The University of Osaka

The Recovery Research Team, Institute of Mental Health,
University of Nottingham

Three perspectives in one life

SERVICE USER



25 years as a service user
Four inpatient years in my twenties

PROFESSIONAL



Mental health social
worker and psychologist

RESEARCHER



Autoethnography of
lived experience

One life, three perspectives

Hospitalization and loss of agency

01

2001 — Diagnosed with PTSD and admitted to a psychiatric hospital

2004 — Japan's Vision for Reform of Mental Health and Welfare:
“From hospital-centered care to community-based living”

02

Four years in hospital. Words interpreted through a medical framework.

Lived experience translated into “symptoms”

Eventually, I began to believe: “Maybe I am the problem.”

03

Loss of agency and iatrogenic trauma

It took me many years to rebuild my self-trust

Medication and return to community life

IN HOSPITAL

Many medicines,
taken under
supervision

AFTER DISCHARGE

A smaller prescription
after discharge
helped me return to
community life

IN THE COMMUNITY

Teaching helped me
regain strength

Working as a mental health professional

01

Mental health social worker in Aichi Prefecture

02

Community work taught me the value of mutual support

03

A diagnosis can never tell the whole story

The cost of hiding my experience

01

I hid my hospitalization and ongoing psychiatric care

02

I feared losing my colleagues' trust

03

Keeping it hidden was exhausting



A peer support program in practice

The intended program

Peer staff visited people in psychiatric hospitals

What I observed

Professionals often chose peers with agreeable recovery stories

Equal collaboration requires change in professional attitudes

Co-production within myself

My position

I believed in peer work but hid my own experience

My question

Could lived experience transform mental health care?

My method

Autoethnography brought my different voices into dialogue

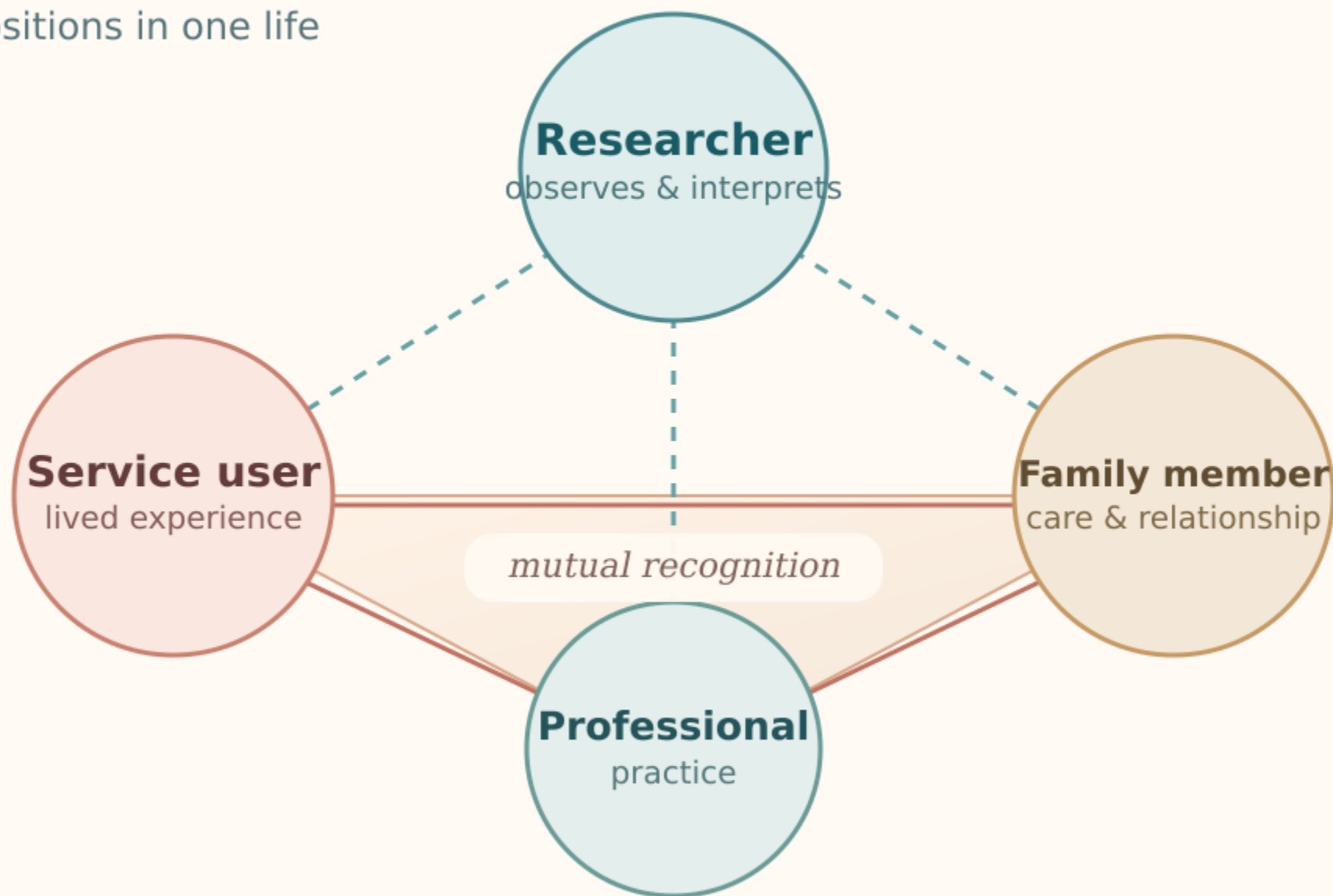


I am here today because the woman I was in my twenties kept living.
I am going back to meet her, and we are doing research together.



Co-production within myself

Four positions in one life



Being recognized as a peer expert

01

René Keet saw a “rich palette” in my experience and skills
“What a rich palette of lived experience, professional skills and philosophy!”

02

Dieuwke van Diepen helped me see myself as a peer expert
“We can normalize having difficulties. My own pain is part of my life.”

03

What I had wanted was to be understood



A zine that opens conversations

01

My poems and essays became *A Zine to Open in the Psychiatric Waiting Room*

02

The zine opens conversations about recovery and trauma-informed care

03

Readings and teaching carry those conversations further



At a reading of my zine

Peer employment and recognition in Japan

FORMAL RECOGNITION

Peer employment gained formal recognition in Japan in 2022

THE REMAINING QUESTION

Employment alone does not ensure equal regard for peer knowledge

How can peer researchers help create trusted knowledge?

Two Drivers of a Paradigm Shift in Mental Health Care

Disclosure can affect work and livelihood

PEER EXPERTS

**Leadership opportunities for
peer experts**

PROFESSIONALS

**Professionals recognizing
their own vulnerability**

Employment, recognition and less stigma support both pillars

An invitation to raise our voices

Many professionals and researchers have hidden lived experience

Sharing our experiences can normalize difficulty

What could change if hidden peers raised their voices together?



詩「こえ」

The Poem “Voice”

こえ / Voice

「あなたの声を聴かせてください」

ほんとう？

ほんとうの声を聴きたいの？

大きすぎる声 低すぎる声
あなたを引き裂くかもしれない響き
そんな声を聴く準備がありますか？
息が漏れるくらいの小さな囁きに
腰をかがめて耳傾ける
そんなしなやかさ お持ちですか？

“Please, let me hear your voice.”

Truly?

Is it the true voice

you wish to hear?

A voice too loud, a voice too low—

a resonance that might split you open.

Are you ready to listen

to such a sound?

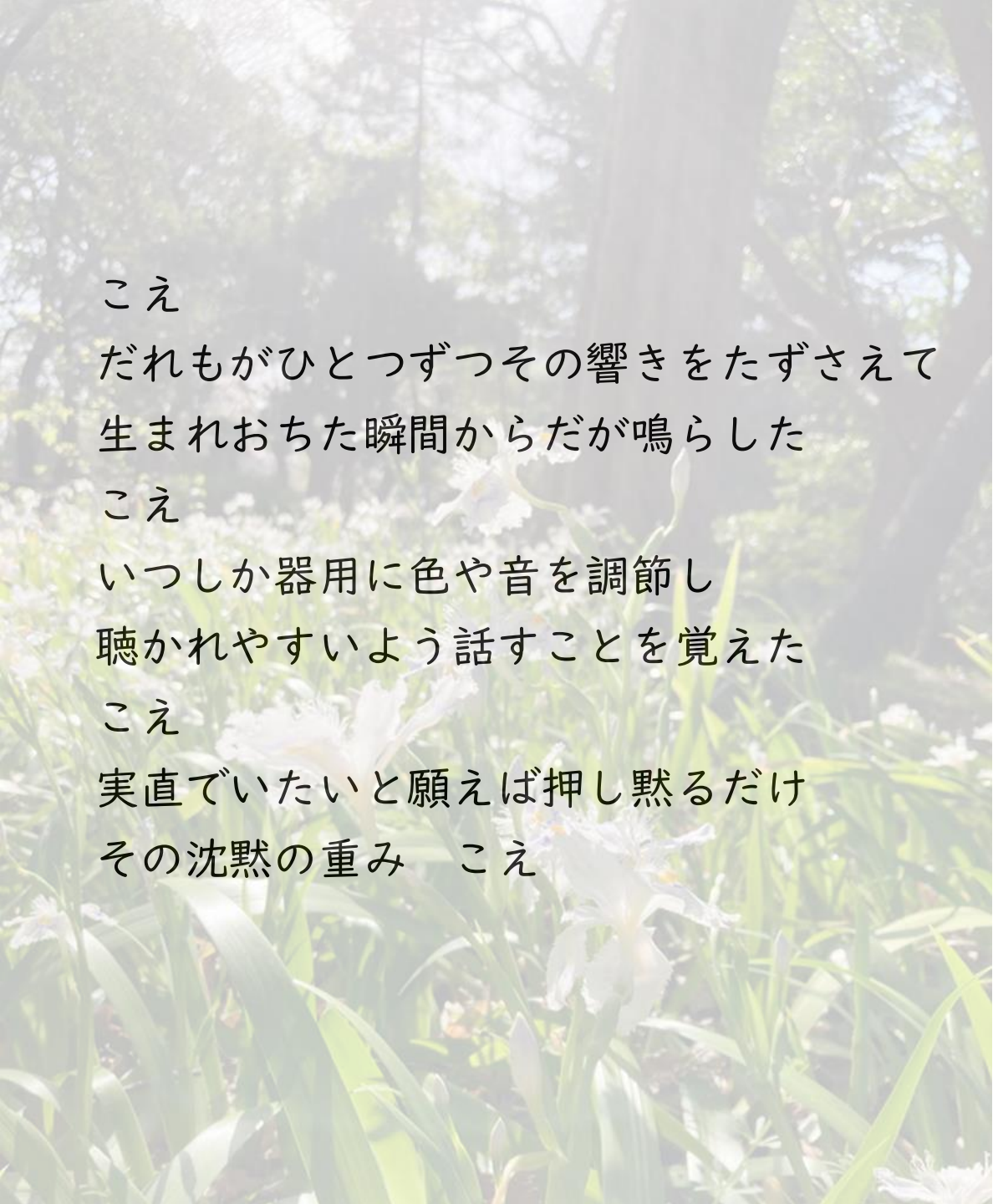
And what of a whisper so small

that breath barely escapes—

can you stoop,

tilt your ear,

and listen with that kind of tenderness?

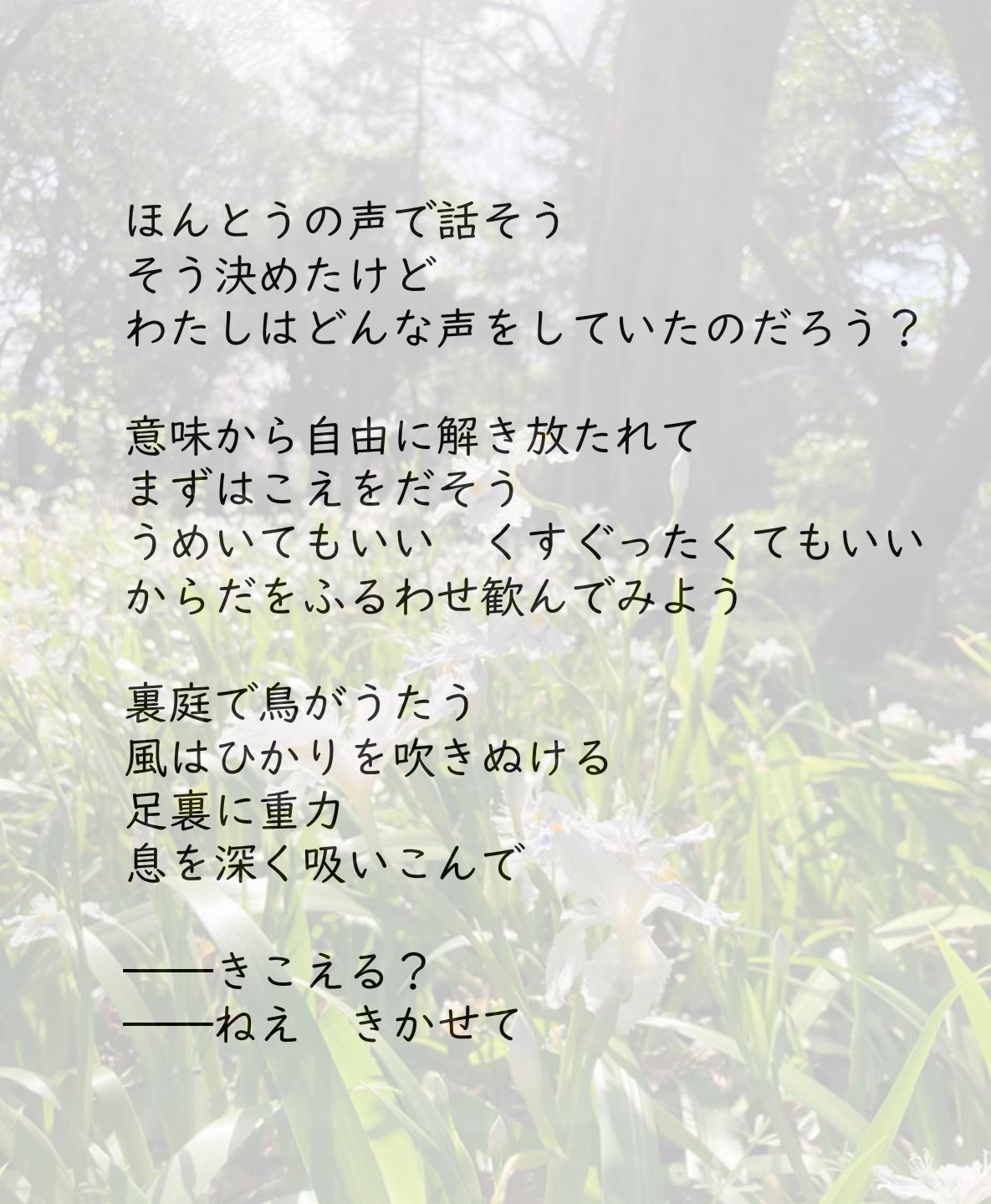


こえ
だれもがひとつずつその響きをたずさえて
生まれおちた瞬間からだが鳴らした
こえ
いつしか器用に色や音を調節し
聴かれやすいよう話すことを覚えた
こえ
実直でいたいと願えば押し黙るだけ
その沈黙の重み こえ

Voice.
Each of us is born
carrying a single resonance,
the body sounding
at the moment we enter the world.

Voice.
In time, we learn to adjust its color, its pitch,
to speak in ways that are easier to receive.

Voice.
When we long to remain honest,
sometimes all we can do is fall silent—
and the weight of that silence



ほんとうの声で話そう
そう決めたけど
わたしはどんな声をしていただろう？

意味から自由に解き放たれて
まずはこえをだそう
うめいてもいい くすぐったくてもいい
からだをふるわせ歡んでみよう

裏庭で鳥がうたう
風はひかりを吹きぬける
足裏に重力
息を深く吸いこんで

——きこえる？
——ねえ きかせて

Let us speak in our true voice.
I decided so, and yet—
what kind of voice
was mine?

Freed from meaning,
first, let the voice emerge.
It may groan.
It may quiver with a ticklish joy.
Let the body tremble.
Let it delight.

In the backyard, a bird sings.
Wind passes light through itself.
Gravity rests beneath my soles.
I draw a deep breath.

—Can you hear it?
—Come, let me hear yours.

**Thank you for
listening.**

yoshiko.syl@gmail.com

