

## **Carmen's Newcomer Story – A Matter of Belonging**

Before my friend took me to a Suppers meeting, I did the beginner questionnaire and decided I didn't qualify. I eat a lot of convenience food, but there is no problem with blood sugar anywhere in my family. I do have a tendency to be depressed, though, and the social aspect of the meeting was very appealing to me. Sometimes just being out with people lifts my spirits. And it made me smile inside to think I could learn to cook with a little help. I sat very small in my chair, thinking maybe nobody would notice I didn't belong there if I took up less space.

When it came my turn to share, I was thinking of passing because telling the truth would get me kicked out of the meeting. My friend gave me the elbow and so I spoke, "Lunch was delicious," I said; "I wish I could cook like this." Two people at the same time said, "Keep coming back."

The sharing went on, most but not all of the members shared on their struggles with cravings, food, weight, and mood problems related to what they ate.

While we washed the dishes, the talking continued and I really enjoyed the camaraderie of performing this simple task as a group. The facilitator asked if I'd be back. I told her I didn't think I qualify because I have no issues with food except that I'm not a very good cook.

"Do you have the desire to lead a healthier life?" She already knew my answer, "Well, yes. I just don't feel that I belong here."

"Carmen, you have two important reasons to be here. You want to learn to cook real food and there's an empty space where your sense of belonging belongs."

That didn't seem like it was enough to me, but everybody else just assumed I was coming back. I took home some literature and read the first boundary five times to let it sink in: The only requirement for membership is the desire to lead a healthier life."