

Facilitators' Story – Taking the Leap

On a scale of 1 to 10, I was feeling 10 on gratitude to Suppers and about 3 ¼ on competence to run my own meeting. I was among the first generation of people learning how to facilitate meetings and the literature wasn't even written yet. We were all invited by the spirit of co-creation to take the basic ideas of Suppers and create groups for the populations of our choosing, people in recovery, people with diabetes, parents of ADHD children, etc. I don't think any of us felt ready when we jumped, but we all experienced urgency to help others with very challenging diet and lifestyle changes, changes we ourselves were still making.

Almost from the outset, there were participants who wanted to help the program grow. It didn't matter at all that we weren't perfectly fixed yet; the desire to help ran strong. At our first meeting, it became clear people had very specific ideas about how they did and didn't want to help the program grow. One of our number complained she never had to go to a special meeting to learn how to lead at AA meetings. True, AA has been around a long enough time. Another only wanted vegetarians. Fine, if we disclosed the special nature of the meeting, it was OK to form groups around special interests; we just had to let people do their own experiments and find their own pathways. My concern was that I was still struggling with some of the food issues that brought me to Suppers to begin with. Uh-huh. Welcome to Suppers. Around here, we call that dealing with reality, and our response is nutritional harm reduction.

Everybody had some reason for resisting the leap. But some of us leapt anyway into our own meetings; some of us jumped into co-facilitating existing meetings, and others of us found ways to contribute our time and talent: acting as therapeutic friends to newcomers or contributing our time to improve the program design.

There is something very healing about creating. It gave all of us a charge. We witnessed as reluctant members caught the spirit of co-creation too, over small things like making their first salad dressing at a meeting without using a recipe or jotting down notes that blossomed into a Suppers story that others could really relate to. One member was so intimidated by food processors she had an expensive one sitting in the box for a year. So one of us went over and demystified the machine. Now she's off to the races soup making. A couple of us have been bitten by the gardening bug, which connects us to creative forces every time we walk outside.

It's harder to stay depressed or sorry for yourself surrounded by people taking baby steps, jumps, or leaps toward wellness. Our common goal is healing for the greatest number, and the force that moves us along is the spirit of co-creation.