

## Jane's Newcomer Story – Miss Information

I went to my first couple of Suppers meetings out of curiosity. I saw a couple of flyers around town and thought I would go check it out. Just curious, right? Well...at the very first meeting I went to I remember thinking to myself, "These people could sure use my help." After all, I did know an awful lot on the subjects they were discussing! I quickly came to the conclusion that by attending these meetings I would be able to help everyone by telling them what I thought they should do to improve their diet, their program, and their life. But every time I got on a roll, the facilitator brought the discussion back to the Suppers concept of biological individuality and how every one was free to experiment and set their own pace and course of action.

It was really frustrating for me because I knew if they would just eat the way I told them to eat, they'd feel a lot better. I told this to the facilitator, and she said, "Good information is not enough." Even if I were right, she said, the price of telling people what to do is too high if it compromises the safe setting of the meeting. "Stay curious," she said. Apparently everybody there already knew they needed to eat better, they were coming because forces greater than themselves were sabotaging all their good intentions. Before diet, before education, before all the things that Suppers does with its members, it creates a safe environment. Thinking back to times when I felt vulnerable, I certainly didn't want people to tell me what to do, I wanted to be heard.

I noticed as I observed long-time members that they were there to continue their own learning. Some were like me, from helping professions, people who are accustomed to being asked for their advice. But Suppers doesn't offer advice, it suggests experiments. I needed to learn to simply share my experiences, including my weaknesses and strengths. In that way, others had the opportunity to identify with my sharing – or not – to be inspired or take hope for their journey, but not compare or criticize.

What *was* my reason for being at Suppers? The only requirement for membership is a desire to lead a healthier life. Did I have any such desire? I think it took me a long time to ask myself these questions because I knew what the answers would be. I enjoy being judgmental. Part of the enjoyment I feel when I tell people what they ought to do comes from feeling superior. I sit in judgment every time I offer unsolicited advice. My choices were to go some place else to find people to fix or stay and work on my self.

I decided to attend Suppers meetings from then on with the only requirement for membership -- desire to lead a healthier life -- always in the front of my mind. I learned how to share my knowledge without selling it and to take my turn speaking. I learned that part of sharing is sharing the time so as many people as possible could speak during the meetings. People do ask me for my opinion on matters related to food and health. But they are asking just as much because I have become a safe person as because I'm full of good information. I did not become that safe person until I learned that curiosity feels much better than judgment.