

Laura Jean's Story – Little Girl Lost

Grandma was a temperance advocate. My father would turn off the radio when beer ads came on. But he was a workaholic, so there were some issues there. I married a problem drinker. And I ended up with enough of a problem myself with alcohol that I decided I needed to stop, and I don't much care whether I fit any official definition of "alcoholic" or not.

When I decided to try Suppers for Sobriety, it was more about reaching out in search of community. At age 60, I found myself dealing with breast cancer, separating from my punishing husband, needing a job, and simultaneously dealing with all the changes in residence and patterns that go along with it. If somebody added up my score on the stress list, it would have been through the roof. And apart from that, I also just have a hard time feeling "inside", which is also stressful. It's been 40 years since I had that "inside" feeling; it was high school. I suppose one good thing about ending the marriage is that it put me on a path of seeking relationship with women.

Then one day I saw a sign on the door of the local pharmacy inviting people to this new Suppers program, for people who have issues with some combination of alcohol, blood sugar, and mood. Mustering more courage than I knew I had, I called. I've been attending ever since. And even though I still have a hard time *feeling* welcome in this community, I know I *am* welcome, almost like I am at church. Some days I head straight for the chopping board and the comfort and familiarity of the cooking. Other days, I talk. I've made a friend, and I love catching up with everybody on Mondays. There are enough of us at meetings so that I can be a driver some days and a passenger others. It was perfect for me, the opportunity to be useful but not the pressure.

The benefits of the program so far have been improved eating, something I needed to get on top of anyway in the aftermath of breast cancer. Between the stabilizing whole foods and the nutritional supplements I take to reduce craving, I have to say that alcohol craving has been erased. What a learning experience! I cooked cabbage for the first time in my life and was amazed to taste how sweet it is. I bought a bulb of fennel and turned it into slaw, yummy. Only when I stopped taking my nutrients for a couple weeks during a visit with my sister did the cravings return. I bought a bottle of scotch and didn't drink it. I'm surprised at how nutrients like fish oil, B vitamins and C can cut my cravings. They're a little expensive, but a lot cheaper than relapsing.

Meetings include cooking, eating together and talking. Sometimes it's hard to stay in the conversation. I had miscarriages, no children. And even though it's been all those years, it's hard to be with women like those at the meeting who connect with the world through their children. The leader of the group encouraged me to write my story, even if I wasn't ready to share it. I've heard many people share their stories at meetings, and when I'm ready, it will be my turn to too. But many of the things I've written here, like about my miscarriages, I haven't talked about with anyone. Maybe just seeing it in writing will bring me one step closer to letting people know who I really am.