

Hannah's Story – Non-Joiner

One day at Suppers I looked around the table and counted how many of us identified ourselves as non-joiners. Four. Four of the people at our Suppers table were there in spite of an aversion to joining groups.

“Join us for Suppers” is not like an invitation to become a member of an organization. It's an invitation to meet people who for a lot of different reasons choose to get together for a meal and informative conversation. In my case, I wanted to check out Suppers because there is something I'm avoiding that my doctor wants me to do: check my numbers. My fear of needles surpasses my fear of the consequences of diabetes. Wouldn't it be perfect if they wouldn't let me join because I refuse to check my blood sugar? No such luck. The Suppers commitment to the active practice of non-judgment is a hallmark of the program, so I couldn't not join on that score.

I want you to understand how this program works, even for non-joiners like me. Every meeting starts with food preparation. If you have the time you can arrive early and help prepare the meal. This is a great way to learn more about healthy food and its preparation. The camaraderie of the Suppers experience harks back to my youth and the family kitchen on special occasions, a time when everyone joined in the food prep and chatted. This kind of getting together experience has been lacking in my adult life, except for my infrequent trips to visit relatives. I like being a part of this Suppers family. I found a place where people can speak their truth with people who have some of the same experiences. I have found people who are not afraid to share their trials and tribulations in a safe environment and to share their success too.

The discussion of the moment was “feeling full”. One of the women at the table said that she had eaten an entire pound cake and had not felt full. Many of us nodded. Sounded familiar. No wonder almost everybody at the table was diabetic and overweight. We were without the experience of feeling full. The few people who ate a normal meal and felt satisfied couldn't even imagine what it's like to live in a body that doesn't provide healthy signals about when it's time to stop eating. It was great to have this topic on the table and know that it wasn't just me! I thought back to a time when I was in my early 30's and adopted the eating schedule of one meal a day, usually around 4 p.m. I had already been aware that whatever time of day I started eating, that marked the start of a lot of eating for the rest of the day. Eating once a day around this time seemed to satisfy me. I ate whatever I wanted in whatever quantity I wanted and spent as much time as was needed to consume my meal. This is as close to feeling satisfied with the amount of food I eat as I have ever come. Clearly I did not get my share of normal signals.

I shared about the role of stress and depression in my life. My work life is crazy and many decisions made by the administration are very disturbing to me. My home life is aggravating, tense and unhappy. For as long as I can remember, my reliable and comforting companions have been the sweeter foods, the sweeter the better. I can and do visit them any time the stress of my relationships with humans is too much to cope with. A big helping of my favorite candy, ice cream or cake calms anger and frustration. Before Suppers I was in the habit of consuming candy several times a day. And on stressful days, I'd have candy hourly. Being a type 2 diabetic makes my consumption of food high in carbohydrates detrimental to me in so many ways, but they have been reliable friends when the people in my life were not there for me. Contrast that with the Suppers meeting, where I get a hug just for walking in the door. It is so emotionally comforting to go to a place where people are happy to see me.

I still don't feel as though I have “joined” Suppers, I am having lunch with friends!

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I wanted to share my feelings about non-joining because at Suppers the message I was sending from behind crossed arms (I am not a joiner) didn't phase anybody one bit! My grumpiness about being there went right over their heads. Now, I'm one year in. To summarize, my process went like this:

I trusted my doctor's recommendation to try Suppers.

I was curious and thirsty for information about the effects of food on me.

I have been going to Suppers meetings for over a year, without joining, naturally.

I feel comfortable and supported at meetings.

I now *crave* vegetables and salads each day and eat them even though they don't fill me.

The healing powers of Suppers are numerous. Here are the benefits I've experienced at one year in:

1. I now have only one sweet eating event per day and some days no sweets at all. I know to have a protein with it to reduce its effect on my blood sugar.
2. I am able to observe my rebellious nature and allow myself to eat for better health.
3. I am cooking at home and giving myself more than one healthy meal (the one at Suppers) every week. I am eating more organic foods.
4. I love myself enough to say I deserve to leave work once a week to go some place where I am relaxed and comfortable -- Suppers at lunchtime.
5. I feel welcome and nourished in body, mind and spirit.

Not bad for a non-joiner.