Ending Isolation: Reducing Anxiety through Connection

Women seeking safety, sobriety, wellness and justice face many barriers. Simple tasks can be frightening or overwhelming at times. Going to court, interacting with Children’s Services or just setting foot outside can bring on fear and anxiety. This uneasiness is compounded when a person feels all alone. Women attending support groups together can serve as a safety net of caring individuals. Women facing similar struggles can reduce isolation, anxiety and fear through their connection to each other.

The women at New Beginnings Wednesday night Support Group came up with the following plan themselves. A member of the group was terrified to go to court alone. She was afraid she would have a panic attack, take a drink or crumple when she saw her abuser. None of these options felt good and she said in anguish, “If I just could take all of you with me, I wouldn’t feel so all alone.” Another group member said, “Maybe we could help you. We can’t physically go but we could all write down a message for you and you could carry it into court with you. Then we would be with you. You would not be alone.” Another group member said, “We can write down our numbers and you can call us before you go in, or if you get scared or after you leave.” We can make a safety plan together,” said yet another. “You can call us if you are thinking of taking a drink, feel like fainting or if your partner says or does something hurtful or scary.”

That evening the women passed around a piece of paper. Everyone in the group wrote a note of support and provided phone numbers. A simple plan was formed. The next day our group member went to court but she was not alone. She had the power of the group on the paper in her pocket. She took the paper out and read, “We believe you. You can do it. We care.” She used the phone numbers. She got through the day and she knew people believed her and cared for her. She said, “When I came in here I felt lower than the rug and so alone. Now I know I’m part of something bigger than myself. There’s a whole movement out there made up of people just like me, and we are there for each other.”

Today when any group member feels afraid, and doesn’t think she can handle a court date or other event alone, group members remind her, “You are not alone.” They ask for paper and pen. Sometimes they write down their words of support; other times they designate a group member to write down words of wisdom and support. It is very healing and empowering to feel safe enough to tell your story, to be believed and to feel connected. This simple tool is most useful and empowering because it is rooted in the experience, strength and hope of women like you. Do you need help from the group today? It is okay to ask for support if you need it now. Today you are not alone.

Note: Some members may choose NOT to provide a phone number if doing so is uncomfortable or poses a safety risk.