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Small Group Communication

October 22, 2013

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“Wait a minute, did I read that correctly?” I thought as I clicked the hyperlink to view the website (MOPS International, 2013). My eyes were wide and my heart racing as my mouth spread into a grin. “Oh my goodness, it’s true!” I said. Two of my favorite female authors and motivational speakers were coming to Kansas City.

I registered for the conference as quickly as I could. I shared the information with all of my close girlfriends who also liked these two writers. And I waited. I waited for someone to immediately respond and tell me she would join me on the trip. After a few hours, days, and weeks, I realized not a single one of my friends were going to join me. I sighed in surrender. I would attend yet another conference by myself. “I’m tough,” I thought. “I don’t need anyone to go with me. I’ll be fine awkwardly sitting alone as I eat lunch around thousands of other groups of people who traveled together.”

A few weeks passed and I received a message from a girl that I had attended high school with. I had not talked with her since we graduated. It had been, ahem, a few years. She wrote, “Hi Liz, I saw you were going to the MOPS convention in Kansas City. So am I. Are you going with friends? If not, would you like to go with our group?” I thought, “oh sure, I’ll just go with total strangers. Ha.” However, as the conference date grew closer, I realized my bank account did not exactly hold the funds for my upcoming hotel bill. I thought back to my old friend’s offer. And soon found my fingers typing a message back to her, asking if the offer was still open. What were my fingers doing? I hadn’t thought through this completely. “Who gave them permission to make a decision without consulting the rest of my body?” I mused. I soon found myself fully immersed in a plan to attend a conference with three total strangers. Not only to

attend the conference together, but to share a hotel room for three nights. But not only share a hotel room, but also a bed.

As the day approached, I repeatedly played several mini daydreams in my mind of the trip turning disastrous. My eyes would grow wider and wider as panic washed over me. Thus, I clung tightly to the safety net of driving my own car on the trip—just in case I had to bail. Once I arrived, I met the three ladies in the hotel lobby. As I walked up, I immediately recognized my old friend. Out of the corner of my eye, I quickly sized up the others. Whew, so far, they look normal.

As the weekend progressed, I went through the awkward yet intriguing conversations that happen when I meet new people. What do you know? I actually have a lot in common with these ladies. Each one has children under the age of five. Each one shared similar excitement about the conference speakers. And each one like me had over packed her suitcase (Spencer, 2013). One lady said, as she walked in, “Oh I just love a freshly made bed. I can’t stand how my kids make their beds. When they leave for school I go in and remake their beds.” We all laughed. We quickly found ourselves laughing and sharing silly experiences about the embarrassing things that come out of our children’s mouths. The fantasy themes were rich with empathy as we told about difficult parenting moments, I looked around the room and saw that while one lady would speak, the other two would nod and smile with understanding. One story would remind us of something else that we have faced. These chains developed a shared sense of identity and unity for the group (Beebe & Masterson 2012).

During the most moving presentation of the conference, I found my heart overwhelmed with passion and emotion. I felt a familiar lump form in my throat as my eyelids welled up with tears. I turned and saw the other three ladies in the group were also overcome with the intensity

of the speaker's words. It hit me at that moment, that I had made the right decision to choose to share this experience with others. I also felt incredibly thankful to cut my travel expenses (Spencer, 2013).

As I packed my bags and loaded my car, I turned to say goodbye to my new friends. One said, "Now don't forget to make your bed each morning." We all laughed at the meaning of the inside joke (Beebe & Masterson 2012).

References

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