

## **The Way It Is**

*By Jean Kirkpatrick, Ph.D., WFS Founder*

It has come to my attention recently that some of the beliefs that are abroad about Women for Sobriety are inaccurate. It seems that in some parts of the country I hear that Women for Sobriety is not for abstinence. At least, this is the perception of Women for Sobriety.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

Women for Sobriety stands firmly upon the insistence that its members end their days of drinking and learn how to live a totally new kind of life.

This organization is not for moderate drinking or sometime drinking or even toleration of frequent relapses. Honest and/or occasional relapses may occur, but they are dealt with properly within the group. However, if a woman does not intend to stop drinking or is a constant relapser, then she is not for Women for Sobriety and Women for Sobriety is not for her.

A harsh line? Perhaps, but this is necessary to save the group. No organization, or group of people, can afford having one person constantly and continually disrupting the group and certainly not if that disrupting person is not sincere.

Women for Sobriety, like AA, stands for total abstinence. And like AA, WFS will always have persons who relapse. And, like AA, this is dealt with in relation to the person and that person's attitude.

Women for Sobriety's program is a recovery program. It shows a woman how to stop drinking and then how to change her entire life by changing her way of thinking, her way of perceiving life. It is a program of retraining of the mind; it is a philosophy.

Women for Sobriety is a program of habit breaking and behavior modification through changed thinking. We live in our minds, in our thoughts. If our thoughts are poisonous, so, too, will our actions be. If our thoughts are troubled, our actions are destructive to ourselves.

The Women for Sobriety program is one of positivity, a program of positive imaging. As women, our greatest problem is the lack of a working self-image. We operate from an image given to us by our parents, or one parent, and then we operate from other images provided to us from other persons we are with. Because of this, the Women For Sobriety program shows how to change into a positive way of imaging ourself. Our keynote: "I am a competent, caring, compassionate woman." And we literally think ourselves into this image and act from it.

The Women for Sobriety program is not a simple program. It takes time to grow into it and with it. But it is a growth program. It is sometimes used not properly but it still 'works'. Then it is the group that is providing sobriety and not oneself. Some women come to Women for Sobriety and have no intention of learning about themselves. All

they want is instant sobriety. They find that by coming to meetings and staying busy, busy, busy, they can stop drinking... temporarily.

But this is not “sobriety”. It is merely not drinking.

The woman who is of serious intent, the woman who wants to change, will find this possible by using the Women for Sobriety recovery and growth program. She can change by learning about her illness and then about how to change her life. She will learn how wrong her perceptions of herself have been. She will learn how to overcome that and how to begin with a new life, with a new self-image, one of her own making. “I am a competent, caring, compassionate woman.”

We live in the environment of our mind. Once we recognize that this is where we always live and will live, we can begin to spend time on changing that environment by changing our thoughts and by constantly working at that change. For this reason the Women for Sobriety program asks that each woman arise 15 minutes earlier to have a period of time to herself to put those positive thoughts into the proper environment, her mind. Throughout the day, this positive imaging should be reinforced. Any, or all, of the 13 Acceptance Statements should be said and held onto firmly.

Many women begin with our 12<sup>th</sup> Statement: “I am a competent woman and have much to give life.”\* It’s a good place to begin. It’s a powerful thought to hold constant. Then, when the thought is firmly in place, positive actions come from it. That’s the beginning of real sobriety.

And that’s what we are all about: a total change of thought and life-style without alcohol. We do not tolerate women who merely want to lessen the pain of their drinking by coming to meetings so that they don’t drink as much as before!

Women for Sobriety members give up their drinking and become the competent women they never knew they could be because of poor self-imaging.

When the real woman emerges, drinking is never again thought about or necessary. But the drink must be put aside first before the recovery can begin and before the growth can take place.

\*This Statement has been updated to reflect the current version.

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#### Comments from Shirley:

In this article of Jean’s, she relates what we stand for and what we expect from the women and men (for those that might not realize, there are MFS groups but they are kept separate from the women’s groups) who join our group. She stresses positive living and outlooks. We have to learn about our past, BUT not to dwell on the negatives. Use the past to create a better future.

There are some negative opinions about WFS! “Oh, you’re going to the male bashing meeting!” “There is only one way to quit drinking and it’s not with WFS, it’s with \_\_\_\_\_” “Women for Sobriety,

they just sit around and gossip about each other.” I have found that these and other comments come from people who know nothing about us. In addition, they do not WANT to know anything about us.

Women have to be serious about their recovery. We have to put ourselves first, learn to love ourselves. We live by what we think, there is this little voice running around in our minds telling us how to react. That is why Jean says it’s important to get up 15-20 minutes earlier in the morning to have time to yourself, to read positive statements and plan on putting them to use during the day. This is a good way to develop positive imaging.

We know that WFS stands for a lot more. We believe in total abstinence, we know that some people have more difficulty getting there than others. Personal experience tells me that this is true; I had several starts before I got it right. Sobriety isn’t just not drinking; we have to be serious about the changes that are required. I found I had to change some of my friends, actions and activities. I had to learn more about myself, whether I like what I saw or not. But I refuse to beat myself up about it, after all I am using Statement # 5, “I am what I think” and Statement #12, “I am a competent woman and much to give life.” Moreover, as Jean says, “It’s a powerful thought to hold constant.” With the positive thought, positive actions will follow. That is the beginning of real sobriety.