

Welcome
to the
Funny
Farm

The All-True Misadventures
of a Woman on the Edge

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No Woman Is an Island

THERE'S A CERTAIN CAMARADERIE AMONG WOMEN.

Whether we're talking about the attitudes of our kids, the contents of our refrigerators, or the girth of our waistlines, we members of the sisterhood of women just seem to have a lot in common.

Maybe it's because we battle so many of the same problems.

Last week I was visiting my folks in Colorado. My mom and I were puttering around together in the kitchen when she said, "Wanna know the best piece of advice I ever got from you?"

Now, I don't normally go around giving advice to my mom—she's a lot wiser than I am—so I was interested to hear what she was about to say. Maybe she had been impressed with some profound insight she'd picked up from something I'd written or while she and I were having an intimate conversation on some deeply spiritual topic.

She said, “It was when you told me to soak crusty pans overnight in automatic dishwashing soap. I haven’t scrubbed a pot since.”

It’s true. If you have a pot or pan with baked-on goo from supper, just fill it with water and toss in some Cascade. The pan wipes clean in the morning.

See? That’s what I’m talking about. We all face so many of the same challenges. Whether we’re single gals or empty nesters, newlyweds or midlife moms, we all know what it’s like to try to scrape the remains of last night’s lasagna off our favorite Corningware.

I love it when another woman shares some little tidbit from her own life—an experience or insight—and it’s something I’ve experienced or thought, but figured I was the only one.

I loved it, for example, when a reader wrote to me and confessed that she sometimes cleans her house and then realizes that lurking in the back of her mind is the motivating thought, barely acknowledged, that once her house is clean someone—she doesn’t really know who—will arrive at her home and rescue her from all of her troubles. And my eyes blinked wide as I read, and I laughed out loud in amazement.

I thought I was the only one who had experienced that sensation.

I love it when I go to my friend Beth’s house. We’ve been friends for four years now. Not just friends. Close friends. Bosom buddies. And in all our many hours together, I’ve never once visited her home and used the bathroom frequented by her kids and found the roll of toilet paper ON THE DISPENSER. Not a single time. And I love it because I can relate. In my bathrooms, entire generations of toilet paper rolls will come and go without ever having been introduced to the dispenser next to the toilet. It’s as if the dispenser has been relegated to the role of some antiquated appliance that once served a purpose, but has fallen into disuse, like the twenty-pound waffle makers we all used to own or the toaster oven or the rotary dial phone.

But somehow knowing that the dispenser has fallen into disuse at Beth's house too makes me feel a little better. Less guilty. I may still get the Bad Mother of the Year Award for letting my kids manually unwind their toilet paper, but at least I won't be making my acceptance speech all alone. Beth'll be right beside me, sharing the podium.

I think one of the scariest feelings in the world is wondering if you're all alone. Of course, I realize that mothers of preschoolers may take issue with this statement because the thing they crave even more than chocolate is isolation. This is because these women have not experienced a private moment—not even to go to the bathroom—since the birth of their first child. But I'm not talking about THAT kind of alone. I'm talking about the alone we feel when we're afraid everyone else is living Martha Stewart/Ruth Graham lives while *our* lives resemble something more akin to Lucy Ricardo meets Roseanne Conner. At Peyton Place, no less.

But that's the nice thing about having friends with whom to share the intimate details of our lives. It helps us realize that we're ALL living Lucy/Roseanne/Peyton Place lives.

King Solomon had it figured out. He wasn't even a woman and he had it figured out (of course, he WAS married to seven hundred of them, so maybe that helped him get a clue). I say he had it figured out because he's credited with writing, in the Book of Ecclesiastes, the observation that "there is nothing new under the sun."

And there isn't.

So the next time you're feeling like no one could possibly understand the things you're going through, think again.

I don't know about you, but I think this is comforting, not because "misery loves company," but because "there's strength in numbers."

And not just strength. There's hope, too. Because if other women have experienced the same struggles and emerged victorious to tell the story, then you and I can do it, too. Although I have to admit, I'm more than a little curious how Solomon's wives made do with baked-on lasagna.